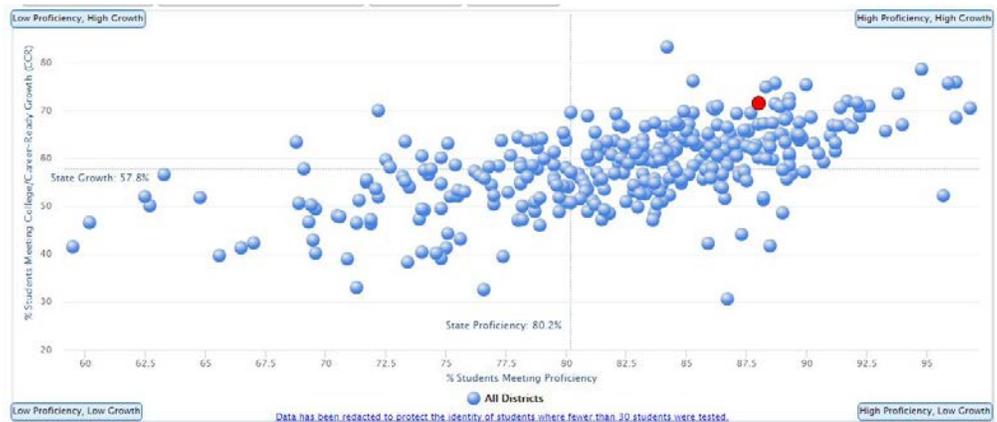


VINTON-SHELLSBURG

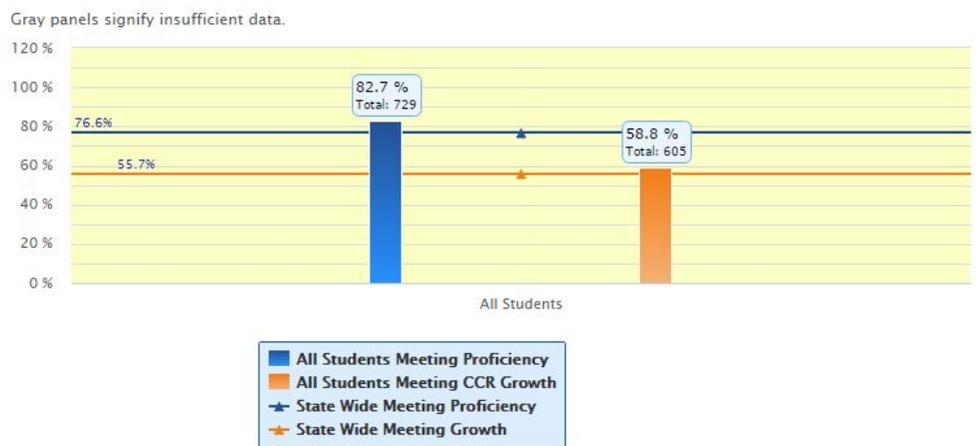
Strategies, Processes and Partnership Lead to Gains in Early Literacy

In February, 2015 the Iowa Department of Education released new data on student proficiency rates and growth to the public. This report, called the Attendance Center Rankings, fulfills a legislative requirement to develop a system for evaluating and ranking Iowa public schools based on their performance on nine specific measures.

In evaluating districts across Iowa, those that are achieving both high proficiency and high growth in a given category like literacy are located in the upper right hand quadrant of a scatter chart representing Iowa's districts. While this data is based on assessments alone, it does reflect Vinton-Shellsburg's enviable position as it relates to reading proficiency and growth toward college and career readiness.



Vinton-Shellsburg: Reading, 2013-2014

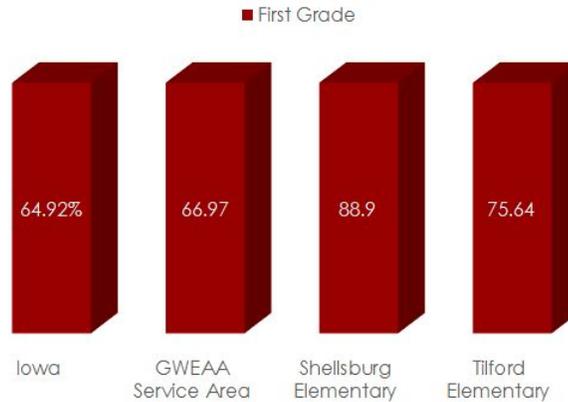


“There is no “one thing” we have done to support our elementary students’ literacy skills,” said Superintendent Mary Jo Hainstock. “It is the result of focusing on knowing what we want; collecting data both to

identify our highest needs as well as to monitor our progress; working together; and coordinating many different people, strategies and processes to make it all work together.”

Vinton-Shellsburg’s administrative team has partnered closely with Grant Wood Area Education Agency to make gains in this common focal area. “I cannot say enough positive things about how Grant Wood supports our work. We are in a strong partnership. I am also very proud of our administrators and how they work together, with their staffs and with the families they serve.”

Vinton-Shellsburg Early Literacy
% students at/above benchmark



This collaboration took several forms at the district and building levels.

- **Getting to the root of the issue.** Special education and general education teachers participated in a Grant Wood AEA and Department of Education initiative focused on literacy that trained teachers on literacy development and how to assess students. This assessment helped teachers determine the root causes of their students’ challenges to ensure a more specific approach to instruction.

- **Mentoring, coaching and induction.** Even before TLC funds were made available at the state level, Grant Wood AEA supported Vinton-Shellsburg with an instructional coach in literacy. She received much of her training and support from Grant Wood including the mentoring training and facilitation skills. Additionally, all of the new Vinton-Shellsburg teachers received support through the AEA’s induction coaching program.

“To watch them in action is truly magical. The focus is on what we want kids to know and do...and there is open, honest and reflective conversation occurring.”

“This has allowed our beginning teachers to get up-and-running in a timely manner and be supported with specific things along the way like classroom management, assessment, and communicating with parents,” said Hainstock.

- **Data-driven decisions.** The district tried, with limited success, to improve data-based decision making at the elementary level until partnering with a Grant Wood AEA school improvement consultant. The consultant worked with teacher leaders and district teams to successfully implement data teams at every grade level in the district.

- **Supporting the Students in Special Education.** “The Grant Wood AEA staff are heavily invested in the identification of our students who are struggling, and developing intervention strategies for them,” said Hainstock, “but it goes further and includes the support of our special education teachers if they have a student with an IEP.”