

A graphic of a spotlight shining from the top left towards the center of the page.

Alaska School SPOTLIGHT

Matanuska Susitna Borough School District

February 2023

According to Louisa Moats and Carol Tolman (2019), authors of LETRS: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling, student success depends on informed teachers who use comprehensive, proven, and effective programs and practices implemented with sufficient skill, intensity, and duration (p. 5). This article shares the progress students in our school, Larson Elementary, are having using the program by the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI), Phonics for Reading by Anita Archer, and Rewards, also by Anita Archer. We began two of these programs in September (both UFLI and Rewards) and later, in October, added Phonics for Reading. The programs are taught by two interventionists, Kaylee King and Kristine Toms, who are currently preparing towards teaching careers. My job is to pair the intervention groups with students who need additional supports. We provide interventions for all grades in 30 or 40-minute increments.

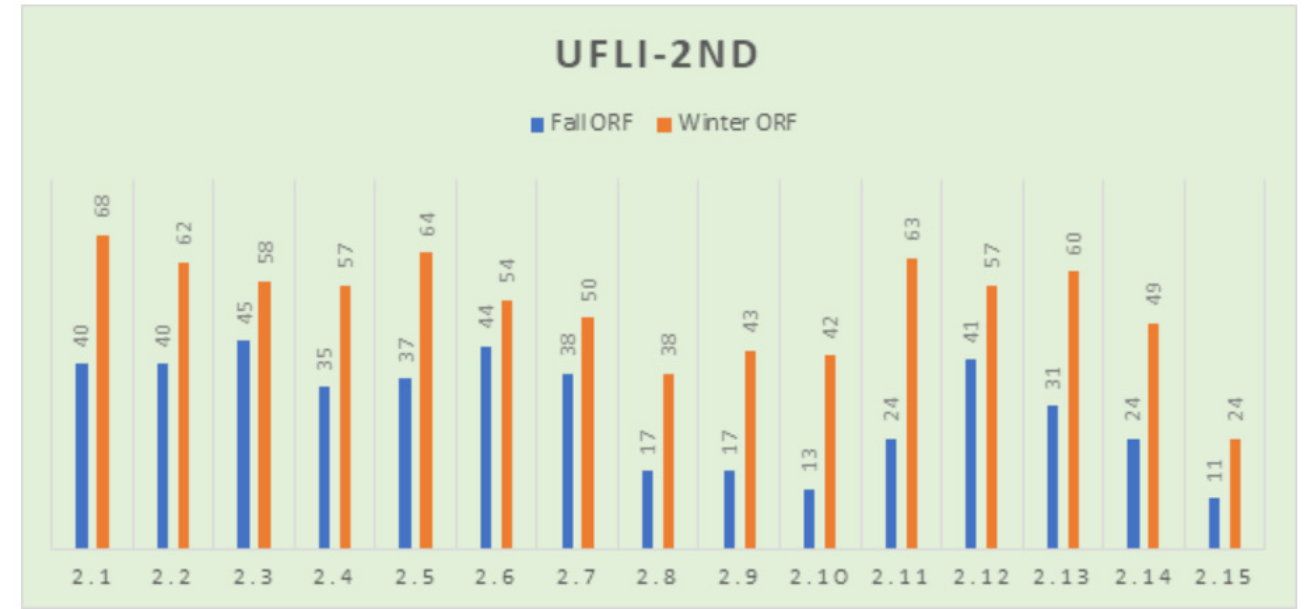
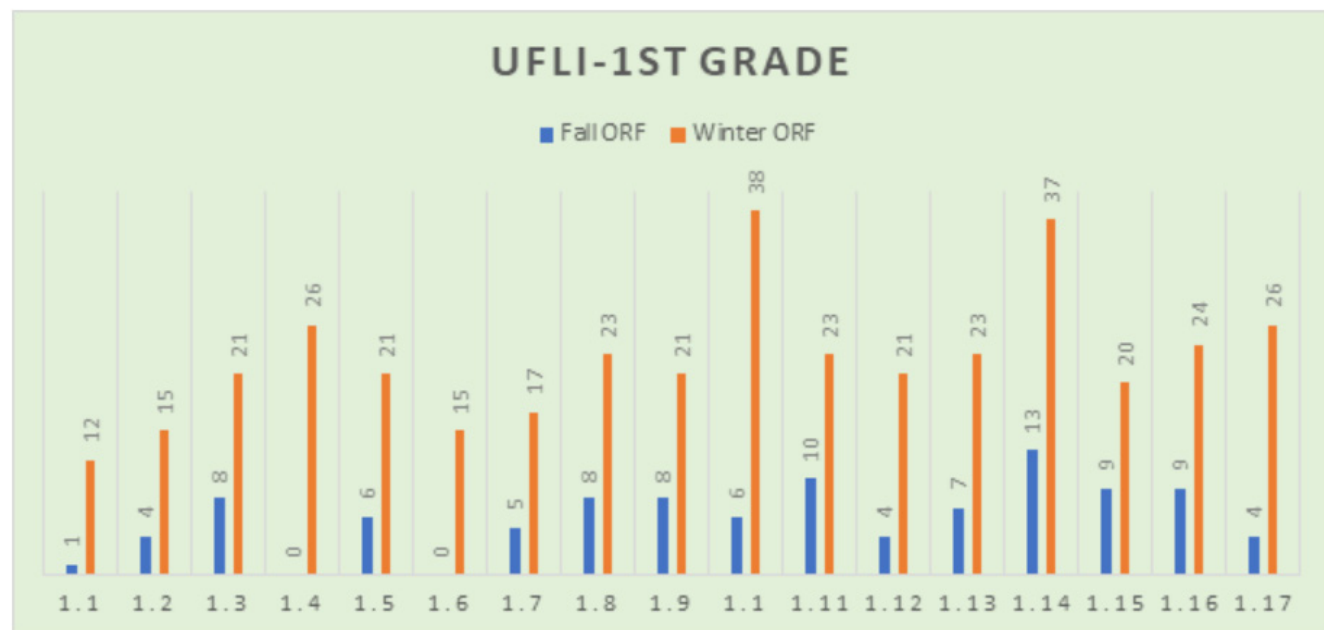
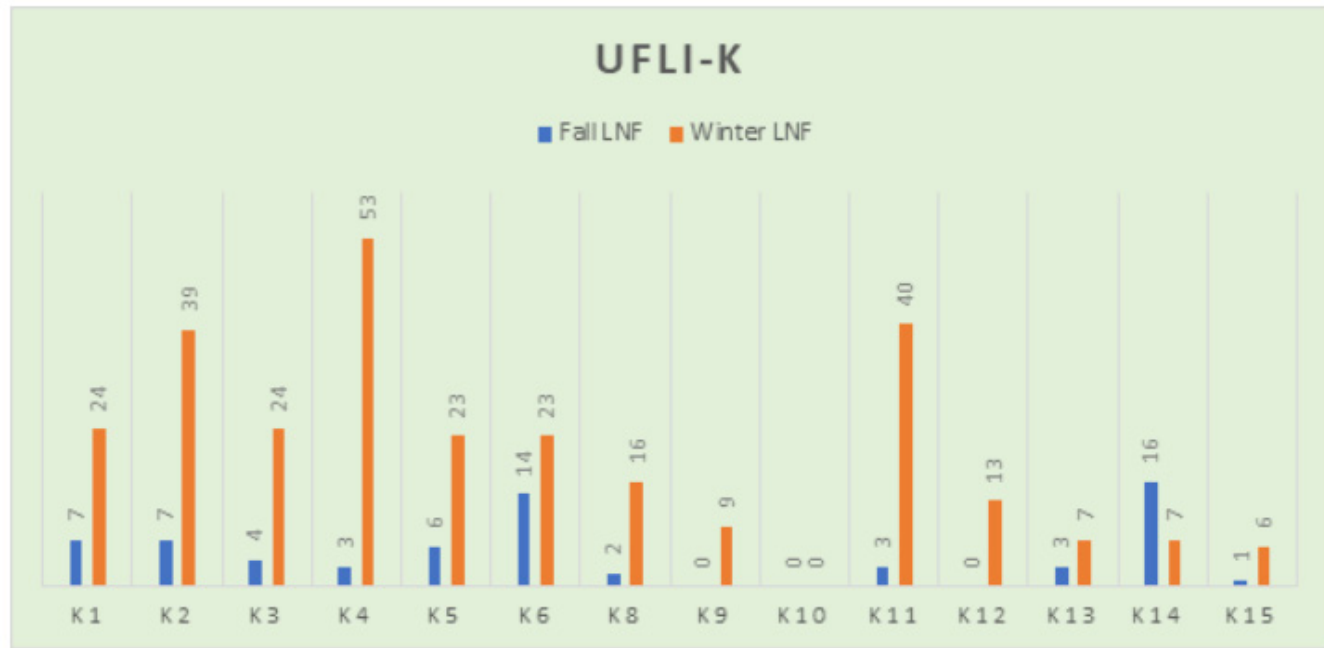
The Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (MSBSD) has been instrumental in supporting interventions through providing Instructional Coaches (my role), professional development, and intervention materials. Every elementary school in our district has a dedicated person who serves as an Instructional Coach. Though each coach has many areas to address, one analyzes data and making instructional decisions to support student success.

