



K-12 Writing Curriculum Review

West St. Paul - Mendota Heights - Eagan Area Schools
School District 197

Prepared by
Cari Jo Kiffmeyer
Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
and
Adriana Henderson
Elementary Literacy Coordinator

July 2014

The Curriculum Review Process

Curriculum in School District 197 is reviewed using a six-year cycle of continuous improvement. This process was adopted in the spring of the 2012-13 school year and includes professional development for teachers that is focused on the creation of digital curriculum and the adoption of innovative instructional practices.

In years 1-3, participating curriculum areas are considered to be in "formal review". In year one a content area team of teachers conducts an in-depth study of the current program to determine its overall effectiveness. Community and staff input is gathered and the team of teachers examines current best practice in curriculum and instruction. Based on the results of the study, the team, with assistance from the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC), who identifies strengths and needs of the existing program, creates a vision for future programming and develops Outcomes that Matter to All and Core Beliefs.

During year two content area teams review the current scope and sequence of the curriculum for grades K-12 and assess how it aligns to state and/or national standards and benchmarks. They then create a district curriculum framework/map that identifies the knowledge, skills, and learning targets that students need to know, be able to do, and act upon. Content area teams also select the materials (paper and electronic) needed to implement the revised curriculum and work to ensure the new curriculum and materials are culturally sensitive and non-discriminatory. If applicable or needed, in year two teams will develop digital curriculum for their content area. Teams also plan professional development activities to ensure proper training and support are provided relative to the new curriculum.

During year three each curriculum area moves to the implementation phase where teachers look at the curriculum as taught, identify holes, design common assessments and begin to review data. The content area team also recommends grouping strategies, identifies how to accelerate or remediate students, and addresses issues relating to students with special needs (ELL and special education). Additionally, in the spring of year three, the content area team will meet to determine if the intended scope and sequence is achievable and identify areas for additional professional development.

Year four of the curriculum review cycle focuses on measurement and ensuring curriculum is being implemented as intended. Staff will pay careful attention to how well students are responding to the new curriculum and ensure that teachers' and parents' questions are answered. Common assessments continue to be reviewed and refined.

During year five, the revising phase, teams adjust implementation procedures and implement changes as needed. The curriculum is evaluated in terms of how well it is working and where modifications need to be made. Common assessments continue to be reviewed and refined. In the refining phase, year six, teams continue to refine the curriculum. They determine if adjustments are needed and implement them accordingly. Common assessments continue to be reviewed and refined.

During 2013-14, a team of teachers, principals and district administrators was assembled to evaluate K-12 Writing in School District 197. The K-12 Writing Team consisted of representatives from the district's elementary, middle, and high schools and Special Programs (Special Education and ESL) department. As called for by the curriculum review process, this year the K-12 Writing Team focused on studying the overall program, developing Outcomes that Matter to All and Core Beliefs and completing a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis.

The K-12 Writing Team met for the first time on December 5, 2013. Approximately 35 members attended the three-hour meeting, during which the team worked with representatives from the University of Minnesota's Writing Project. The group had conversations about writing instruction and curriculum, including the recommendations developed by the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) for best practices in writing in instruction. Team members also spent time in mixed grade-level vertical groups generating the start of a SWOT analysis of writing instruction in School District 197.

Input was also gathered from parents/guardians and staff at a Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting in January and through a K-12 Writing survey of the writing review team in the spring. All of this feedback was added to the program's SWOT analysis and used in creating Outcomes that Matter to All and Core Beliefs for K-12 Writing.

Through the SWOT analysis many strengths were identified. This past year we implemented a common intervention program in grades 1 and 2 that incorporates guided writing into the reading instruction. Further expansion of this intervention will take place for Kindergarten in the 2014-2015 school year. In the middle schools, teachers are consistently seeking more opportunities to collaborate around integrating writing into other content areas and creating interdisciplinary units. The high school is the furthest along in a consistent writing curriculum across all English classrooms due to the high levels of collaboration within the department. In the 2013-2014 school year, the high school English teachers implemented common writing rubrics and began norming samples of student work.

Three common weaknesses were developed across K-12. The first common theme was a need for consistent writing instruction and resources. Through our analysis we learned that there are inconsistent daily writing opportunities across the elementary buildings and the six period day at the middle schools, particularly at grades seven and eight, limiting the amount of time for writing. Therefore, recommendations for the amount time students should spend in writing need to be developed for each grade level. Another common theme throughout the SWOT analysis is the teacher's desire to collaborate and an eagerness to look for ways to incorporate writing into other content areas.

