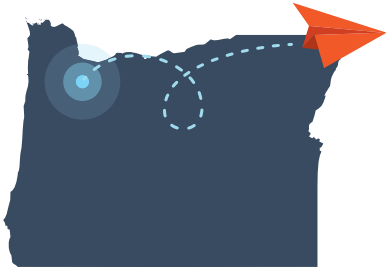


Jennifer Serravallo:

Making a difference in Oregon



"About five years ago, you wouldn't have seen a model of instruction that has small groups and conferring," Sarah Dunkin reflects. Dunkin is an Early Learning and ELA Teacher on Special Assignment in Beaverton School District near Portland, Oregon. But all that has changed for Beaverton's teachers in part **thanks to resources by Jennifer Serravallo**.

The change started with Dunkin and her colleague Jennifer Burkart who is an Early Learning, ELA, and Reading Intervention specialist. "I read [Serravallo's] Professional Books, and I heard her speak at Teacher's College," said Burkart. "We ordered *The Reading Strategies Book*, and it felt like the missing link for teachers."

Dunkin and Burkart had taken a needs assessment of the district's teachers, getting responses directly from them about what kind of professional learning they needed. What they ask for was clarity, flexibility, and practicality. *The Reading Strategies Book* fit their teachers' needs perfectly. Said Burkart, "We were able to communicate 'You said you wanted this, and we got you this.'"

"We wanted our teachers to see *The Reading Strategies Book* as a vital and necessary tool and a complement to instruction," said Dunkin. She and Burkart rolled the book out to all their elementary teachers for a district-wide book study. "Everyone got *The Reading Strategies Book*," Burkart explained. "We loved her '**What Can I Work on as a Reader**' tool [free downloadable at

Heinemann.com], and our reading specialist used it to support how we read the introduction."

The book proved immediately popular with their teachers. "It simplified the work," said Dunkin. "If there's a need, she provides an answer. She's been very supportive of teachers and the needs they have." *The Reading Strategies Book* gave teachers the *how*—actionable instructional steps to take with readers. "What does that look like and how do I do it? That's what Jen does so well," Dunkin further explained. "It alone provides professional development because if you're using it, you're learning what kids need."

"We had a big kickoff with all our elementary teachers here on-site," Burkart recalled, "then followed up with a webinar with Jen [Serravallo]." Ahead of the webinar, Dunkin and Burkart sent Serravallo a mug with the district logo on it. On the day of the event, in the middle of winter, everyone, including Serravallo, enjoyed a steaming Beaverton Schools mug of hot cocoa together. "Jen was amazing," said Burkart. "She was so clear. Our teachers said, 'This is the kind of PD we want!'"

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During that and subsequent webinars Serravallo demystified how she created the 300 reading strategies in *The Reading Strategies Book*. She helped participants understand that there aren't any magical strategies out there that teachers don't know about—that Serravallo's

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own ideas came from a combination of high-quality research and her experiences working with readers. Ultimately, these webinars helped Beaverton teachers connect assessments directly to strategies in Serravallo’s book. Importantly for the teachers, those strategies could be implemented the very next day.

Ultimately *The Reading Strategies Book* is helping Beaverton teachers answer that difficult teaching question: *What’s next?* “For some teachers, having the scaffold of the strategies helps them become much more concrete, clear, and flexible,” said Burkart.

“Teachers are more empowered to be responsive to the needs of students,” added Burkart, noting that

Serravallo’s resources help educators see that there is more than one way to approach an individual student’s instruction. “It’s one thing to say, ‘Do these lessons one by one with fidelity,’ but we want our teachers to be flexible thinkers.”

Dunkin points out that Serravallo’s resources make a difference for *all* readers. “She can provide help for an emergent reader and a child who is more developed as a reader.”

Teachers will always face instructional challenges such as supporting striving readers, helping any student move through increasingly complex texts, or simply finding a just-right strategy for a reader who is stuck. Burkart says that with Jennifer Serravallo’s resources, classroom practitioners can go further in helping their readers. “If your teachers are looking for something to hold onto as they stretch, Jen’s books can anchor their thinking.”

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