A young girl with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up, leaning over a desk. She is wearing a light-colored, horizontally striped shirt. She is holding a yellow pencil in her right hand and is in the process of writing on a piece of paper. The paper has some faint, illegible text on it. The background is a solid orange color that transitions into a white area at the bottom right.

# Local Literacy Plan

Grades K-5  
2023



**St. Louis Park  
Public Schools**

# Local Literacy Plan for Grades K-5

The intent of this document is to provide St. Louis Park stakeholders with a description of our district comprehensive Local Literacy Plan for students in Kindergarten through Grade 5. Our overarching Teaching and Learning goal is to continuously develop, design and align the district's fundamental processes of curriculum, instruction, intervention, assessment and professional development for the success of ALL learners. Outlined in this document you will find the essential components of a Local Literacy Plan as defined in MN Statute 120B.12:

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

### Curriculum

What is taught based on academic standards and benchmarks

### Instruction

Teaching methods designated to ensure academic success for all

### Intervention

Additional instructional time for students not yet at grade level and co-teaching with all teachers

### Assessment

Data used to inform instruction and monitor student learning

### Family and Community

Partnerships collaborations with stakeholders to share support and learning opportunities for learners

### Professional Development

Support and guidance for educators to provide high quality instruction to all students

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## Acknowledgements

District 283 regularly updates our Reading Well by Third Grade Plan. With guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education on literacy policy and practices, the review team listed above generously shared their expertise, influence and ideas that contributed greatly to the creation of this document. Their ongoing support, expertise and dedication to our learners is invaluable.

If you have questions regarding information in our Local Literacy Plan, please contact your school's principal.

# Overview

An effective elementary literacy program is a powerful vehicle that enables all students to become successful, independent readers, writers and thinkers. This is particularly important to support our goals of increasing student achievement and reducing the racial achievement gap. Our Black, Brown, and Indigenous students have traditionally been at risk for not meeting grade level outcomes. We believe that all students should have an academic identity that includes reading proficiently, and we regularly examine our practices and beliefs to ensure we continually develop systems and structures that are designed to benefit our students. To provide clarity regarding what constitutes effective literacy instruction in St. Louis Park Schools, a team of teachers, principals and teaching and learning staff collaborated to develop a comprehensive literacy plan for our district. The intent of this document is to provide our school community with a description of our comprehensive literacy plan to ensure consistency, coherence and alignment in messages, expectations and professional development for literacy. Our goal is to provide our students with a quality preschool-grade 12 Literacy and Language Arts Curriculum and ensure that all students in our schools become strong and effective readers, writers, and thinkers by grade 3 and beyond. Special attention is given to practices that are consistent with culturally relevant pedagogy and those that maximize gifts and talents of our students of color.

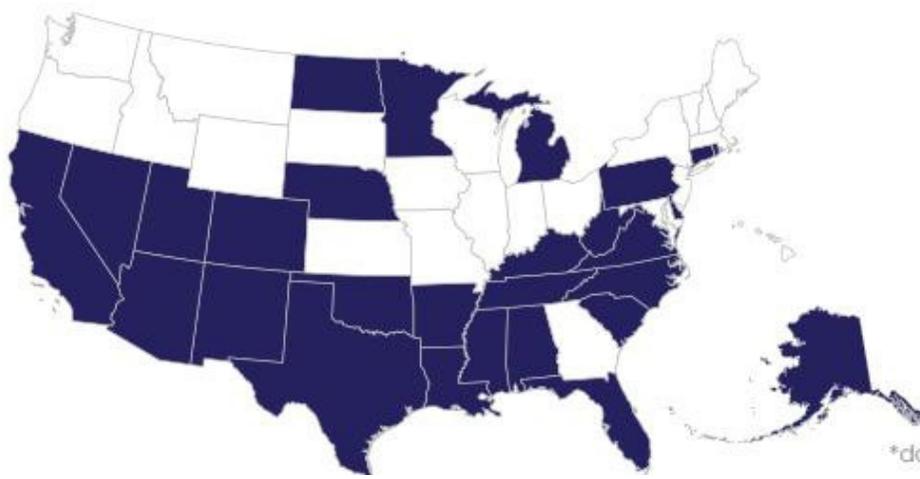
Consistent with section 122A.06 sub division 4, our exemplary teachers and leaders construct a comprehensive language arts program by providing best practice and meaningful instruction in reading, writing, listening, speaking, language and media literacy. As teachers model good reading and writing, they connect skills and strategy development across a literacy

continuum. Reading is an equity issue. Only about 35% of American children are reading proficiently, and these opportunity gaps are even more significant for underprivileged students. The good news is, we know how to close those gaps and help every child learn to read proficiently. The solution lies in evidence-based instruction because while learning to speak is an innate process, neuroscience research has shown that learning to read is not.

Through decades of studies in neuroscience, education, psychology, and more, experts have determined the best practices for teaching literacy, and we are seeing this evidence-based instruction make a difference in childrens' lives.

