

Spotlight Iowa: A Tier 2 implementation journey

Overview

Fort Dodge Community School District was struggling with a high rate of chronic absenteeism, a 25% dropout rate, and a very clear literacy crisis with only 42% of students proficient in the 2023-2024 school year when Teri Boezinger joined the district as the new director of curriculum and instruction. Along with a new superintendent and a new executive director of educational services, the trio recognized this was a problem they needed to solve—they made it their focus to tackle the Tier 1 foundational skills problem and at the same time help their students who were struggling too long in interventions. Their hope was that as they focused on supporting students through literacy, the overall dropout percentage of students would decrease tremendously.



DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

Fort Dodge Community School

7 total schools

4 total elementary schools

230 - 260
students per grade level

SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC

- **53%** Economically disadvantaged (FRL)
- **5%** English language learner
- **14.2%** Special education
- **2%** Unhoused
- **17.2%** Hispanic
- **6.6%** Black
- **65.6%** White

They spent the first year getting to know their students and teachers, and doing knowledge building. During that time, they evaluated five possible curricula and selected two. Then in Fall 2024, they did a full K-5 implementation across all instructional tiers, with a small early Tier 3 adoption. And in the 2025-2026 school year, they are expanding Tier 2 and Tier 3 implementation of literacy programs to grades 6-12.

In this Spotlight, we focus on their Tier 2 implementation in particular. Teri Boezinger walks us through their implementation journey, and shares the story of their challenges and successes.



Teri Boezinger is one of the most passionate committed leaders I have had the pleasure of meeting in my career, full stop. I was deeply moved by her story in leading Fort Dodge's literacy journey and her commitment to the district's transformation."

LAURA STEWART

Chief Academic Officer
95 Percent Group



Alignment, alignment, alignment! That really was my big focus."

TERI BOEZINGER, EDS

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Focus on alignment

For Teri Boezinger and the literacy leadership team at Fort Dodge Community School District, alignment was a key driver in choosing new literacy curricula for Tier 1 and Tier 2. Boezinger had participated in LETRS instruction in a previous job. She recounts the one thing she learned there that really stayed with her. "We had disjointed literacy programming. Our skills instruction was outdated and not based on science." She could see the importance of aligning their system to make sure the scope and sequence of skill instruction and routines didn't hinder student learning.

In the fall of 2024, Fort Dodge Community School District implemented [95 Tier 1 Phonics Solution](#) with 95 Phonics Core Program® and Sortegories™, and 95 Tier 2 Phonics Solution with 95 Literacy Intervention System™ and 95 Phonics Lesson Library™ 2.0. They also implemented Phonemic Awareness Intervention Resource™ (PAIR™) and Multisyllable Routine Cards™ (MSRC), as additional, aligned resources for use in their Tier 2 invention.

When asked why they took on implementing 95 Percent Group's solutions for Tier 1 and Tier 2 from the start, Boezinger explained:

"I came here as a literacy consultant. I worked in several school districts across the state of Iowa, and it felt a bit like a game of whack-a-mole—we had a Tier 1 curriculum, a different Tier 2 curriculum, we were all talking about different sounds and systems and finger stretching and finger tapping, and Bossy E and Silent E, just all of the things."

"That is really where I was going with our alignment of Tier 1 and Tier 2—we need the children to focus on the skills and the instruction and not the routines associated with it. We all need to be speaking the same language. We need to be using the same instructional sequence. We need to be doing the same thing so that we can teach the skills, and the children can learn them."

Benefits of alignment for teachers

Alignment impacts teachers as well as students. Boezinger described how the teachers are enjoying how they can move seamlessly from teaching Tier 1 foundational skills to the 95 Phonics Lesson Library for intervention, using the same manipulatives and not changing their language or teaching styles.

She explained, "It just eases some of the strain for everyone, and the materials are at their fingertips all the time. We feel lucky that we are able to do that."



