

A graphic of a spotlight shining from the top left towards the center of the page.

Alaska School SPOTLIGHT

Swanson Elementary is a K-2 school of about 400 students located in Palmer, Alaska. Swanson is part of the Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District. Being a K-2 school, the Alaska Reads Act has impacted the entire school building. Principal, Josh Rockey is in his first year as leader of Swanson Elementary, but not new to leadership, having served five years at Butte and five years at Sutton as principal of both of those schools prior to this school year. He knew there were going to be two main non-negotiables going into this school year: Alaska Reads Act Requirements and Professional Learning Communities (PLC's). Although already a high-functioning school at 73.8% Tier I proficiency rate in reading (AIMSWEB), the team set the bar at raising that to 85% proficiency in its first year of systematic implementations of tiered reading instruction.

The first order of business was curriculum. Swanson staff wanted to align with the Alaska Reads Act as best they could with the district-wide curriculum. They refer to the work as the "Core + More" implementation. Three main goals of "Core + More" are:

1. All students receive uninterrupted core instruction.
2. Those that need it would receive tiered interventions.
3. Acceleration for students that are ready.

Immediate success was noticed by staff. Students began skyrocketing in their learning!

As part of their dedication to improving reading staff implemented before-and-after school tutoring starting in October. This only occurs because of the commitment of the staff. Both teachers and paraprofessionals are willing to spend extra time to assist with these interventions. The school has committed to contract extensions for those willing to assist. The same interventions are offered before and after school that are during the day. UFLI, Heggerty, and Read Naturally have worked well for them. Above grade level students are also served. They work on more complex reading skills within literature circle groups. One example of success is 92% of 2nd graders already meeting their end of the year phonemic awareness skill goal.

Family Engagement is important at Swanson Elementary. So far, the parents have provided a very positive response to Principal Rockey's efforts to not only tell how shifts in practice by

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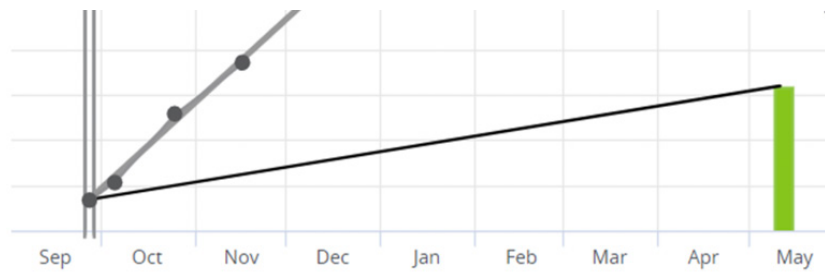
the Swanson Elementary Teachers and Staff are affecting student learning, but also show them. Staff report that they are seeing an increase in parents working with their child at home. They feel this is a result of the Alaska Reads Act work.

Here are some highlights from an Alaska Reads Act success story published in their monthly school newsletter for December 2023 under their "Reads Act in Action" section. Principal Rockey recognized that changes can feel overwhelming and even sometimes confusing. He states the staff set a team goal of raising student reading achievement on AIMSWeb tests from 73.3% Tier I to 85% Tier I, then lists the 4 main changes the dedicated staff are working on.

1. Work on the alignment of district-wide curriculum with Science of Reading. This meant a large emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics, especially in the lower grades.
2. Implementation of "Core + More", where all students receive uninterrupted core instruction and interventions as needed, including acceleration. Within this model, the most skilled teachers will work with students with the greatest need. This took some very crafty scheduling.
3. Dedicated time on Mondays for Professional Learning Communities that focuses on reading. Instructional needs of the students is priority with a focus on that 85% proficiency goal. All Mat-Su Staff participated in the district-hosted Solution Tree PLC Summit in November 2023.
4. Before and after school tutoring opportunities extend the instructional time for Tier III Students. This means more time to work on foundational skills with the students who need it most.

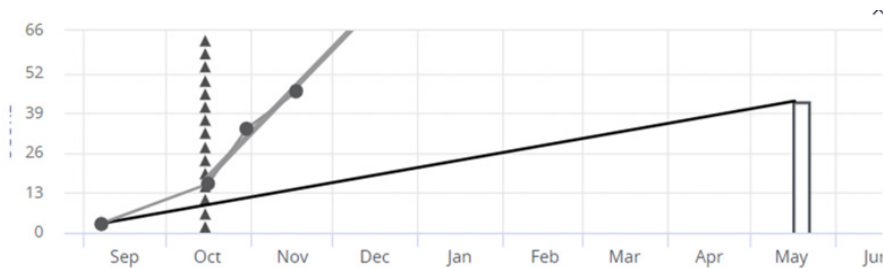
Principal Rockey provided graphs for the parents as a visual representation of the progress a sample of students made between Fall and Winter assessments for the school year.

Principal Rockey attributes much of their school "Alaska Reads Act" implementation success to Swanson Elementary's teachers and paraprofessionals. He is pleased with how invested the staff is. The staff has a mindset of "each student belongs to all of us", and they've built trust to capitalize on individual employee strengths, which he emphasizes takes a LOT of trust to let go. He also attributes success to the mindset they have of solving their problems from within. With the uncertainty and unknowns of resources, challenges of staffing, and other issues that arise the staff at Swanson Elementary depend on each other for successful solutions.



	Baseline	9/25	10/2	10/9	10/16	10/23	10/30	11/6	11/13	11/20	11/27
Score	11	11	17			41			59		
Errors	9	9	7			5			1		
Goal ROI	1.25	1.25	1.25			1.25			1.25		
Trend ROI			5.25			7.67			6.92		
Intervention Trend ROI			5.25			7.67			6.92		

Example of Success - UFLI



	Baseline	9/4	9/11	9/18	9/25	10/2	10/9	10/16	10/23	10/30	11/6	11/13
Score	3	3						16		34		46
Errors	9	9						8		6		5
Goal ROI	1.11	1.11						1.11		1.11		1.11
Trend ROI								2.33		3.71		4.25
Intervention Trend ROI										9.00		6.47

Example of Success – Letter Naming Fluency



Has your school proven great success increasing student reading proficiency utilizing evidence-based curriculum and materials? Do you have something you are really excited about as an outcome of a shift to Science of Reading best practices? We are interested in hearing what amazing things are happening in your school to positively impact student reading proficiency and achievement. Please submit your story to the e-mail below. You may be chosen as the next school spotlight in a future edition of the Alaska Reading Newsletter.

Please e-mail your submissions or questions to: Jenn.Miller@alaska.gov

[View all editions Alaska School Spotlights here.](#)