

Please direct inquiries to:

Dr. Jennifer Murray, 484-258-7030

iezzilm@readingsd.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **May 13, 2024**

Reading School District Showcases Innovative Approach to Literacy and Teacher Pipeline at NSBA Annual Conference

READING, PA — Members of the Reading School District Board of Directors delivered a compelling presentation at the National School Boards Association (NSBA) [Annual Conference and Exposition](#) in New Orleans, held from April 6 to 8, 2024.

Against the backdrop of persistent educational challenges stemming from the pandemic, RSD Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Murray, School Board President Dr. Noahleen Betts, and School Board Vice President Dr. Paige M. Brookins shared insights on how the Reading School District has tackled these issues during their session titled “Accelerating Struggling Readers While Strengthening the Teacher Pipeline” on Saturday, April 6.

The presentation highlighted RSD's successful initiatives aimed at improving literacy outcomes and addressing the teacher shortage within the district. Specifically, the session focused on the district's implementation of the [Read Alliance](#) program, which targets struggling first-grade readers, primarily English Learners, with tailored 1:1 tutoring support. This approach has shown significant gains in literacy and language skills among students.

Murray, Betts, and Brookins detailed the evolution of the Read Alliance program within the district, starting with a pilot year in spring 2021 involving a small group of teen tutors from Reading High School and first-grade students at 10th & Penn Elementary. Since then, the program has expanded to include more schools and participants, now serving 200 first graders across seven RSD elementary schools, supported by approximately 150 Reading High School student tutors by spring 2024.

During the presentation, the RSD leaders emphasized the role of strategic collaborations with [Equus Workforce Solutions](#) and [United Way of Berks County](#) in enhancing educational opportunities for both young readers and high school students seeking professional experience. Through these partnerships, students have gained literacy skills while high school tutors have acquired valuable experience, guiding them towards the teacher pipeline and contributing to their career readiness while addressing critical needs in the district.

“We were excited to share our journey of collaboration and success with fellow educators and policymakers at the NSBA conference,” said Dr. Murray. “Our Read Alliance program highlights our commitment to early literacy and our innovative approach to addressing challenges faced by urban school districts like ours. It’s been rewarding to witness academic strides and increased engagement among our students—both young learners and high school tutors.”

Thanks to the funding support provided by United Way of Berks County, the Reading School District's successful Read Alliance program continues to thrive, with additional support from [Customers Bank](#) and the young adult programs offered by [PA CareerLink® Berks County](#).

"We recognize the significant hurdles schools face with literacy and the teacher shortage, especially in the wake of the pandemic," said Dr. Betts. "Our hope is that by sharing our experiences and strategies, attendees will develop their own strategic approaches by leveraging community partners to ensure continued student success."

To learn more about Reading School District's Read Alliance program and its impact, visit readyssetreadberks.org/read-alliance/.

###

Note: For a photo from the conference, please visit <https://tinyurl.com/2tt2p49f>. Pictured from left to right are School Board President Dr. Noahleen Betts, Superintendent Dr. Jennifer Murray, and School Board Vice President Dr. Paige M. Brookins.