

Spotlight Colorado:

How one charter school network is transforming secondary literacy intervention

Overview

At Rocky Mountain Prep, leaders recognized a critical gap in literacy instruction at the middle and high school levels. While younger students had access to strong foundational supports, older students—many of whom were English Learners, students with IEPs, or reading multiple grade levels behind—needed extra support.

“We knew it was a program that really supported younger students for foundational literacy, and we had that gap at the middle and high schools. We desperately needed something to fill those gaps,” said Julie Soskolne, managing director of academic operations and school support.

The search for a solution led Rocky Mountain Prep to 95 Percent Group.

Sam Weir, literacy interventionist for grades 7-12 and coordinator for the gifted and talented program, had already been teaching high school English with the Charter School Network for six years when she was asked to pilot a literacy intervention class.



SMART HIGH SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

Rocky Mountain Prep Charter School Network

- Located in Denver, Colorado
- 98% minority enrollment
- 93% Multilingual Learners (MLL—Spanish as primary language)
- Title I School—93% eligible for free or reduced lunch

At the time, Weir was teaching 10th grade English and was frustrated with the lack of meaningful growth. She spent hours creating materials, designing curriculum from scratch, and managing a wide range of learners. “I was really burned out from the effort I had to put into my daily teaching,” she admitted.

When new principal Chelsea Yondo completed her first year, she approached Weir with an idea: launch the school’s first literacy intervention class. “Something in my gut told me to trust her,” Weir recalled. With Yondo’s support and the guidance of a coach, she helped design the class.

That first year was difficult—“It was just me, constantly running around, exhausting myself trying to find the right resources,” she said—but the small signs of student success she began to see were really encouraging.

The following year, Rocky Mountain Prep invested in 95 Percent Group resources, and the results were immediate.

“

Now we have four teachers using it [95 Percent Group resources] across all different learning levels. My load is so much lighter, and I am so much more effective.”

SAM WEIR

Secondary literacy interventionist
Rocky Mountain Prep Charter School Network
Colorado

Building buy-in through training

When Rocky Mountain Prep adopted 95 Percent Group’s programs, every secondary teacher became a **Reading Academy teacher**, RMP’s school-wide initiative to ensure that there was an “all-hands-on-deck” approach to literacy intervention. Teachers were trained and supported in learning how to teach evidence-based, science of reading-informed instructional strategies.

“It created a great through-line for every conversation, no matter the content area,” Soskolne explained. “Even an 8th grade math teacher could identify the literacy needs of students. That connection was really powerful, and it helped with buy-in because everyone was on the same page.”

THE STRATEGY

Here’s how they grouped students in order to meet each where they were. Students reading well below grade level were placed into one of two targeted courses:

TARGET COURSE ONE

Intervention classes using 95 Phonics Core Program® 4 and 5 for students at a 4th–5th grade reading level

TARGET COURSE TWO

Intervention classes using 95 Phonics Lesson Library™ for high schoolers testing between grade levels K–2.9

Weir loves this system. “For many of my students, reading isn’t about a lack of skills—it’s about the missing pieces, almost like Swiss cheese. The Phonics Lesson Library helped us pinpoint those gaps and address them directly,” Weir explained. “Once those holes were filled, their growth was incredible: on average, about 2.4 years in a single semester, with some students soaring back to grade level once they had mastered the missing foundational skills.”

Additionally, because these programs in the One 95 Literacy Ecosystem all share common routines and a common language, the flexibility to move kids between programs makes it even easier to ensure their continued growth and support. Weir commented on the impact of this alignment. “We can just move students from one class into the next class and it’s seamless. There is no ‘adjustment’ period.”

Student spotlight

For Rocky Mountain Prep’s largely Latino, multilingual population (93% MLL, Title I), finding a program that addressed their specific needs had been difficult.

“95 Percent Group is based in the science of reading and learning—you can trust that it works,” Soskolne emphasized.

And the impact on students has been remarkable. Learners who once resisted reading have begun to reframe how they see themselves. Weir shared that many had truly believed that being a fluent reader just wasn’t in the cards for them and that continuing on to college would never be possible.

One student entered high school in 9th grade reading at a second-grade level. By junior year, he had nearly given up, telling Weir that school was too hard and that he would just work with his dad after graduation.

But after beginning work with the 95 Phonics Lesson Library, something clicked. Within weeks, he had mastered specific and critical skills that had held him back, and his reading level began to soar—eventually reaching a college-ready level.

“

It’s turnkey and it’s science-backed. I don’t have to spend time adapting lessons for our student population—I know it’s sequenced in the right order.”

SAM WEIR

Secondary literacy interventionist
Rocky Mountain Prep Charter School Network
Colorado

Weir recalls his renewed confidence in himself and what he was now capable of.

“He came to me—so proud— and said ‘School is actually easy now that I know how to read.’”

As he gained both skill and confidence, his trajectory changed. He was identified as gifted and talented—a student that had been underperforming on assessments for years due to gaps in his foundational reading skills. He asked for a college recommendation letter, and began applying to schools.

“It changed everything for him—his goals are different now, and he’s going to live the life he wants to live,” Weir said, joyfully.

It’s not just the students experiencing growth

Students weren’t the only ones seeing confidence and growth.

Having effective, turnkey resources also transformed teacher practice. Staff appreciated how detailed and supportive the lessons were, and quickly noticed growth among their students.

Weir spoke a lot about how having the Phonics Lesson Library and Phonics Core Program really changed the way she engaged with her work. “Without these tools, I don’t think I could keep teaching. They take away the mental and physical strain, so I can stay in the classroom, be effective, and achieve the best results of my career. It’s truly about working smarter, not harder,” Weir explained.

“Because I have these instructional tools, my teaching career can be longer. I can stay in the classroom without burning out—it actually feels like teacher care.”

SAM WEIR

Secondary literacy interventionist
Rocky Mountain Prep Charter School Network, Colorado

Results and looking ahead

For both students and teachers, the impact extends beyond test scores to the academic and personal. Students now take pride in tracking their own progress, teachers feel more intentional, balanced, and purposeful in their work, and a stronger culture of literacy has taken hold across the school—opening doors to equity and access to higher education.

“It feels revolutionary,” Weir said. “At our school we believe that literacy equals justice. Our kids will be able to read their ballots, and their leases. They’ll be able to make change in their communities because of this work.”

She continued. “Our school has really lofty goals, and this program gives me all the tools I need to succeed.”

“ I love that 95 Percent Group resources are grounded in the science of reading and how students acquire language—whether as a first or additional language. It’s just so nice to finally have something that works.”

SAM WEIR

Secondary literacy interventionist
Rocky Mountain Prep Charter School Network, Colorado

Ready to learn more? Contact a literacy specialist!

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