

Research supports Idaho district's purchase of reading curriculum for Tier 3 students

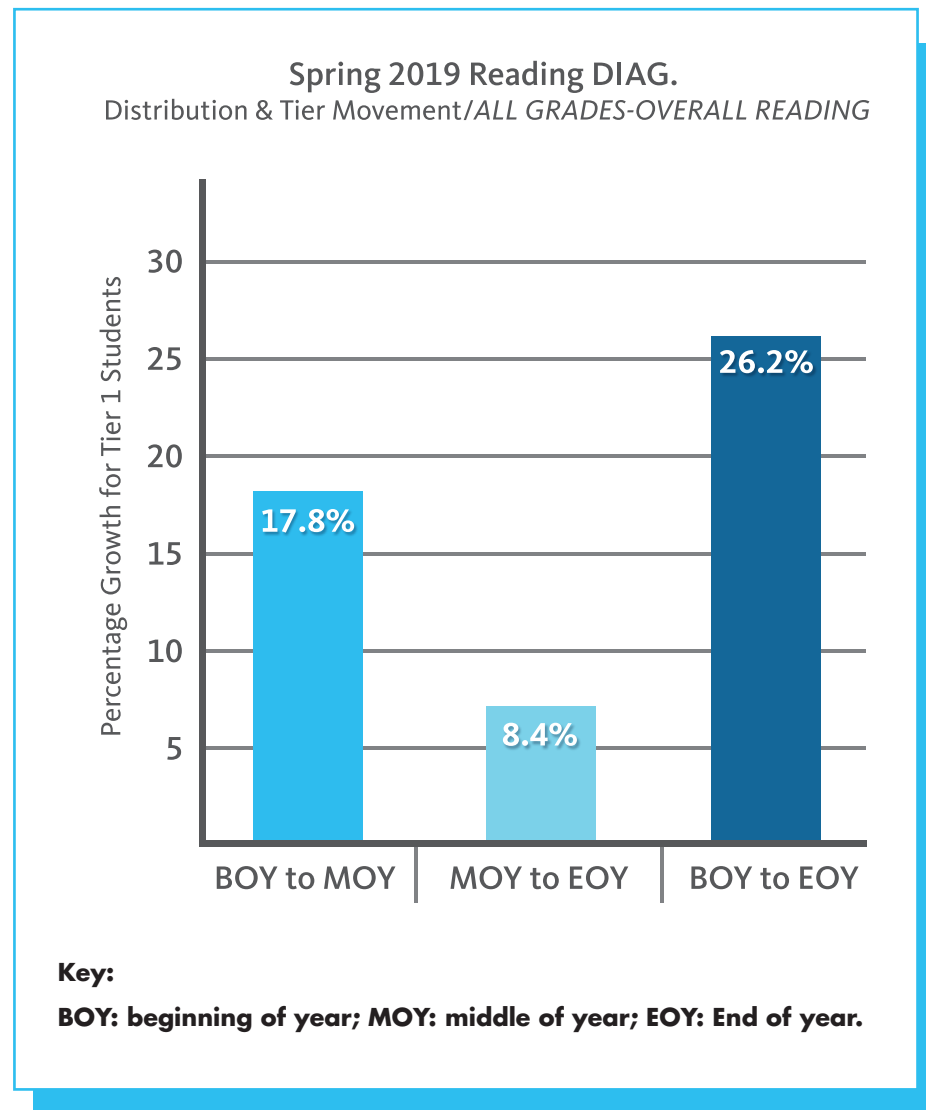
Providing access to Istation boosted students' academic growth at Coeur d'Alene Public Schools

When Mike Nelson was named director of assessment and system performance for Coeur d'Alene Public Schools in the summer of 2019, he was ready to answer one important question: "Is what we're doing making a difference?"

System performance, he explains, is the lens used by the north Idaho district to ensure money is well spent. It's also used to gather data to assist in future decision-making. An educator for 20 years, Nelson was particularly interested in whether the district's recent purchase of Istation curriculum licenses—which were provided to all students identified into Tier 3 after taking September reading assessments—was a good use of taxpayer dollars.

Outperforming their peers
"We purchased the licenses because we wanted to have a supplement to instruction that tied the assessment and curriculum together, and provided opportunities for students to have deeper practice and differentiation," Nelson says. "The key takeaway from our research is that students provided with an Istation curriculum license outperformed their peers without an Istation curriculum license."

Using diagnostic growth numbers for the 2018-19 school year, the study found:



• K-5 students with the curriculum license showed 25% more growth than those students without a curriculum license.

• K-3 students who used Istation instructional licenses gained 30.1 points, compared with 23.29 points for students without Istation licenses.



'Right level of support'

The study also showed significant tier movement for students using Istation's curriculum. Findings include:

- The number of Tier 1 students in all K-5 grade levels went from 61% to 77% over the course of the school year.
- The number of Tier 2 students decreased from 22% to 13%.
- The number of Tier 3 students was halved, going from 18% to 9%.

"We've been very pleased overall with what we've seen," Nelson says. "The biggest thing for our district is that these data points show Istation is providing the right level of support for students, and it does demonstrate that schools using it as a key intervention are seeing particular success."

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Istation

Unprecedented number of teachers embrace assessments

Coeur d'Alene Public Schools first used Istation reading assessments in 2017-18, when three of its elementary schools were selected for a statewide pilot. Today, Istation's Indicator of Progress (ISIP™) is used as the Idaho Reading Indicator for all K-3 students in the state.

"The pilot showed us that the way we measure reading now is through instant feedback, and it's not just a number," says Mike Nelson, director of assessment and system performance for the north Idaho district. "We are not only able to plot growth, we are also able to look at the pinpointed needs of every student."

Detailed reports

Powered by the Science of Reading, Istation's assessments and instruction cover the National Reading Council's "Big Five" foundational essentials. Schools get the support they need to improve comprehension and growth with activities and lessons that provide actionable and insightful data that measures phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary, as well as other skills.

The interactive assessments adapt as students master skills or demonstrate the need for further practice. Detailed reports provide teachers with actionable data they can use to differentiate instruction or provide additional practice.

"As teachers were preparing for conferences recently, they were pulling student summary reports as well as reports on tier growth to share with parents," Nelson says. "It's somewhat ingrained in the intervention practices now."



Unprecedented acceptance

Nelson credits Istation's ease of use, reliable information and teacher support for his district's unprecedented acceptance of it.

"It's difficult for teachers to accept first-order change—especially to go from a one-minute timed, face-to-face assessment to one that is computer-based," Nelson says. "Our staff

members now rely on Istation practices, reporting features and clear indications of growth."

By law, students must take the assessments two times per year. By choice, about 95% of Coeur d'Alene teachers assess students monthly.

Clarity of information

"That's a feather in Istation's cap," Nelson says of teachers using the assessments more than required. "I've worked in the district for 20 years and have rarely seen this kind of buy-in. Based on the amount of data we get back, the clarity it provides, the consistency in how it's being measured, and the cleanliness of reports, it seems Istation has been very good for our district."