Another part of the K-12 Writing Team's work in 2013-14 involved a review of the Minnesota English Language Arts (MN ELA) Writing Anchor Standards. The Team worked closely with the U of M Writing Project and the Minnesota Department of Education to "unpack" the standards and develop learning targets--what students need to be able to know and do in order to meet end-of-year grade level proficiency. Learning targets are written in student friendly language. The MN ELA Writing Anchor Standards and grade level benchmarks were also used by the committee in the development of Outcomes that Matter to All and Core Beliefs for K-12 Writing.

The K-12 Writing Team had their final meeting in June to complete the first year of self-study and set the stage for year two of the review process. In 2014-15 the group will work to create an implementation plan for an articulated K-12 writing curriculum.

Elementary Teachers

Lindsey Deiderich – Moreland
Jennifer Hogan – Somerset
Lisa Jasper – Garlough
Debbi Krohn – Garlough
Allison Laing – Somerset
Andrea Saenz – Garlough
Thomas Schwister – Mendota
Krista Seipel – Somerset
Kelli Simpson – Garlough
Ruth Underdahl – Pilot Knob
Candice Whelan – Mendota
Mai Yang – Pilot Knob

Middle School Teachers

Emily Abbott – Heritage
Andrea Brown – Friendly Hills
Angela Corbett – Friendly Hills
Patrick Hibbard – Friendly Hills
Kristine Jacobs – Friendly Hills
Leah Martin – Heritage
Jennifer Reichel – Friendly Hills
Erin Schmidt – Heritage
Thomas Smith - Heritage
Jenna St. Fluer – Friendly Hills

High School Teachers

Jesse Emery – Henry Sibley
Heather Gardner – Henry Sibley
Joanna Imm – Henry Sibley
Julie Johnson – Henry Sibley
Dan McCormick – Henry Sibley
Erica Ramisch – Henry Sibley
Glenn Skov – Henry Sibley
Kelly Smalstig – Henry Sibley
Suzanne Temple – Henry Sibley
Amy VanDamme – Henry Sibley

Administration

Thomas Benson - Pilot Knob Elementary Principal
Adriana Henderson - Elementary Literacy Coordinator
Cari Jo Kiffmeyer - Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
Karin Swainey - K-12 Curriculum Coordinator

Mission (Our Core Purpose)

School District 197 provides a challenging educational environment that instills in each student a lifelong passion for learning, empowers all students to achieve their personal goals and academic potential, and prepares them to be responsible citizens in an interconnected world.

When our work aligns with our Core Purpose, we produce Outcomes That Matter To All, such as:

Students will view themselves as writers by demonstrating an authentic voice in their writing.

Students will use metacognition (awareness of their own thinking) when developing their own writing process by planning, drafting, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

Students will produce legible, clear, and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Students will apply appropriate writing conventions including an accreditation of sources.

Students will write routinely for many purposes, modes (informative/explanatory, argumentative, persuasive, narrative and other creative texts, etc.) and audiences using various formats (written document, electronically, oral presentation, dramatic performance, visual expression, etc.) and media across content areas.

Students will demonstrate the ability to conduct research using literary or informational texts to comprehend, evaluate, synthesize, and report on information and ideas from multiple print and digital resources assessing the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Students will use evidence and reasoning to support claims in writing including the analysis and reflection of research topics.

Students will know the real-world applications of effective writing and its many purposes.

Students will develop as writers by producing, publishing, and presenting writing by gathering information, communicating ideas, and collaborating with others.

We believe in a balanced and integrated model of literacy where students actively engage in reading, writing, language development, speaking, viewing, listening, and media literacy skills throughout the content areas using a diverse range of culturally relevant materials and technology.

1. **Teacher Modeling of Differentiated Effective Instruction**

- We believe in the importance of teachers modeling their writing process with students.
- We believe in using mentor texts and anchor papers to highlight authors' craft.
- We believe the gradual release of responsibility approach allows students to engage in whole group instruction, guided practice, and the independent application of learning targets.
- We believe it is necessary to scaffold and differentiate writing instruction to meet the diverse needs and ranges of all learners.

2. **Student Choice, Purpose for Writing, and Writing for an Audience**

- We believe in engaging and motivating students by offering choices in writing.
- We believe in providing students opportunities to write for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- We believe in offering students choice of modality (narrative, expository, argumentative, persuasive, etc.) and formats to write, publish, and present work.
- We believe in presenting real-life applications for which individuals write (i.e., job application, persuasive essay, research/technical writing, etc.).

3. **Writing Process and the Use of Technology**

- We believe that writing is a process developed individually where writing improves through reflection and revision while using various types of effective models, peer reviews, and writing conferences.
- We believe in the expectation that students demonstrate legible, clear, and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience as a means to communicate with others.
- We believe in the importance of teaching students proper grammar usage, punctuation, and mechanics while applying professional rules of writing including appropriate citation of sources and other individuals' works.
- We believe in providing opportunities for students to present and publish completed works of writing in a variety of formats (written document, electronically, oral presentation, dramatic performance, visual expression, etc.) and media.

