



Noah Webster Academy

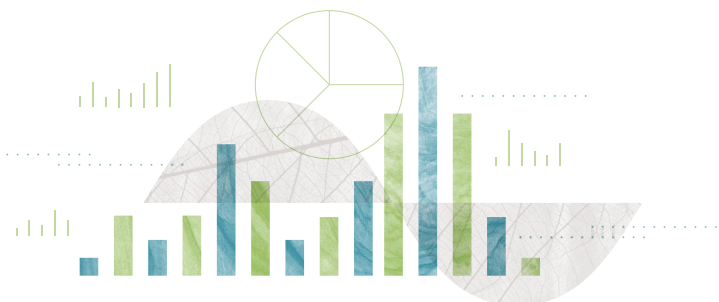
Executive Summary

Noah Webster Academy, a K–6 charter school in Utah, identified challenges in literacy instruction, including stagnating reading progress and inconsistent phonics instruction. In response, the school implemented *Reading Horizons® Discovery* (RHD) in 2022 for early grades and *Reading Horizons® Elevate* (RHE) for grades 4–6 to provide structured, explicit phonics instruction aligned with science-based reading practices.

Through a strategic rollout, teachers received comprehensive training, coaching, and professional development to ensure successful implementation. The school adapted to new pacing models and technology enhancements in RHD while leveraging structured interventions through RHE for upper elementary students.

By 2024, Noah Webster Academy observed significant growth in student reading proficiency, as measured by Acadience assessments. Students engaged in multimodal literacy activities, improving decoding, spelling, and reading comprehension skills. Cohort analyses showed that students receiving targeted RHE interventions experienced steady and accelerated gains in literacy proficiency over time.

Moving forward, Noah Webster Academy will continue using Reading Horizons® alongside the Wonders ELA curriculum to enhance comprehension, refine instructional practices, and sustain positive literacy outcomes.



Things to Consider Before Reading

Use this **Relevance Checklist** to determine if this success story is a good fit for your school's needs and circumstances:

Does this description sound like your school?

- You aim to implement a **Structured Literacy** program in grades K–3 or targeted interventions in grades 4–6, or both.
- Your school serves a **diverse student body**, including multilingual learners (14 percent), students receiving special education services (18 percent), and economically disadvantaged students (47 percent).
- You have observed **inconsistent literacy progress** and need a **unified, research-based phonics approach**.

Do you have these foundational supports in place?

- Your leadership team is dedicated to advancing literacy outcomes.
- Your **master schedule** allows time for professional development and instructional planning.
- Your instructional leaders and coaches are trained in **Structured Literacy methods**.

Are these resources available to support implementation?

- Your professional development aligns with the **science of reading**.
- Your school has comprehensive **teacher and student literacy materials**.
- Your educators receive ongoing **support and coaching** from Reading Horizons® and internal literacy leaders.

If these readiness conditions are similar to your own, Noah Webster Academy's success with Reading Horizons® may offer valuable perspectives and strategies for your literacy goals.

Checklist adapted from Danks (2023)



Noah Webster ACADEMY

Case Study

The Impact of the *Reading Horizons*® Method
Implementation on Student Learning

AT-A-GLANCE

Noah Webster Academy
2022–2024 Academic Years

“We have learned that teachers need to be heard in the implementation process, and having a voice in the PD made the implementation much smoother.”

– **STACI MADSEN**,
Assistant Director, Noah Webster Academy

Where reading momentum begins™

A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner featuring a silhouette of a person reading a book, overlaid with a pie chart and a bar chart, all set against a background of small dots.

NOAH WEBSTER ACADEMY

Background and Goals

Noah Webster Academy is a charter school in Utah, serving students from kindergarten through sixth grade on a single campus. The school has a diverse student population, with 14 percent multilingual learners (MLLs), 18 percent receiving special education services (SPED), and 47 percent identified as economically disadvantaged. However, the school faced challenges in its literacy program, including stagnating student reading progress and a lack of alignment in literacy instruction across grade levels.

Before adopting Reading Horizons®, Noah Webster Academy struggled with an inconsistent approach to phonics instruction, particularly in teaching students decoding skills and phonemic awareness. Despite some growth in reading, many students failed to maintain this progress over time, and there was no unified curriculum to provide foundational reading support. District leaders were searching for a program that would align with their science of reading training and provide structured, explicit phonics instruction for all students.

Implementation

While Noah Webster Academy already had a long history of implementing the key instructional systems that research has shown to impact student literacy positively, the school implemented *Reading Horizons® Discovery* (RHD) to address their pressing need for high-quality instructional materials that showed strong alignment with the LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training. The school was drawn to Reading Horizons® because of its comprehensive focus on explicit phonics instruction, offering an essential component that complemented and enhanced their existing curricula.

