

Achievement Soars Across the Board When CORE Coaching Is Paired With SIPPS Curriculum Implementation



There's a quote coined by Grady Booch that often crosses Chase Tafoya's mind: "A fool with a tool is still a fool." But this principal at Woodbine Elementary School in Sacramento, CA, is no fool.

When Woodbine received a School Improvement Grant (allocated for the bottom 5% of Title I schools in California) in 2016-17, site leaders decided to use the "turnaround grant" funds to improve reading scores through the implementation of the SIPPS (Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words) program in 2017-18.

"Just in year one, we started addressing reading foundational skills because of how poor our performance was when we qualified for the grant," says Tafoya. "The year before we started, 12% of kids were proficient and the distance from standard was 94. Almost all of our kids were Level 1. So we knew we needed to address reading foundational skills, and the one program that we implemented instructionally that entire year was SIPPS."

Always with Booch's quote in the back of his mind, Tafoya knew that implementing the program was not going to be enough to raise students' reading achievement. Teachers needed to know how to use the program first.

"When I did my research with the SIPPS materials, and what I learned from other schools in Sacramento that had implemented SIPPS, is that it's really vital to get the coaching to go with it," Tafoya explains.

What You'll Find at Woodbine | 2018-19

- 320 Students
- 97% Free & reduced lunch
- 96% Socioeconomically disadvantaged
- 28% English learners
- 12-15 Languages spoken
- 21% Students with disabilities

Woodbine Finds a Partner for Successful SIPPS Implementation

For that coaching, Tafoya and his team turned to CORE and CORE Educational Consultant Ann Leon.

“Ann has been our coach since we started, and her training is just second to none,” he says. “It’s one thing to be a practitioner of SIPPS and be proficient in teaching it. It’s another to truly know the standards and understand how reading development takes place.”

Woodbine’s coaching with CORE started in 2017-18 with a review of the reading foundational skills standards and unpacking those standards, and then organizing professional learning around them. According to Tafoya, understanding what SIPPS was teaching in alignment with the standards for reading foundational skills was an important first step.

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From there, Leon worked with Woodbine K-6 and special education teachers to help them understand the logistics of the program and how SIPPS levels correspond to grade levels and student skill level. Her training also focused on helping teachers master the routines and materials so that they could deliver instruction confidently and effectively and be more responsive to students’ individual needs. Leon engaged Woodbine teachers in lesson studies, modeling instruction before having teachers practice SIPPS routines following her examples. This coaching was provided during on-site summer in-service days as well as in periodic one-on-one debriefs with teachers throughout the year. Even the school’s Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE) support and training specialist aligned her work in English language arts and English language development with the instruction and coaching Leon provided.

Prior to the pandemic, as teachers became more proficient with SIPPS, CORE’s coaching model in Woodbine flipped. Leon visited classrooms to watch teachers deliver lessons first, and then followed up with feedback to help them keep growing and enhancing their instruction. This year, Ann is doing this work remotely.

“Every year I show teachers a slide that says ‘Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime,’” Tafoya quotes. “We’ve been trying not to take the free dinners and really focus now on building our capacity.”

Woodbine Achieves Significant Results with CORE Coaching

As a result of this coaching, Tafoya says he’s observed that teachers are more confident in SIPPS instruction, are able to make more data-driven instructional decisions, and are successfully teaching to standards that are critical to unlocking students’ future success, essentially giving kids a stronger reading foundation for learning higher grade-level skills across the curriculum.

“Our formative data shows that our kids are really making gains in reading, whether it be in foundational skills like decoding, or reading fluency, or in comprehension,” Tafoya notes. “When we look at the kids who have been at Woodbine for two or more years and are going into their third or fourth years, they are making huge gains because of their instruction with SIPPS. Those kids are much closer to grade-level standards, or are at or above grade-level standards, which is fantastic.”

