

# ***The School Board of Highlands County***

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October 19, 2004

Dr. Bill Blokker  
Literacy First Process  
Professional Development Institute, Inc.  
3109 150<sup>th</sup> Place Southeast  
Mill Creek, Washington 98012

Dear Dr. Blokker:

As we begin the final year of our three-year training and coaching in the Literacy First Process, I must take this opportunity to share with you the positive changes and impact that this process has had on the teaching of reading and student reading achievement in our district.

For the first time as my tenure as the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, I had an elementary principal tell me that the Literacy First Process we started three years ago is the best investment this district has ever made during her thirty years in education. I agree! It has been a pleasure to work with you, your outstanding office staff, and the Literacy First consultants.

One significant impact that has come from our collaborative relationship is the difference I have observed in classroom instruction. Not only is it exciting to witness an increased level of knowledge on the part of our teachers and administrators in the scientifically-based reading research, but it is also even more exciting to witness the application of knowledge in the delivery of direct, explicit instruction as well as differentiated instruction with our students. (Yes, including our administrators!)

Another most significant impact has come in the area of student reading achievement at the elementary AND secondary level. As I have shared with you previously, the district has made greater achievement gains in reading at the elementary and middle level than in math and writing. For example, as a district, we made overall +13% achievement gain from 2003 to 2004 in the area of reading in grades three, four, and five. At the middle level, we had the least variability across all middle schools in the percent of students not making adequate gains in reading. In addition, it is evident based on student data by teacher at the middle level, that

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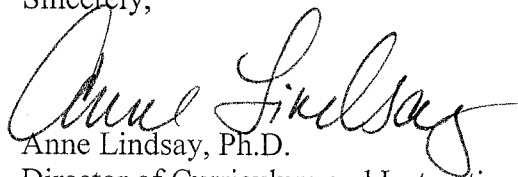
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dependent readers being taught by a Literacy First trained teacher are making greater gains in reading than those students being taught by a non-Literacy First trained teacher.

Finally, it is further evident that those schools who have embraced the Literacy First process as you propose are having more reading achievement gains than those who only emphasize most/some but not all of the elements of the process.

Please accept my deepest appreciation for the quality process that you have created and made available to schools/school districts. I can't imagine investing our limited resources in any other process or program proposed to increase student reading achievement. Just so you will know, I am meeting with Dr. Paula Whittier, Executive Director for Consulting Services, Professional Development Institute, Inc., to discuss options for extending our contract for services for school year 2005-2006. I look forward to our continued professional relationship as we consider expanding our opportunities to help and support our teachers and students of Highlands County!

Sincerely,

  
Anne Lindsay, Ph.D.  
Director of Curriculum and Instruction