

Readership project debuts with training for teachers in five districts



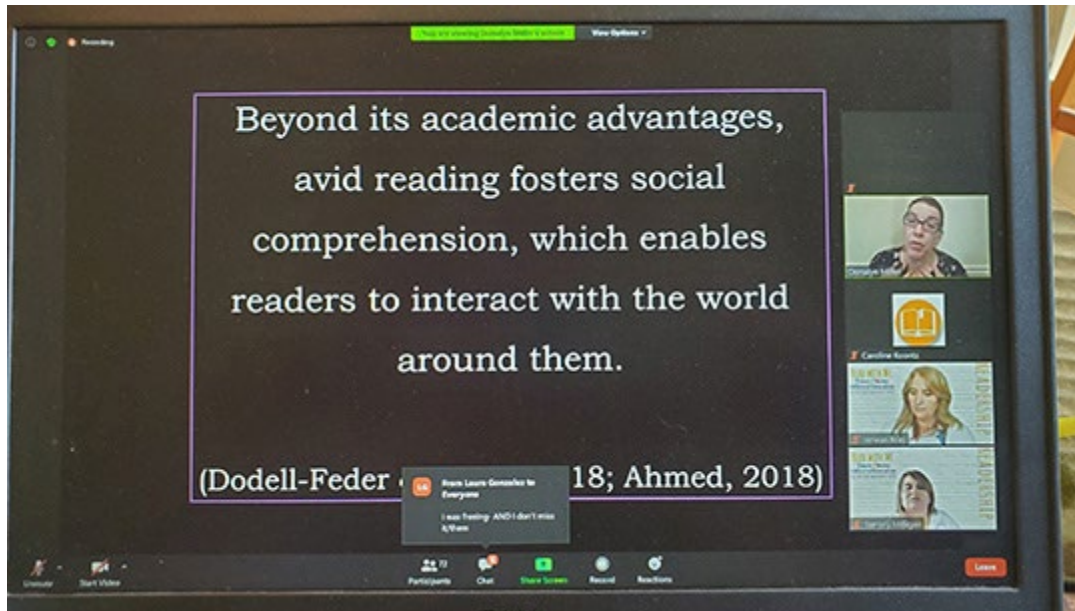
Readership

Improving lives through the power of books

Last summer, California Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond announced that the California Department of Education (CDE) would provide two \$500,000 grants to address the statewide trend that shows more than 50% of K-12 students do not meet the standard for English Language Arts on state assessment tests. The grants were awarded to county offices of education in Tulare and Riverside counties to create literacy programs. The awards were based on the high percentage of students needing literacy support and each county office's track record in developing literacy programs.

"We need to fix our literacy rates in California, and we need to start early and empower a whole village of support in order to get our students to the level of literacy that they should be at," said Mr. Thurmond. "I am proud of my team for finding creative ways to increase resources provided to vulnerable student populations so that we may better serve them in their quest for proficient literacy, to encourage and support a love of reading, and to help move the literacy rates for all students in California in a positive direction."

Within days of receiving news of the grant from State Superintendent Thurmond, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Tim Hire began to consult with TCOE instructional leaders to determine the type of program that would best serve Tulare County students. "From the beginning, we established that the program would increase access to books for students and families, and that it could be expanded to eventually serve the entire county, easily adopted by other counties, and sustainable by our office far into the future," he said. Last fall, Mr. Hire and his team invited representatives from five large, medium, and small districts across the county to be part of the pilot program. The districts in the pilot program include Earlimart, Monson-Sultana Joint Union, Porterville Unified, Woodlake Unified, and Woodville Union. Work on the literacy program, named Readership, continued through the spring and summer.



Last week, project directors Jenean Bray and Tammy Milligan, members of the English Language Arts team at Educational Resource Services, kicked off Readership with virtual training for 60 teachers, leaders, and coaches from nine elementary and middle schools within the partner districts. Participants were engaged in learning strategies to foster the mindsets of students in grades 4-8 to engage in literacy. Attendees also heard from award-winning author and staff development leader Donalyn Miller. Through her presentation, Ms. Miller shared research on the correlation between reading and student success, and provided suggestions and resources to foster children's love of reading.

One of the highlights of the training was the introduction of a four-part video developed by the project directors in partnership with the Theatre Company. Current and former TCOE Theatre Company students starred in each segment, including one entitled "The Book Report." In this segment, a teacher checks in with his class via Zoom to discuss their book report project. The students announce that they've chosen the book *Dreams From Many Rivers* by Margarita Engle, but have few ideas on developing their project. The teacher encourages them to think outside the box. Uninspired at first, the students eventually find a line from a poem in the book that motivates them to write and perform a music video entitled *Fall & Rise*.



The video segments were designed to encourage participants to find ways that they and their students can further the work of the project and create community cultures where literacy is valued and promoted. The entire series can be viewed on TCOE's YouTube Channel at www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEZVjC88Ozr5T_ek7fajFxoGMkl2HG1qh.

Readership is the latest project of TCOE's Central Valley Networked Improvement Communities (CVNIC). Participating districts will convene four times during the school year at network meetings to focus on developing cultures of literacy, student mindsets, reading instructional practices, content pedagogy, and continuous improvement. The project's continuous improvement work will focus on engaging each community in literacy, providing access to high-quality reading material, and empowering teachers and leaders. To support teachers, each will receive more than 100 books for their classrooms, professional resources, five days of coaching, and the opportunity to network alongside other schools. Additionally, districts will receive hundreds of books for distribution to students and families.

"We appreciate the CDE's support in getting Tulare County's Readership project off to a great start," said Mr. Hire. "I also appreciate the tremendous work done by Jenean, Tammy, our ELA team, and partner districts in creating a program that we can share with others around the state. Most importantly, this work begins a countywide effort to champion the value of literacy within schools and families, which we know has a direct correlation to student achievement."

Photos above:

~ Author and literacy trainer Donalyn Miller (upper right) was the keynote speaker at the kickoff training of the Readership project last week. Ms. Miller shared research on the correlation between reading and student success, and provided suggestions and resources to foster children's love of reading.

~ Participants at the launch of Readership were treated to a four-part, student produced video created to inspire educators to work with their students to develop a culture of literacy in their

schools. Current and former Theatre Company students acted and sang in the segments, including an original music video entitled Fall & Rise.

CHOICES provides online resource for teachers and students



Depression is not just sadness. Depression is not weakness. Depression is not a choice.

These statements and the facts that support them can be found in a new online prevention resource for teachers and students developed by the CHOICES Program. Located at tcoe.org/CHOICESnewsletter, the series of two-page newsletters contains simple strategies for students to deal with a variety of timely topics, including the challenges of communication and anxiety during distance learning.

Each week, the CHOICES Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) Program will post a new edition of the TUPE newsletter to its webpage and share important highlights on TCOE's social media platforms. The newsletter is available in English and Spanish and is supported by a California Department of Education TUPE grant.

Distance Learning Resources

- [Arts All Around Us](#)
- [TCOE Learning at Home](#)
- [TCOE's Educational Resource Services Library](#)

Editor: [Robert Herman](#), Public Information Officer

Contributors: Marlene Moreno, Jennifer Fisher, Lorena White, Jenean Bray, Tammy Milligan, Caroline Koontz, and Jeff Lynch.

To receive *News Gallery Week*, visit tcoe.org/GetTheGallery, or contact Jennifer Fisher at jenniferf@tcoe.org or (559) 733-6172.