Getting started: Solving the literacy problem

Fort Dodge, Iowa is a rural district in central Iowa, with a population of about 25,000 people. Fort Dodge Community School District is one of the larger districts in the state. Over half the student population is economically disadvantaged. They have an oversized transient student population with students coming and going throughout the year. The English learner population doubled in two years. A large number of their students require intervention.

In addition, their teachers have a significant knowledge gap in literacy instruction, requiring lots of professional learning and coaching.

Boezinger explained how they got started with such a strong literacy focus in the district.

“Our superintendent, Josh Porter, was brand new. I was a brand new curriculum director, and we had a brand new executive director of educational services. We all were determined to solve the literacy problem.”

She continued.

“The literacy to prison pipeline is real, and is real here in Fort Dodge. I was a literacy consultant before I came here. Literacy is my jam. Our district goal is literacy, and it will be for the foreseeable future.”

But they had some important work to do first. Boezinger described how they decided to wait on literacy curriculum adoption for a year. Since her team of three were all new to the district, they wanted to make sure they really knew their students and teachers before selecting and adopting new curricula.

Boezinger explained how a phone call pushed them ahead toward adoption.

“I got a call one night on my way home from work from the superintendent, and he shared, ‘These scores really are making me nervous, so let’s just go with adoption.’”

And I said, “Okay.” That was in October of 2023.

The curriculum adoption process: Making tough choices

As Boezinger described, they went quickly through an adoption—they looked at five programs, and selected two programs: [95 Tier 1 Phonics Solution](#) for the word recognition strands of the Reading Rope, and a second curriculum, Wit and Wisdom, for the knowledge building strands of the Reading Rope. They adopted both of those curricula in the fall of 2024.

For Tier 2, they adopted [95 Tier 2 Phonics Solution](#) which includes 95 Literacy Intervention System and 95 Phonics Lesson Library 2.0. Additional aligned resources include: 95 Phonemic Awareness Intervention Resource™ (PAIR™) and Multisyllable Routine Cards™.

In addition, they started with an early adoption of 95 Tier 3 Literacy Solution, featuring 95 RAP™.



Why 2 different curricula?

Boezinger explains: “We looked at 5 different curricula. Four of them were complete systems with foundational skills and knowledge building. I was looking at both sides of Scarborough’s Reading Rope. I knew that I wanted 95 Percent Group for foundational skills. So I was looking for a curriculum to support the other half of the rope—I didn’t want to buy a complete system and then have to pull content out of it. So we adopted a new separate curriculum for just knowledge building.

“Reflecting today on what I’d do differently, I would have kept our old curriculum for knowledge building and focused on foundational skill instruction. Then the following year I would bring in a new knowledge building curriculum. It was a heavy lift adopting two new curricula at the same time. It was definitely a heavy lift for our teachers, and I want to give them a pat on the back, because they are lifting the load.”



Professional learning: The essential ingredient in success

Boezinger describes how professional learning has been and continues to be key to their success—for students, the teachers, and the literacy team: “Today we have really high-quality, instructional materials for literacy in the hands of our teachers. They’re amazing resources. But I don’t think they would be very effective if we didn’t have professional learning in our district. We have a lot of professional learning, and I can tell you in year two, we need more. I need it as much as our teachers need it. It’s just good practice when you bring in new resources to also continue professional learning and coaching.”

Last year Iowa received \$26 million for literacy improvement for the state and Fort Dodge Community School District applied for the competitive Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant. This particular grant requires grantees to work directly with the Department of Education and a grant support provider in allocating how the money is spent.

“We won the grant. 95 Percent Group became our grant support provider, so they are walking this journey with us. It’s a 5-year grant. Since we already have purchased the high quality materials, we will spend that portion of money on professional learning in the upcoming years.”

Boezinger continues:

“We have one 95 Percent Group coach now. She knows our system really, really well, and I think that’s very helpful. Having one coach to support our entire system helps us stay aligned. My teachers love professional learning. They absolutely love it. They love to sit and talk about what the correct language is, what the student data is, all the instructional moves. They really love 95 Percent Group’s programs. There’s an ease of use for them and that’s really important for us, because our knowledge building curriculum is not easy to use. So we’re balancing some of that right now.”