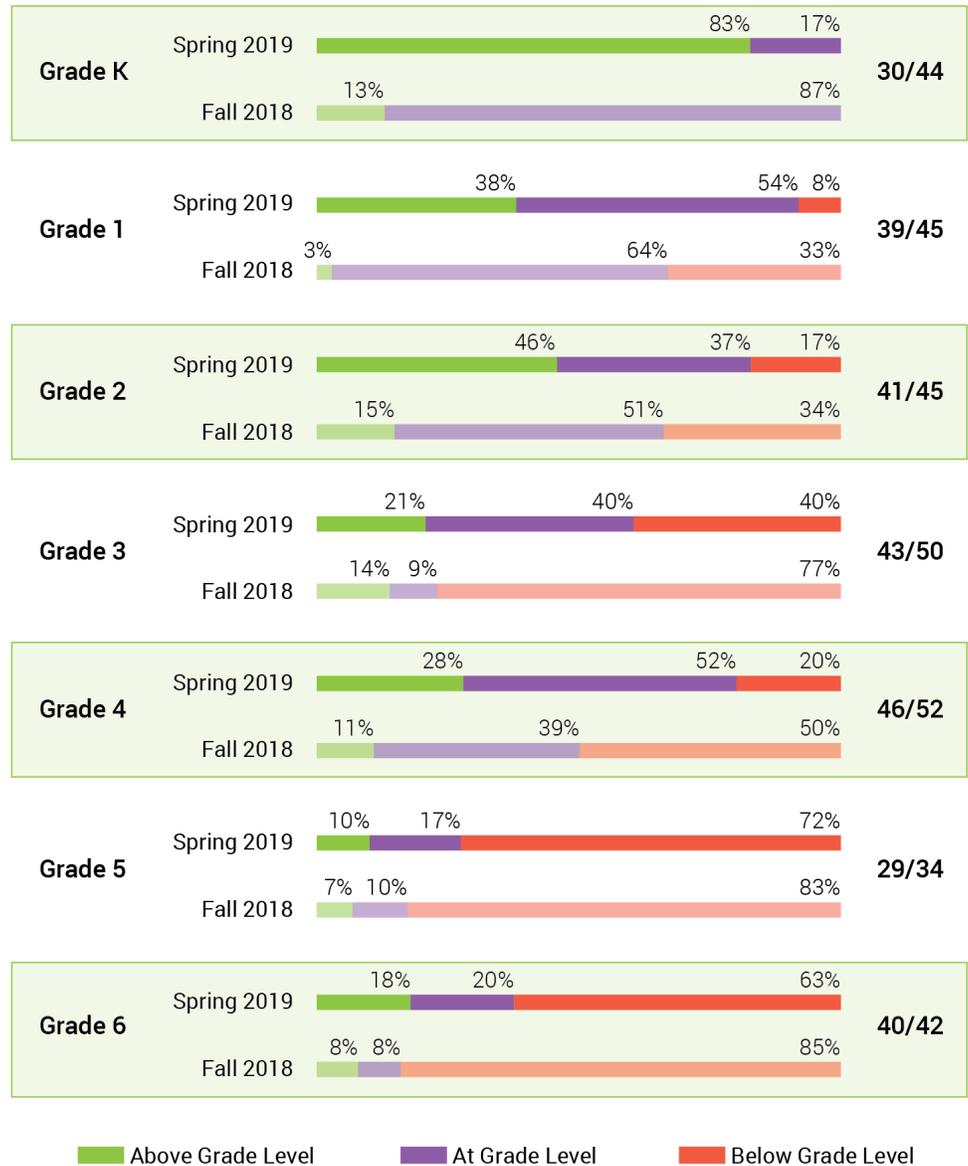
The impact of CORE’s work in helping Woodbine successfully implement SIPPS is evident in the school’s iReady reading assessment data, which shows that fewer students started school year 2018-19 at Tier III compared to the previous year.

iReady Reading – 2 Year Data
Tier III
(below two grade levels or more)

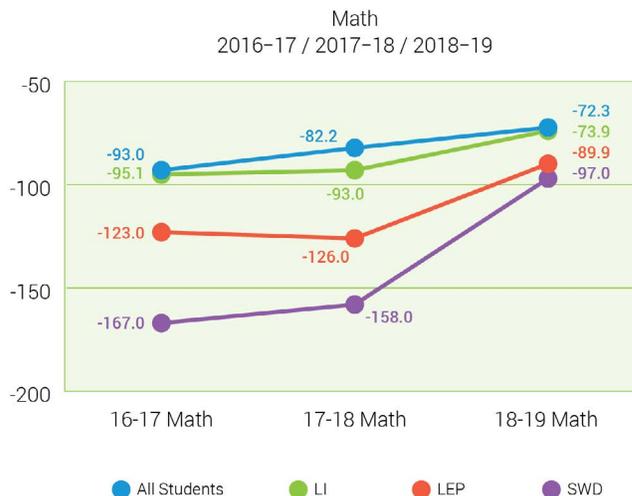
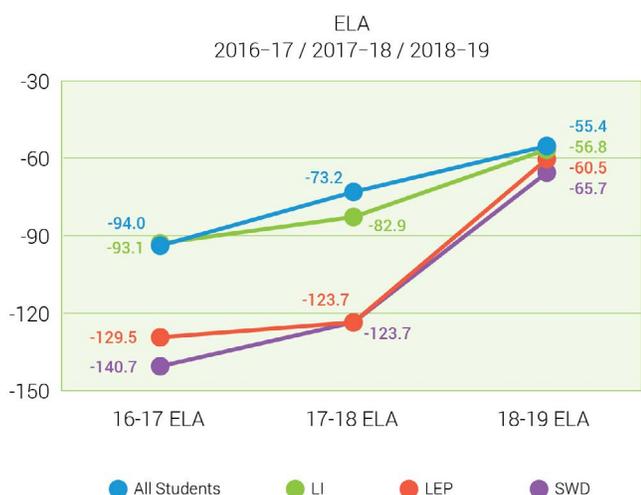


More iReady Reading data reveals that Woodbine educators have successfully reduced the number of kids who end the year behind grade level in reading, too.

iReady ELA 2018–2019 by Grade Level
Fall – Spring



And, even more exciting, after just two years of CORE coaching with SIPPS, the school has significantly reduced the distance from standard for all students (-94 to -55), while at the same time closing the achievement gap for historically disadvantaged groups including, English learners (LEP), students with disabilities (SWD) and low-income students (LI).



Tafoya credits higher reading achievement to gains students are making in math as well, which CORE has provided no training on.

“One of the philosophies we’ve adopted is that kids first learn to read and then read to learn,” he explains. “We know that reading unlocks success in other subjects. And to that point, we have seen the same overall growth patterns in our math data. And we did no professional learning or coaching in math at all. We’re seeing the effects that teaching students to read and become fluent readers has on success across the curriculum.”

Woodbine Looks to the Future

If state benchmark assessments hadn’t been cancelled in 2020 due to the pandemic, Tafoya is confident that educators at Woodbine would have seen achievement grow. And though he knows that COVID will certainly result in greater-than-normal learning loss, he believes that his team can recover with the help of CORE and Ann’s guidance, whether they’re teaching in school or remotely.

“This summer we met and revisited the focus of SIPPS instruction,” he says. “We were able to bring Ann in to tweak the plan to accommodate distance learning.”