The first step in the implementation journey was to secure teacher buy-in. All K–3 teachers were provided initial training above and beyond LETRS to ensure they understood and could apply the

program’s Structured Literacy approach. Ongoing professional development (PD) sessions, including coaching by Reading Horizons® facilitators, were instrumental in ensuring the program’s successful implementation. The instructional coach at Noah Webster Academy played a key role in guiding teachers through the process, and the PD was customized to meet the school’s specific needs. Teachers also had the opportunity to observe model lessons and receive feedback to refine their practice.

“We have learned that teachers need to be heard in the implementation process, and having a voice in the PD made the implementation much smoother.”

– **STACI MADSEN,**
Assistant Director, Noah Webster Academy

Starting in 2022, the school implemented *Reading Horizons® Elevate* (RHE) as a targeted intervention program for students in grades 4–6 to address literacy needs in the upper elementary grades. RHE provided additional support requiring more intensive literacy instruction, ensuring all students had access to structured, explicit phonics instruction tailored to their proficiency levels.

The school implemented the newest version of RHD during the 2022–2023 school year as part of its ongoing commitment to improving literacy outcomes. This version provided enhanced features, including improved technology integration and expanded resources, further supporting teachers in delivering effective foundational literacy instruction. As the school began to implement this version, one of the early challenges was adapting to RHD’s new pacing and progression model. Additionally, minor concerns with the initial technology integration were addressed over time with updates to the program based on teacher feedback. The school leveraged these new tools to enhance instructional consistency and ensure students received the most up-to-date, research-based literacy support.

NOAH WEBSTER ACADEMY

“The teachers were very excited about the new, tech-enhanced program, especially when they saw the changes they requested had been made to the program. One third-grade teacher said, ‘The order makes more sense, and the teacher side of the website is much better.’” —Staci Madsen

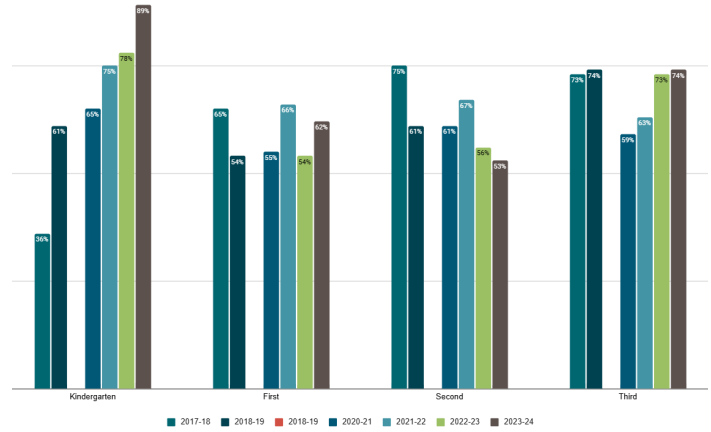
“The hardest thing to implement is just learning all these things for the first time myself. Even then, it was a fun experience that was really eye-opening.” —Marc Luthy

Results

After several years of implementing Structured Literacy initiatives, Noah Webster Academy had already seen significant improvements in reading proficiency across all grade levels. However, by the end of the 2024 academic year, the school observed a marked increase in student performance on the Acadience literacy assessment as a result of its RHD implementation starting in 2022. Teachers felt more confident in their ability to teach phonics, as students actively engaged in multimodal literacy activities that incorporated hand movements, listening, speaking, writing, and reading to internalize phonics patterns. This active engagement led to notable gains in both reading and spelling skills.

The percentage of students scoring proficient or above rose steadily from the beginning of the year (BOY) to the end of the year (EOY) in kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 3 (see Figure 1). Staci Madsen, Assistant Director, indicated that students have shown considerable improvement in their ability to apply decoding skills to connected text reading and writing tasks. Noah Webster Academy’s longitudinal Acadience end-of-year assessment results from 2017 to 2024 reveal notable trends in reading proficiency across grade levels. All grades demonstrated variable performance over the years, likely reflecting adjustments in instruction, curriculum changes, or external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020–2021.

Figure 1. Acadience End-of-Year Performance Over Time for Grades K–3



Most notably, the kindergarten scores improved significantly, particularly in 2022–2023 and 2023–2024, suggesting the success of early literacy initiatives and instructional support (Figure 2). Grades 1 and 3 also show consistent growth from 2017 to 2021, a dip in 2021–2022, followed by recovery by 2023–2024, possibly reflecting pandemic-related disruptions and subsequent recovery efforts. Grade 2 scores have remained consistently strong, suggesting a steady development in reading skills.

