



SCHOOL

New Stanley Elementary School

DISTRICT

Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools

SCHOOL TYPE

Public

ENROLLMENT

380

SUMMARY

When Principal Ryan Most came to New Stanley Elementary School in 2012, the school ranked in the bottom 5% of the state. Classroom libraries were outdated, and teachers received little if any professional development. That same year, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (KCK) received \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Education's School Improvement Grant. Some of these funds came to New Stanley. The elementary school used these funds to update its classroom libraries, and has since seen measurable improvements:

- » 20 percent growth in grade level proficiency
- » 98 to 100 percent participation in every assessment window
- » 215% increase in student participation in our read at home program during the 2015-16 school year
- » 5% increase in students scoring at the 75 percentile or higher (college and career ready) during the 2014-15 school year

Booksource Classroom Libraries Boost Reading Achievement in Kansas City Elementary School

CHALLENGES

LACK OF MATERIALS

One of the biggest challenges New Stanley faced was a lack of quality trade books in the classroom. The school had remnants from past basal programs that targeted below-grade-level readers. These materials worked for some kids, but not all. The assumption with these programs seemed to be that students couldn't perform at grade level, let alone, beyond. Classrooms also had ten-year-old prebound books with faded, often unreadable covers that made it difficult for students to pick out books, much less to get excited about reading.

IMPLEMENTING NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

In 2012, Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools hired an outside agency to do a full audit of literacy instruction in the district. The agency came up with multiple recommendations which led to a district-wide initiative. Dubbed "The Big Three Plus," this initiative focused on knowing students as readers, doing interactive read alouds and implementing

monitored independent reading. KCK built upon this initiative in the following years, adding small group instruction and writer's workshop in subsequent years. The common link between all of these methodologies was the use of engaging texts. New Stanley not only needed more quality books for their students but also needed professional development to address The Big Three Plus initiatives as well as better practices around balanced literacy in general.

EVALUATING VENDORS

In the past, Most never had funds to purchase books, so buying was a new experience for him. He reached out to colleagues for recommendations on vendors, but few had experience with purchasing books either. He then contacted area school librarians and learned KCK had contracts with certain vendors. He started with these vendors and continued to research other vendors that could best meet the needs of New Stanley. In his first year, Most ordered from pretty much every vendor he could find. As time went by, he learned which vendors were the most supportive and responsive to his needs.

A FOCUS ON BALANCED LITERACY

Ryan Most had learned early in his career that there is a direct correlation between student achievement and the use of trade books in the classroom. Prior to his time at KCK, Most was in Effingham, KS, where he taught eighth and ninth grade. Most had students reading texts ranging from Dr. Seuss to Fahrenheit 451. As Most researched how to teach kids on such a large spectrum, the idea of using trade books came up repeatedly.

Principal Most started implementing small group reading and independent reading—structures that required trade books at a wide range of levels. His research also pointed him to guided reading, modeling and shared reading. He had witnessed firsthand that if texts were too difficult, his students would shut down. He began to see success as students engaged with self-selected texts at the right reading level. Because of this, Most spent a lot of time coaching kids on how to identify a text that was right for them. From there, he worked on getting them to engage at higher levels. Most's experiences with authentic literature and the balanced literacy model in Effingham classrooms later helped to shape his efforts at New Stanley.

THE BOOKSOURCE SOLUTION

SAVING TEACHERS TIME

Principal Most and his teachers did not always have the time to flip through catalogs and evaluate products for their classroom libraries. Booksource stood out to them in this regard because they offered free custom booklists. They could curate custom booklists by guided reading level, genre, content area, topic and more—whatever each classroom needed. Plus, their title experts really knew children’s books—they recommended books students actually wanted to read. Booksource listened to the requests of Most’s teachers and then did most of the legwork, recommending texts that met the needs of New Stanley students.



PROVIDING A WIDE SELECTION OF QUALITY BOOKS

Quality and selection became more important as the use of classroom libraries increased. Booksource books were sturdy, quality trade editions from reputable publishers, unlike cheaper book fair editions. As for selection, Most knew that he needed a wide variety of titles. After all, every kid is unique and has unique interests. Booksource offered over 30,000 titles and more than 5,000 collections to meet the needs of the students at New Stanley. As Most says, “there has got to be that variety – different genres, different topics. So, it really comes back to variety first. We can get any collection in the world, but if there’s not a variety of books, some kids will be left out, and my goal is that we don’t leave anybody out.”

“We can get any collection in the world, but if there’s not a variety of books, some kids will be left out, and my goal is that we don’t leave anybody out.”

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Most’s experience with Booksource taught him that they are more than a vendor, but they actually act as a literacy partner. New Stanley had purchased books for independent reading, reading and writing workshop units and content area instruction. With so many new books in the classrooms, teachers actually felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of using them. Booksource stepped in and provided a hands-on workshop that offered insights on structure, assessment and authentic writing-based projects, as well as best practices for a complete balanced literacy model. Additionally, a follow-up session was provided on using trade books in math, social studies and science.

THE OUTCOME

Since Most started at New Stanley, four years ago, students are much more engaged in reading and tests scores have improved. Trade books (along with great teachers of course) are making a positive impact. Over the last two years, New Stanley has shown an average 20 percent growth in grade level proficiency.

“Through F&P and Map Assessments, we see that those students who are choosing those new books and choosing the books that really, truly interest them, their scores go up much more quickly.”

Teachers are noticing much more enthusiasm for reading, as well. Students get excited about choosing their next read. They seem more invested in their learning because they have choices and want to succeed through what they chose. Teacher, Brandy Treaster, notes, “Through F&P and Map Assessments, we see that those students who are choosing those new books and choosing the books that really, truly interest them, their scores go up much more quickly.” Students even want to bring books home.

One of the sticking points for New Stanley teachers had been incorporating books across the curriculum. Armed with the right materials as well as some timely professional development, trade books are making an impact in the content areas, too. Long-time Stanley teacher, Theresa Barry, explains, “I think balanced literacy is really starting to take hold here because, now, there are more books to choose from. It’s easier to pull in books for the content areas.”

Always looking to improve, Most states, “We are still not where we want to be, still not where we need to be, and we’re nowhere near where our students deserve us to be, but we’ve made a substantial enough gain to know that we are headed in the right direction.” He then summarizes the importance of placing an emphasis on classroom libraries and a balanced literacy model; “Personally, I think it centers on the texts that we’ve had for the kids to access. First and foremost, you can’t stand up there and teach if you don’t have books in kids’ hands that they actually want to read.”