

Possible Titles:

- **Unprecedented Achievement in Provo Kindergarten with BYU Early Literacy Program**
- **Learning Success with BYU Program Excites Kindergarten Teacher**
- **Teachers use Cutting Edge Methods to Engage and Educate Kindergartners**

(The following is a combination of Lakken Cannon's [Provo School District PR] draft of a press release for SEEL, with additions by the SEEL Administrative Team.)

PROVO- Edgemont Kindergarten classes see nearly 100% of their students at or above grade level in reading with the help of SEEL (Systematic Engaging Early Literacy), an innovative program created by Dr. Barbara Culatta and her research team from the McKay School of Education at Brigham Young University.

"I wouldn't do anything else *but* SEEL", said Dianne Amesse, an experienced kindergarten teacher at Edgemont Elementary School. "I've never seen such great results."

SEEL (Systematic Engaging Early Literacy), an explicit yet playful early literacy development program, is designed to support diverse young learners as they authentically explore skills through effective strategies.

Jolie Hill, director of Project SEEL, leads the research team currently developing and field testing this uniquely successful program. "SEEL not only exposes children to sound patterns and letters at the sound and print level, it provides them with multiple opportunities for playful engagement", Hill said. "Activities are designed to stimulate an emotional connection to meaning which ultimately supports students in their ability to remember and apply skills. This is what sets SEEL apart from other literacy programs available."

During the field testing phase of the research, early literacy educators are offered professional development on a consistent basis to aide in planning and implementing SEEL curriculum. This curriculum is designed to capture student attention while capitalizing on critical windows of opportunity for reading skill development. An example of a lesson exploring the word ending target –at, begins with Amesse dramatically telling a colorful story of a "fat bat" who flew into a wall and went splat. "The bat is now flat instead of fat because he went splat!" Amesse explains. She follows up with a retelling of the story, encouraging her students to help her create a "flat bat" by drawing one on a deflated balloon. She asks, "Is this bat fat or flat?" She continues to wonder aloud, "How could we make this flat bat become fat?" Of course, the children suggest and delight in watching the flat bat BECOME fat as she inflates the balloon. She reminds them that a way they can help the bat become fat is to chant "FAT BAT" with each puff of air, systematically engaging them in "target practice" without the slightest resistance. She then asks if they would like to see the fat bat go splat and become flat again...and lets the balloon go! The children squeal with delight as they witness the "fat to flat" transformation. Finally she introduces print by engaging them in an interactive writing of their experience and a final hi-lighting of any –at words.

"Connections to skill development are made when kids have fun while they are learning. I've had students come to me after they transition to first grade and share memories in which they recount a SEEL lesson almost verbatim a year later!" Amesse said. "We all remember things so much better when we are emotionally engaged in the learning process."

SEEL is currently being implemented in select schools in Provo School District while researchers continue to gather data. Edgemont Elementary Principal Dennis Pratt and his

Kindergarten/Tutoring team are in their second year of adopting the program and testing its effectiveness with their youngest learners. Parents have also participated in the classroom as well as at home, as researchers explore a plan for a SEEL home & school connection. A documentary is currently being created to offer an even more in depth look at this program and its impact on students and their families. Look for it on KBYU in the future. If you are interested in hearing more about SEEL and how teachers, students, and families at your school might benefit from its playful curriculum, please contact teachers Dianne Amesse (DianneA@provo.edu) or Kristen Ellis (KristenE@provo.edu)