Last year coaches and some selected teachers were offered LETRS training. We are currently in our second year of the program. The LETRS training has been the best professional development our team has received. Coaches were also invited to the Alaska Reading Symposium, presented by the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED). The conference presented valuable information about the reading process. It, too, was paramount to our goal of empowering students with the skills necessary for reading success. Both opportunities enabled us to evaluate our previous intervention programs and improve our reading opportunities for our students. We decided to make a change and use something more explicit and aligned with the Science of Reading (SOR).

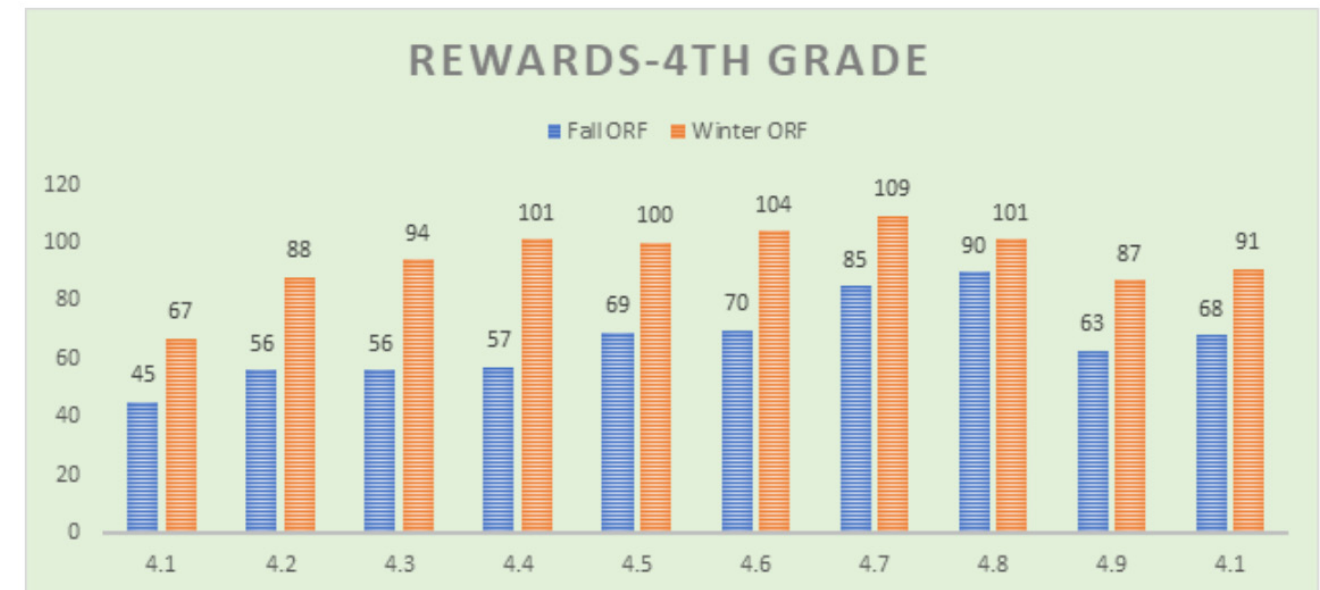


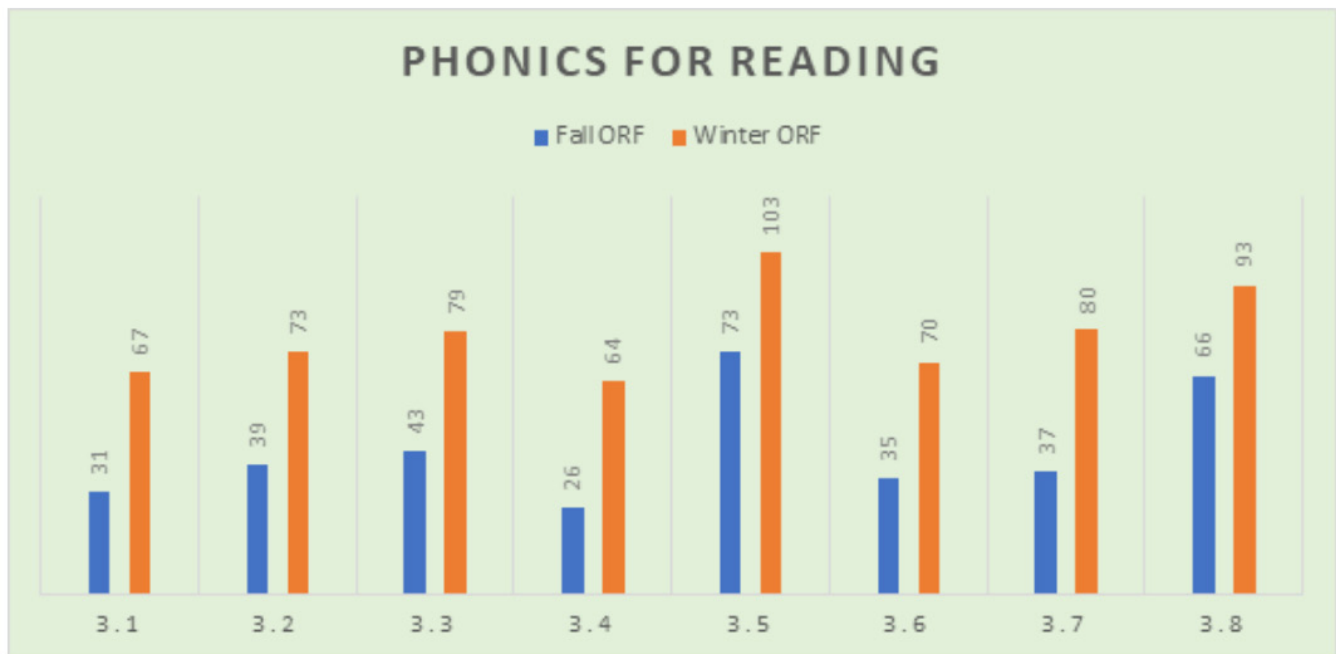
Our Mission: An excellent education for every student every day.

Dr. Kristi Graber, DEED ELA Content Specialist, provided professional development webinars on using UFLI through Canvas. The recorded webinars allow teachers and staff to receive instruction in implementing UFLI and Phonics for Reading. UFLI is an engaging, explicit phonetic approach which mirrors SOR. Larson kindergarten intervention students receive 30 minutes of instruction four days per week, first and second grade intervention students receive 40 minutes of instruction four days per week. We progress monitor one day each week. The tables show students' fall and winter scores for the current year of 2022-2023.



