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## Testimony for the House Republican Policy Committee

The Honorable Stanley E. Saylor, Chairman

Monday March 15, 2010

When Pleasant Valley School District became involved with Step By Step Learning in 2006 we had a student population of 6852 with following ethnic breakdown: 7.2% African American, 8.5% Latino, 1.3% Asian, and 0.2% Native American. We also had 21.8% of our students eligible for free or reduced lunch and had a special education population of 14.5% or 993 students K-12. It was not uncommon for there to be 40 or more special education referrals throughout the school year in the K-4 division. Many of these referrals happened between January and March for reading delays when teachers had exhausted all the resources they had in their classrooms.

From the 2001-2002 school year through the 2005-2006 school year we had stagnant performance. Our students entered Kindergarten ranging between 38% and 45% benchmarked, which translates on average to 60% at risk. The end of the year their performance ranged from 46% to 55% benchmarked. In that same period of time we were using curriculum based assessment in grades 1-4. Scores on those assessments were stagnant, ranging from 65% to 70% proficient. The assessments that we were using were district developed with no correlation to national or state norms and were not based on research.

During that period of time we were having many conversations internally about what needed to be done. We added a variety of programs and began to examine the programs that we had in place for effectiveness. We were also examining schools with many more risk factors, 90% minority populations, 90% poverty rate yet these schools were 90% proficient.

At that time we had one intervention program that we were using in first grade: Reading Recovery. An examination of the data related to the program showed that on average 70% of the students in the program completed it successfully, but by 5<sup>th</sup> grade only 25% of that group remained on grade level. We estimated the annual cost of the program to be about \$600,000 to service 32-45 students, with only about 10 students remaining on grade level in the end.

We had a professional development plan that I refer to as a patch work quilt. We had differentiated professional development where teachers were given the opportunity to select a variety of courses in our educational academy to satisfy their professional development obligation. There were on average 72 different courses offered K-12 and the administration rarely, if ever, attended. It was extremely difficult to move the district in any one direction under this structure. Teacher collaboration was minimal with the exception of special education. Any student experiencing a reading delay became the responsibility of the reading specialist. As our needs continued to grow we continued to hire more and more reading specialist but did not see improvement in our data. Teachers received data about their student performance in September of the following year. The data was only used at that time to help teachers identify areas upon which they may need to focus during the new year's instruction. There was no data collected during the school year to confirm instruction outcomes for students.

By the summer of 2005 we had reached a level of frustration that forced us to make a decision. Did we want to continue on the path we were on, continually revising and revamping what we did to see if we could improve our students' achievement or did we need to wipe the slate clean and start over? We decided that we needed to invest in our staff and ensure that our children were receiving the best initial reading instruction possible from the classroom teacher. We needed classroom teachers to be the reading experts.

When looking at making a shift to an RTII structure we contacted the IU for help. They were able to offer consultation as we moved in that direction but they were not able to offer the intense support that we needed to make the change. PATTAN offered overview training on the RTII model but again lacked the ongoing support to effectively produce the change needed. I needed a solid professional development model that included ongoing training, modeling, and coaching for both teachers and administrators to effect long range and sustained change.

At that time we were contact by Step By Step Learning's Mike Grabarits about our student achievement. We provided him with our DIBELS data and asked him to do an analysis to see if we could find some direction. We discussed a plan that was a well developed RTII model that was also well above what we could afford. Mike contacted Senator Pat Browne and together we were able to write and receive an Education Demonstration Grant for \$200,000 which funded our project for the first year. Since that time we have used every grant source possible to fund the Pleasant Valley Improvement Project.

The structure of our project includes training in using the Palm Pilot to administer DIBELS assessment using the Mclass computer system. Teachers assess each child in their class and sync the Palm to display assessment data by skill category (initial sound fluency, phoneme segmentation fluency, letter naming fluency, etc.). These results are available to all teachers who are working with the child including reading specialists, special education teachers, speech therapists, and administration. Based on the results, teachers will select additional assessments to better identify skill deficits in order to guide their interventions. All students receive core reading instruction by the classroom teacher. The interventions can be provided by the classroom teacher, reading specialist, para professional or a combination of those individuals based on the student's need. Students are also progress monitored every two, three or four weeks depending

on their benchmark status. This provides the team with the data needed to make instructional decisions on what to do next. The teaching staff has received extensive training on data analysis. When a student does not show progress towards the established goals, even though interventions are being provided, the staff will hold a SIR (Student Intervention Response) meeting. This gives teachers the opportunity to discuss one student's data and progress and brainstorm options for individual program modification for the child. This could mean additional instruction, a change to an intervention program reducing the group size, etc.

The SIR team could consist of one to two classroom teachers, reading specialists, special educator, speech therapist, IST teacher, building administrator, etc. The goal is to look at the child's data with several fresh pairs of eyes to determine what changes need to occur for the child to be successful. We are in the process of putting our intervention logs on line in a system call Performance Pathways to enable the same level of access as we have with the Mclass system.

In addition to the training in data collection, analysis, and progress monitoring our teachers K-2 have also received training in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Modules 1, 2, and 3, Connecting the Classroom Mod 2 and 3, in-class modeling and in-class coaching. This school year teachers also had a LETRS Rewind session to review some of the information that may have been missed in the first training.

We have structured our professional development so all teachers are on a team. Currently we have 16 professional development teams. Each team consists of 2 to 4 partner teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, guidance or IST teacher and an administrator. We are now in our third and fourth cohort of para-professionals being trained in LETRS for Para Professionals. Everybody is trained. When administrative observations are completed now they

reflect the training we have received and are holding teachers accountable for instruction using the methods and concepts that we all have been taught.

We are currently in the process of moving the project into third grade. We are also developing a plan with Step By Step to transfer data analysis, modeling, and coaching over to local capacity. Our plan is to continue expansion of the project into 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Our work with Step By Step Learning has enabled us to implement a strong, researched based Response to Instruction and Intervention model that has shown great results as the data below reflects. Our special education population has shown a 4.5% reduction in three years. Our students are benchmarking at a rate of over 90% in both first and second grade. The training provided by SBSL is of the highest quality. The personnel are well trained and knowledgeable. They have access to national researchers and the latest research. We hope to continue our partnership with Step By Step Learning until we have consistent results for all of our students.

<b>Kindergarten</b>			
	<b>Fall</b>	<b>Winter</b>	<b>Spring</b>
2002-2003	38	41	46
2003-2004	38	44	49
2004-2005	45	45	55
2005-2006	42	33	52
2006-2007	43	54	72
2007-2008	54	65	82
2008-2009	58	79	91
2009-2010	61	82	

<b>First Grade</b>			
2006-2007	60	68	75
2007-2008	68	65	77
2008-2009	74	71	91
2009-2010	80	85	

<b>Second Grade</b>			
2007-2008	63	76	71
2008-2009	69	80	80
2009-2010	72	87	

<b>Cohort Data</b>				
	<b>Initial</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
2006-2007	43	72	77	80
2007-2008	54	82	91	
2008-2009	58	91		
2009-2010	61			

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