4. **Assessment (Feedback, Conferencing, and Peer Reviews)**

- We believe assessments vary based on the task, learning target(s), and purpose.
- We believe that assessments can occur during a writing process as well as in a final product recognizing that not every piece of writing be assessed and graded.
- We believe students improve and grow as writers when given feedback during writing conferences and peer reviews.
- We believe students need to assess their own writing while engaging in their writing process using self-evaluations and ongoing reflections.

5. **Writing Across the Content Areas and Frequency of Writing**

- We believe in providing opportunities for students to write authentically every day throughout the content areas.
- We believe writer's notebooks, journals, and writing logs are an effective method for reflecting daily and generating writing across the content areas.

6. **Professional Development and Vertical Alignment**

- We believe in providing teachers professional development in effectively teaching standards based instruction, assessments, and the vertical alignment of skills.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>K-2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers provide modeling of writing and use literature and resources provided in Reading Streets and the 6-Traits of Writing Resources Writing is process-oriented leaving room for creativity A focus on grammar is taught within the writing instruction Some staff use the writer's workshop model and the Lucy Calkins Curriculum in teaching writing that allows for a structured program with student choice in writing Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) includes various guided writing instruction embedded in the interventions for all sites grades 1-2 	<p>K-2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a consistent writing program and resources that all teachers use routinely with students Daily writing opportunities for students is inconsistent Lack of ongoing professional development in writing instruction and using resources as reported by classroom teachers Lessons that are scripted can be limiting in instruction for a variety of learners Scheduling for writing instruction is limited Lack of common writing assessments aligned to Minnesota English Language Arts (MN ELA) Standards
<p>Gr. 3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers provide modeling of writing and use literature and resources provided in Reading Streets and the 6-Traits of Writing Resources Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) includes various guided writing instruction embedded in the interventions at Title One sites for grades 3-4 Writer's Workshop is successful for classrooms who incorporate this model for students Writing across the content areas allows for more opportunities for students to write Vocabulary is an emphasis in writing at some sites Journaling is a form of daily writing that students engage in 	<p>Gr. 3-4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a consistent writing program and resources that all teachers use routinely with students Daily writing opportunities for students is inconsistent Lack of ongoing professional development in writing instruction and using resources as reported by classroom teachers Scheduling for writing instruction is limited and not always considered a priority Developing student interest and motivation is a barrier Lack on common writing assessments aligned to MN ELA Standards
<p>Gr. 5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers provide modeling of writing and use literature and resources provided in Reading Streets and the 6-Traits of Writing Resources Writing is standards-based Teaching staff see the importance of writing instruction and are beginning to integrate writing into the content areas Teachers are seeking opportunities to collaborate around writing instruction Teachers work to create dynamic and engaging lessons for students 	<p>Gr. 5-6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a consistent writing program and resources that all teachers use between both middle schools including instructional practices and standards-based common writing assessments Half the year at grades 5-6 is dedicated to writing Writing is combined with reading during the language arts time in grades 7-8 without enough time to do both reading and writing effectively as needed Common vocabulary/language in writing is lacking between teachers/grade levels/middle schools

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<p>Gr. 7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexibility in using technology with writing • Students engage in writing in a variety of modalities (persuasive, narrative, expository, argumentative, etc.) • High level of commitment to writing is evident • Writing is occurring and is purposeful in classrooms • Students see themselves as writers (i.e. student blogs, websites, etc.) • Writing is occurring outside of the language arts block in other content areas 	<p>Gr. 7-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time constraints within the schedule make providing adequate instruction difficult • Inconsistent instructional practices • Lack of alignment between middle schools around writing instruction and standards-based common assessments • Resources are not common between teachers and sites • Vertical alignment and collaboration lacks between grade levels and sites • Reading test prep has become a higher priority in comparison to writing instruction
<p>Gr. 9-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is viewed as thinking processes with many opportunities for students to write • Writing is emphasized with high expectations that students are writing and are prepared for college writing • Reaching students where they are at in writing is a strength with the belief that teachers acknowledge, accept, and promote all student's writing • Through the use of rubrics in writing, a process of creating consistency among grade levels and assignments is occurring with the goal to work on norming • Teaching of the writing process is broken down for students and is emphasized in instruction and student expectations • Alignment exists between/among grade levels due to collaboration and is a work in progress • There has been an increase in consistency in the creation of assessments including the attempt at providing feedback and using formative assessments to adjust teaching to reach more students • Teachers conference with students in writing and allow for more choices in writing 	<p>Gr. 9-12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivating students to write and become writers by choice • Availability of technology • Using technology and writing programs with students who have varying abilities in keyboarding skills • Creating writers to be independent • Providing the time needed to develop writing instruction and offer students adequate time for feedback • Providing opportunities for students to write in various modes • Lack of time to effectively conference with students as much as teachers would like to do • Focusing on summative writing rather than offering formative assessments-noted as a weakness but teachers are aware of this and addressing this currently through collaboration • Curriculum is lacking surrounding conventions/effective grammar/usage • Differentiation of writing instruction with a diverse range of writers and student needs

OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>K-12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a K-12 Writing Curriculum Framework with a scope and sequence and a common language focused on the MN ELA Writing Standards that can be implemented by staff members • Writing learning targets tied to grade level ELA benchmarks that address what student need to be able to know and do • Developing a writing curriculum that is aligned to grade level benchmarks and learning targets • Vertically aligning teaching and learning through ongoing collaboration and professional development • Integrating and applying the MN ELA Standards and writing instruction across content areas • Implementing resources and instructional practices that teachers can use flexibly to support all writers through scaffolding and differentiation of instruction • Developing effective writers to be college and career ready who are motivated and engaged in writing for a variety of audiences and purposes • Finding mentor texts to use in writing units/lessons around the ELA standards developed with the support of teachers and the curriculum department • Communicating the importance of writing every day across all content areas • Collaboratively developing standards-based common writing assessments • Sharing ideas with staff members around effective writing instruction and practices • Dedicating time to implement and collaborate around a new writing curriculum/program • Focusing more on writing instruction and giving students more choices and a purpose in their writing • Providing professional development opportunities for staff regarding the implementation of the MN ELA Standards and a K-12 Writing Curriculum Framework that focuses on effective researched based instructional practices, assessments, and the use of technology in writing 	<p>K-12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 lacks a consistent writing program that address the needs of a variety of learners including ESL and Special Education students • Addressing the needed shifts of instruction and rigor in the MN ELA Standards for all students • Resources and instructional practices that teachers can use flexibly to support all writers through scaffolding and differentiation of instruction • Inconsistency in the amount of instructional time devoted to writing • Inconsistency in the urgency of creating and providing students opportunities to develop as writers • Not enough time dedicated to work collaboratively on vertical alignment • Lengthy MN ELA grade level benchmarks require time to adequately integrate them throughout instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Breaking down grade level benchmarks and learning targets for special learners is a concern • Philosophical differences around writing instruction and writing beliefs – being able to sustain a writing program over time • Developing a balanced program that includes student choice along with academic tasks students must be versed in as writers • Developing a K-12 Writing Curriculum Framework that can be easily followed by staff members • Time needed to implement a new writing curriculum/program among grade levels and departments • Providing professional development to staff that incorporates the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Beliefs about writing instruction ○ Knowledge of MN ELA and the unpacking process of standards ○ Writing learning targets aligned to grade level benchmarks ○ Outcomes that Matter to All in Writing ○ Effective writing standards-based instructional practices ○ Designing standards-based common writing assessments ○ Using technology in writing

School District 197 Curriculum Review Cycle

	2012 – 2013	2013 – 2014	2014 – 2015	2015 – 2016	2016 – 2017	2017 - 2018	2018-2019
State Action	Implementation of Language Arts	Implementation of Social Studies		Revision in Math begins		Revision in Science begins	
Year 1: Self Study	5-12 Social Studies	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE AND Health Tech Ed FACS	K-12 Math Art Counseling	Music Business	K-12 Science	K-12 Language Arts
Year 2: Developing	5-12 Social Studies	5-12 Social Studies Chemistry Physics K-4 Social Studies	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE and Health Tech Ed FACS	K-12 Math Art Counseling	Music Business	K-12 Science
Year 3: Implementing	K-8 Language Arts MS Science	5-12 Social Studies 9-12 Language Arts	K-4 Social Studies Chemistry Physics	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE and Health Tech Ed FACS	K-12 Math Art Counseling	Music Business
Year 4: Measuring		K-8 Language Arts MS Science	5-12 Social Studies 9-12 Language Arts	K-4 Social Studies Chemistry Physics	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE and Health Tech Ed FACS	K-12 Math Art Counseling
Year 5: Revising			K-8 Language Arts MS Science	5-12 Social Studies 9-12 Language Arts	K-4 Social Studies Chemistry Physics	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE and Health Tech Ed FACS
Year 6: Refining				K-8 Language Arts MS Science	5-12 Social Studies 9-12 Language Arts	K-4 Social Studies Chemistry Physics	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language
Budget	5-8 Science	5-8 Social Studies 9-12 Language Arts	K-12 Social Studies Chemistry, Physics PLTW	ELA - Writing ESL Gifted and Talented World Language	AVID PE Health Tech Ed, FACS	K-12 Math Art Counseling	K-12 Science Music Business