The Rewards program, written by Anita Archer, is a district-approved intervention in our MSBSD's Academic Framework for Tiered Plan of Services and part of our Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS), but our school had never used it. The fourth-grade students in our group, had worked through Lexia (a computer-based intervention) during their 3rd-grade year and had made progress towards decoding but needed more experience with multi-syllabic word reading. Their success with Rewards has been very encouraging.





After seeing the success with UFLI and Rewards, we began Phonics for Reading with the 3rd-grade students. Tracy Parker, DEED's Reading Specialist, provided professional development for this program through Canvas. Since we began in October, students have been more engaged and responding very well to their progress monitoring. We are anxiously awaiting their spring scores.

Each of these students has classroom teachers who provide daily instruction in addition to the interventions they are receiving. Some students, as you can see, have not responded as well to the interventions, but there is a story with every student and score. Their teachers meet regularly to review their scores, see their attendance, and change to their programs as needed. Our goal is to provide every opportunity for each student to be a successful learner.

Resources:

Archer, A. L., Gleason, M. M., & Vachon, V. (2000). Rewards. Sopris West.

Archer, A., Flood, J., Lapp, D., & Lungren, L. (2011). Phonics for Reading Series. Curriculum Associates.

Lane, H., & Contesse, V. (2022). Ufli foundations: An explicit and Systematic Phonics program. Ventris Learning.

Moats, L. C., & Tolman, C. A. (2019). Lets: Language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling. Sopris West Educational Services.