



# IT WORKED!

## *Making Drastic Changes using Standards-Based Reporting*

**Janice Riggs**

*Instructional Facilitator*

*El Dorado Public Schools, AR*

One of the problems with the current method of assigning grades is that it rarely tells an accurate story about what a child does or does not know. Standards-Based Reporting is a much more effective way of reporting student progress. Ultimately, we want what is best for students—the issue was how to start. Our story is about Standards-Based Reporting, but in many ways the real story is how we implemented such a drastic change, which started with so much panic and fear. This is a story of our journey in making teachers the biggest proponents of a new program.

When our district started Standards-Based Reporting in Kindergarten, many people were worried, myself included. But before the end of the first year, people got excited about it. When implementing a drastic change, it should always be a goal to figure out how to move a staff from surviving to thriving—that is, moving from viewing the change as something new to viewing the change as necessary and beneficial. Change is a mental game. It helps to get people to start with a positive mindset. We started by telling our teachers that Standards-Based Reporting is better than sliced bread and chocolate. We actually had facilitators who made homemade bread and handed out chocolate at our first meeting with our Kindergarten teachers.

We wanted our teachers to be supportive of this initiative, so we encouraged ownership by ensuring that teachers had a huge part in creating and developing the Standards-Based Reporting systems for our district. We also made it a priority to keep a continuous dialogue running between teachers, facilitators, and district representatives. To do this, we had weekly meetings at each school to discuss successes and struggles. We also had one representative from each school attending teacher-led quarterly meetings to discuss issues with other schools.

Looking back on the implementation and its results, I see that students have benefitted in so many ways. We have seen some very promising results already. Our teachers know their Arkansas Mathematics Standards better than ever and they also know their students' strengths and weaknesses at a level that has never been achieved before. Parents know exactly how to help their children. Before, when a child received a "B" or a "C", parents did not necessarily know what to do to help. Because of our work on this initiative, those parents now know how to help their children.

Our biggest proponents of Standards-Based Reporting are now our Kindergarten teachers. One of my teachers actually stated that her biggest problem now is finding things to do on the weekends. She was accustomed to grading papers all weekend, and now she doesn't have to. Next year, we start implementing with 1st-grade and we hope to continue our success as we move up the grade levels.

Brought to you by the NCSM Coaching Committee (May 2017)

Special thanks to the Arkansas Association of Mathematics Leaders (AAML)

