

Calico Rock Ranked #2 in Reading Readiness

According to Arkansaslearns.org, the Calico Rock School district is ranked #2 in Arkansas. The ranking is based on growth in the area of reading readiness. This means that a Springdale School is the only school in Arkansas that had more growth in reading readiness for the last four years than Calico Rock. Currently, 95% of Calico Rock kindergarten and first grade students are at or above reading level by the end of the year.

Calico Rock elementary has embraced the Science of Reading and their hard work is paying off. Three years ago Ms. Kim Thomas was given the task of aligning the elementary curriculum so there would be fluidity between grades and classrooms. We wanted to create an environment where students moved seamlessly through the school system with no gaps or holes in their education. This new environment also allowed teachers to work collaboratively sharing information about pedagogy and subject matter.

Next, she began having teachers trained to teach reading, using the Apple Connections program. Then, a literacy curriculum called Wonders was chosen. The K-2 teachers have also completed training in the RISE Initiative, a phonemic awareness program and the K-6 teachers are trained in a literacy program that provides direct, explicit instruction in the five components of reading with a strong phonics base. Calico Rock's teachers are using their knowledge and the assessments from RISE along with the literacy program to provide direct targeted instruction for their students, but Calico Rock teachers are continuing to move forward.

Ms. Kish Pool traveled to Chicago to be trained in the Barton Reading and Spelling program. She now trains and supports our teachers and staff in the Barton System and serves as Calico Rock's Dyslexia Specialist. She looks at the initial screening data of our students for characteristics of Dyslexia and intervenes early to help students at risk for reading failure.

Calico Rock is starting to see the fruits of their labor. Currently 95% of K-1 students are on grade level in reading. Being on grade level will boost their ability to be successful when they enter third grade. At which time students should be reading to learn, not learning to read. When students are on grade level in reading, teachers are able to spend more time teaching the standards set by the Arkansas Department of Education instead of catching students up on reading.

The 3rd-6th grade teachers are also supporting the students with two programs for literacy and math. These programs are Ready for literacy and I-Ready for math, help students work on specific weaknesses that may be detected and provides challenging activities for those on grade level or above.

I'm so proud of the Calico Rock school family. This is what happens when you have a plan, personnel who cooperate and collaborate using a common methodology and chooses a curriculum that works. They continue striving to improve their craft and to reach every student

where they are because every student can learn. . . Our goal is for Calico Rock students to be the best educated students in the state, leave high school reading on grade level, knowing what they want to do and with a plan for doing it, and the courage and confidence to accomplish their dreams.

Jerry Skidmore, Superintendent