

# Learning Together Workshops

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*Boise School District  
Boise, Idaho*

**B**oise's District Partnership Action Team (D-PAT) created Learning Together Workshops to help 11 of its Title I schools meet their shared school improvement goal of increasing reading achievement on the Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI), a state test given to elementary school students in the fall, winter, and spring each year. The D-PAT, which meets monthly and includes a Title I teacher from each school, planned, created, evaluated, and revised learning games that targeted the specific literacy skills tested by the IRI. To pilot the Learning Together Workshops, teachers focused exclusively on kindergarten students.

In February, the Title I teachers analyzed the winter IRI scores. All kindergarteners in the participating schools who scored below grade level and their families were targeted for this intervention. The two one-hour workshops focused on the five early literacy skills on the spring reading test: print awareness, letter identification, rhyming, beginning sounds, and sight words. The D-PAT committee developed hands-on activities for each skill. In the workshops, the kindergarten students and their families learned to use the activities and materials to practice and reinforce the literacy skills taught in school. The district provided translated materials to aid the parents of ELL students.

The D-PAT chairperson conducted the first workshop at each school with the school's Partnership Action Team (PAT) members and classroom teachers assisting. The Title I or classroom teachers conducted the second workshop. While the district preferred that

the workshops be conducted as two one-hour sessions, some schools felt parents would not be able to attend on two separate nights, so they held one two-hour workshop.

Each literacy workshop kit cost approximately \$6. District Title I Parent Involvement funds paid for kits for the 114 participating families. The district felt its approach of starting with selected kindergarteners as a pilot program worked well.

A research study conducted by a federal programs consultant measured the effectiveness of these programs, revealing a statistically significant difference between the achievement of students who participated and those who did not. In telephone surveys three months after the workshops, most parents expressed their appreciation for the workshops, the materials they were given, and the guidance on how to work with their children at home. All participants indicated that they would attend similar workshops if offered. "It was the first time I saw him get excited about learning," said one parent. "She still brings out the games and wants to play them" added another. "Now I know what to do to help my child learn the letter sounds," commented a third.

Next year, the number of Learning Together Workshops will more than triple, as the district covers both reading and math for students in grades K–5.

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