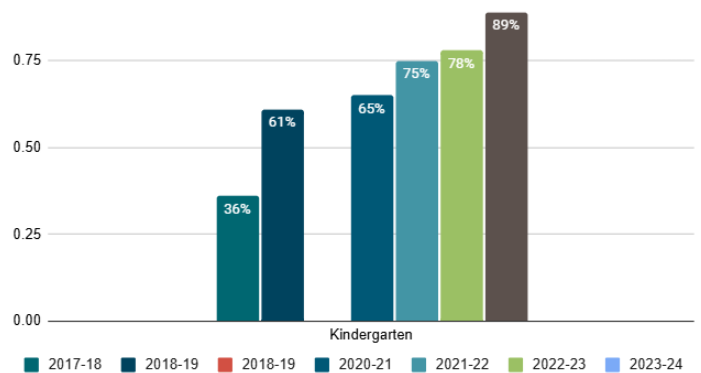


Figure 2. Kindergarten Acadience Performance Over Time

Fourth Grade Cohort Analysis—Reading Horizons® Elevate. Additional successes were found for two cohorts of fourth-grade students who received targeted intervention with RHE.

- **Cohort 1:** Students who completed fourth grade in 2021–2022 (before the implementation of RHE), fifth grade in 2022–2023, and sixth grade in 2023–2024 showed steady, year-over-year growth (Figure 3). This cohort’s

NOAH WEBSTER ACADEMY

Acadience assessment proficiency levels rose from 57 percent in grade 4 to 61 percent in grade 5 and then jumped to 73 percent in grade 6. The consistent improvement across the years demonstrates the lasting impact of structured phonics instruction through RHE as students build on foundational skills each year.

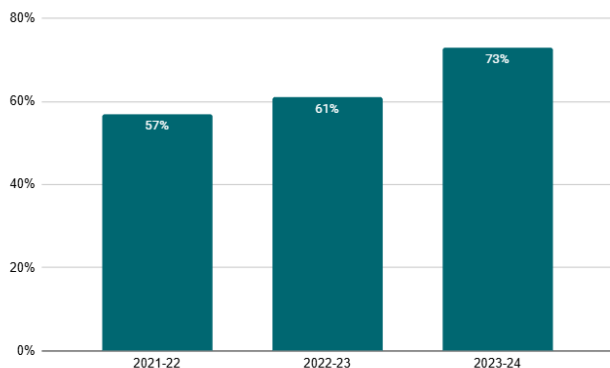


Figure 3. Fourth Grade Cohort 1 Acadience Performance Over Time

- **Cohort 2:** Students who completed grade 4 in the 2022–2023 school year also demonstrated substantial growth. This cohort achieved an *Acadience* assessment proficiency rate of 61 percent in grade 4 and increased significantly to 80 percent by the end of grade 6 in 2023–2024 (Figure 4). This sharp improvement reflects the success of structured, explicit phonics instruction in accelerating literacy development over the course of these two academic years.

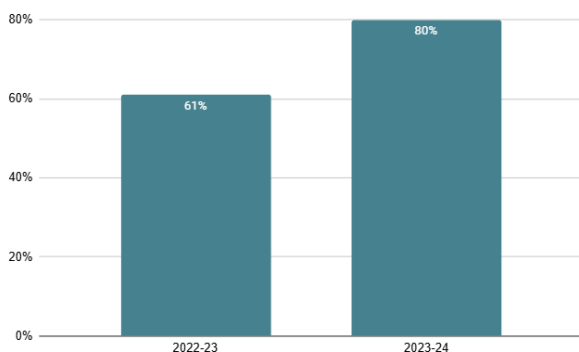


Figure 4. Fourth Grade Cohort 2 Acadience Performance Over Time

These cohorts illustrate the impact of Noah Webster Academy’s literacy initiatives, showing that Structured Literacy programs like *Reading Horizons® Elevate* provide a strong foundation for

students to achieve lasting reading gains. The consistent year-over-year growth in Cohort 1 and the rapid improvement seen in Cohort 2 underscores the effectiveness of targeted interventions in fostering essential reading skills.

Summary. These results suggest that *Reading Horizons® Discovery*, *Reading Horizons® Elevate*, and other literacy initiatives are effectively fostering growth in reading proficiency, particularly in fourth and fifth grades. The high and stable scores indicate that Structured Literacy practices support students in building and retaining essential reading skills. Although some variability exists, such as the slight decline seen in certain grade levels, continued analysis and adjustments will help ensure ongoing success.

While all grades likely experienced disruptions due to the pandemic, recent upward trends indicate that intervention strategies—such as targeted reading programs and refined teaching methodologies—are helping students recover and advance their reading abilities across grade levels.

Next Steps

Looking ahead, Noah Webster Academy plans to continue using *Reading Horizons®* for foundational literacy instruction while integrating the newly adopted *Wonders ELA* curriculum for comprehension. The school’s leadership is focused on refining instructional practices and providing targeted professional development to ensure teachers feel confident in delivering high-quality reading instruction. They also plan to use assessment data to better tailor instruction to individual student needs and further improve literacy outcomes. As Staci Madsen stated, “As leaders, we look at the data regularly with our teachers in PLCs to determine next steps, but our continuation of *Reading Horizons®* as part of that plan has never been in question. We are all excited about *Reading Horizons®* and know that it is providing those foundational skills our scholars need to be good readers. We are still learning, but everyone is on board with *Reading Horizons®*.”

