

**Arapahoe Ridge Elementary School  
ADAMS 12 FIVE STAR SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Reading/Writing Connections and Reading**

**Introduction**

Arapahoe Ridge Elementary School is part of Adams 12 Five Star School District, a large, diverse, and expanding district. Under the leadership of Marilyn Jerde, the school began their work with Regie Routman in 2002 with the goal of creating a culture of professional learning and high quality instruction for every student. Marilyn served as the principal through 2006, when she moved to her current role as Executive Director of Elementary Schools. Trena Speirs became the principal and continues to work with Regie and support and sustain the quality instructional changes that continue to occur at Arapahoe Ridge Elementary.

**Student Performance Data**

Even through staff and administrative changes that included a new principal and turnover of 24 teachers, Arapahoe maintains strong scores and continued growth in CSAP reading data. The following chart captures reading scores prior to Regie Routman’s residencies through 2007.

Grade	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
3	71.0%	74.0%	70%	81%	73.68%	82.10%	82.85%
Grade	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
4	65.0%	62.0%	70.5%	67.3%	74.71%	75.00%	80.00%
Grade	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
5	67.0%	69.0%	54.8%	72.7%	76.46%	77.08%	70.21%

**Lessons Learned**

- Examining beliefs and establishing a set of common beliefs about how kids learn to read is key in opening the lines of communication, developing and adopting a set of consistent practices across grade levels,
- Whole-school, on-site professional development provides a staff with opportunities to build a common knowledge base—specific to the needs of the participants.
- Above all, make time for weekly professional conversations.
- Establish a strong leadership team. Encourage teachers to take on the role of teacher-leaders by setting up professional conversations among themselves, providing articles and questions for discussion, peer observation, etc.
- An effective principal is very involved in all aspects of the onsite-professional development program—from being a member of the leadership team to facilitating professional development sessions to team-teaching and classroom observations.
- Reflection is vital for meaningful and lasting change.
- Establish a focus on independent reading, classroom libraries, and reading for pleasure.
- Ensure that students are reading independently everyday.

**Testimonials**

**Marilyn Jerde, Former Principal:** With an unrelenting focus on high expectations and effective teaching, Arapahoe Ridge was transformed from a good school to a great school. I noticed that when we focused on learning, the teaching got better in every classroom. We also learned the importance of modeling for our students and how much support is needed before students can truly be independent.

**Trena Speirs, Principal:** Literacy was already strong and vibrant when I became the principal of ARE, and has continued to be the hub of our teaching and learning. Strong classroom libraries and knowledgeable teachers provide access to literature for all students, and daily independent reading is monitored by informal reading conferences. Guided reading is used as a catalyst to move readers forward depending upon their strengths, while literature discussions and read alouds provide opportunities for modeling comprehension strategies.

**Robin Woods, Teacher:** I learned that the goal of reading instruction goes beyond teaching children how to read...it is about getting kids to love to read and want to read on their own for the fun of it. During Independent Reading, I now spend my time talking with my students about their reading interests, and I steer them in the direction of great books.

**Terri Thompson- Grade 1 Teacher:** Regie demonstrates an instructional approach to teaching and learning that, in action, shows teachers, students, and parents that anything is possible with hard work and intensity. We learned how to scaffold the learner, whether a kindergartener, fifth grader, beginning teacher or experienced teacher, to discover the simplistic truth, that engaging in reading and writing experiences that happen in real life are those that lead to success. All our students have been positively impacted by the ongoing professional commitment to improving reading and writing. instruction.