

Maine School Administrative District #37: Top in State Fourth-Grade Assessment Scores

Debra LaRoche, Reading Recovery Teacher Leader, Rose M. Gaffney Elementary School, Machias, Maine

Washington County, Maine is where the sun first shines in the United States and the unemployment rate is the highest in the state. More recent notoriety is due to the accomplishments of one school district, Maine School Administrative District (MSAD) #37, which includes the towns of Addison, Cherryfield, Columbia Falls, Harrington, and Milbridge. Under the care and management of Superintendent George Kiley, MSAD #37 is the top-scoring school district in the state of Maine based on last year's fourth-grade Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) reading and math scores. The five schools were in the top 26 schools, with Columbia Falls and Cherryfield both 5th out of Maine's 368 primary schools. The Harrington school was 3rd in the state and was also named Title I Distinguished School of 2004, being one of 81 schools to receive this award at the

national level. Only six schools in the state were considered for this recognition, three of which were in MSAD #37. Cherryfield received the same distinction in 1998. The Title I teachers in each of MSAD #37 schools are Reading Recovery teachers, and several classroom teachers in Grades K-4 are former Reading Recovery teachers.

In 1992 Principal Ronald Ramsey agreed to have the Harrington Elementary School house the area's first Reading Recovery training site with Gael Romei serving as teacher leader. All five schools in the district were soon training Reading Recovery teachers. That was the beginning of Reading Recovery in Washington County. Mr. Ramsey continues to be a strong Reading Recovery advocate to this day.

The district's No Child Left Behind coordinator/curriculum integrator,



A teacher works with a fourth-grade student at the Rose M. Gaffney School.

Marianne DeRaps, attributes the success of the MSAD #37 schools to several factors including Reading Recovery and its influences in each school, a commitment to ongoing professional development for all staff, the support and involvement of each community, and mostly to the dedication of motivated teachers to ensure the success of each child—encouraging students to live up to the district's motto, *Look Good and Sound Smart*.

Reading Recovery Influences Her Work as Principal

Julie Moorhead McKay, Principal, Catoctin Elementary School, Loudoun County, Virginia



Julie McKay and students at Catoctin Elementary School.

Reading Recovery training was a pivotal point in my career, adding a new lens through which to see students' strengths and the importance of high-quality, intense teaching within a student's zone of proximal development.

The skills I learned as a Reading Recovery teacher leader were invaluable to my role as an elementary principal. The training has helped me understand the processes a school staff needs to work through as new techniques and teaching skills are developed.

I feel it is my job to coach staff to their next level of expertise in their professional journey. I help teachers to understand the importance of initial and ongoing assessment in developing appropriate instruction and to develop strategic plans to move the students forward. I am able to support the change process and the long-term goal

of getting change institutionalized within a school.

Reading Recovery training inspired me to move into administration. I wanted to play a role in important decisions about critical programs (such as Reading Recovery) made at school and central office levels—to help support and sustain change that is in the best interests of students. Reading Recovery training propelled my career; I know that my training influences and impacts the staff, students, and community I work with daily in a very rewarding and positive way.