In retrospect, Boezinger shared how she would have made different choices. She wishes they could have just focused in on professional learning for 95 Percent Group’s solutions for a year, and picked up the knowledge building curriculum later. She explains, “Our professional learning really was a challenge—it was pushing us into different directions because we had to have a dual-focus. We’re still doing professional learning for 95, and we’re still doing professional learning for Wit and Wisdom, the knowledge building curriculum. And that is a challenge because we need a lot of it. It’s complicated, and that’s why I think I would have chosen to do it differently.”

Impact: How the Tier 2 Phonics Solution changed intervention

Boezinger explained how the 95 Tier 2 phonics solution, particularly 95 Literacy Intervention System™ and 95 Phonics Lesson Library™ 2.0, has changed the approach to intervention in the district.



It’s less taxing on my teachers actually. They enjoy teaching intervention, because they can jump right from core to Tier 2 and not have to learn a new system and not have to do separate data assessment pieces—it’s an easy transition for a classroom teacher to make to jump from core instruction to tiered lessons.”

TERI BOEZINGER, EDS, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

“They like not having to search for materials. What they need is in their hands. That’s very, very important, I think. I think that’s probably the biggest piece—they have what they need. We’ve purchased everything. They have books, and they have materials—they’re not looking for anything. Everything is at their fingertips.”

What the student data shows

Because the 95 Literacy Intervention System gives Boezinger and her colleagues a district-wide view, she shares that they’ve made a decision at the district level to put a lot of professional learning power into the first grade team this year.

Boezinger explains,

“We can see that our first graders are very, very low. So, we are putting all of our energy into that group of kiddos so that we can get them up to grade level and hopefully have them ready to be readers by the time they hit third grade. That probably is the biggest example we have so far.”

It’s still early on the data. They are seeing growth, but because they have a population of students so far below proficiency, Boezinger says it’s going to take them some time to pull out of that space.

She reports that they are seeing some very promising early results:

“One of the biggest payoffs we are seeing is with our students who have divergent behavior.

As they make gains in literacy—their behavior is improving—significantly!”

“

I’m looking forward to seeing spring data.

The kids are doing the things, and I’m excited about that and they’re excited about it. They’re talking about it. They know the routines—it’s 95 time, yay! I love to hear about that.”

TERI BOEZINGER, EDS

Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Advice on the adoption process for your district

When we asked Boezinger about her advice for other districts considering starting an adoption discovery and implementation journey, she urged people to spend more time in their districts initially.

To summarize, she recommends:



Visit with your populations and observe what they have in place.



Look at data and see where data is trending.



Put choices together based on what you learn.



In assembling a curriculum adoption team, ideally, choose people who already have the knowledge or **do a lot of knowledge building together.**



Don't split your focus (and your professional learning requirement). **Consider carefully what you need most in year one** and push additional curricula adoption and the required professional learning out for the following year.

“Adoption is hard and difficult, but it’s also really fun. It’s really fun to get into teachers’ classrooms, learn alongside them, and truly understand their needs. And so, I feel lucky that we have gotten to do this work together.”

TERI BOEZINGER, EDS, Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Expanding the literacy initiative in 2025-2026

This year Fort Dodge Community School District has adopted new curriculum in 6th through 12th grade—95 Vocabulary Surge™: Unleashing the Power of Word Parts and 95 Multisyllable Routine Cards™ Package, and 95 Phonics Lesson Library 2.0—with class-wide, Tier 2 intervention implementation. For Tier 3, they are bringing on 95 RAP in both the middle school and the high school.

As Boezinger understates, “We’ve been busy.”

Want to learn about Fort Dodge School District’s journey first hand?

Watch Teri Boezinger’s walkthrough of the 95 LIS implementation for the district to see what the administrators and teachers see in the system in our on-demand webinar along with Laura Stewart, Joni Maville, and Shanitra Deas.

[WATCH HERE](#)



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