In fact, as of August 2022, 30 states have passed laws or implemented policies around evidence-based reading instruction to ensure every child is given their best chance to become successful, confident readers.





So, what is this evidence-based instruction? Simply put, it is instruction based on the science of reading. The science of reading is a body of research that definitively answers the question: “How does the human brain learn to read?” It spans more than 100 papers and the research has been growing for more than five decades. With studies from education, linguistics, psychology, and neurology, the science of reading includes research about how our brains process written words. The skills required to read can be broken down in many different ways.

In 2000, the National Reading Panel summed up effective reading instruction as requiring the following five concepts: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

Through the science of reading, we can better understand how we learn to read, what skills are involved in reading, and how those skills work together. But more than that, this research helps us to understand how educators can best teach those skills.

See, the science of reading is not a literacy method in and of itself. However, it can inform literacy instruction to ensure all students are given the opportunity to become successful readers.

Today, there are several approaches based in the science of reading, including Orton-Gillingham and the Wilson Reading System. These approaches, and others that teach foundational reading skills through explicit instruction are encompassed by the umbrella term: Structured Literacy. Structured Literacy is the application of knowledge from the science of reading which teaches children to read in an evidence-based and systematic way.

But more importantly, Structured Literacy approaches are explicit, systematic, cumulative, diagnostic, and responsive. Explicit means the concepts are directly taught and practiced. Systematic means the skills are taught in a “stairstep” fashion: Each skill builds on the last, and they are taught in a logical order that starts with the simple information and becomes progressively more complex. Cumulative means all the information builds upon earlier knowledge. Diagnostic and responsive means students' unique strengths and weaknesses are identified using differentiated instruction.

Our use of the Science of Reading includes structured literacy and also builds upon our history of balanced and culturally relevant literacy, ensuring that we teach writing and the expression of ideas (intellectualism, criticality, identity) as well as the skills of reading in our instruction. The research behind the pursuits of Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy (Muhammad, 2022) is key to this process.

# Curriculum and Instruction

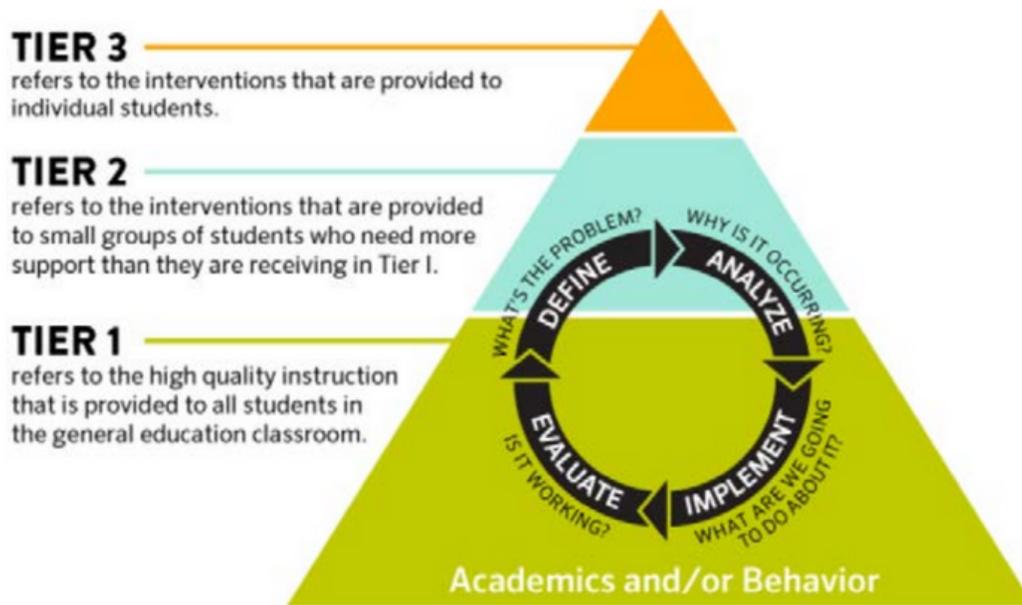
## Definition of Terms

- **Culturally Relevant Literacy** is defined as engagement of the five pursuits of identity development, skill, intellectualism, criticality and joy.
- **Curriculum** is defined by St. Louis Park Public Schools as an instructional framework guided by the Minnesota State Standards and benchmarks in concert with culturally relevant pedagogy. Curriculum is everything that impacts learning - stated or unstated, within our school community. Aquila Elementary, Peter Hobart Elementary, and Susan Lindgren Elementary offer the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme (IB/PYP). These three authorized IB/PYP primary schools join together with schools from across the world to create educational experiences that will prepare students for the challenges of the 21st Century. Spanish Immersion School provides a Spanish immersion education promoting academic excellence, intellectual curiosity, cultural understanding, and bilingualism in Spanish and English, while also involving the family and community in the development of lifelong learning. Together as a collective learning community, we offer our young learners robust learning opportunities where literacy is not only an integral part of our core educational programming, but something that is reinforced and enriched all day everyday through a wide variety of learning experiences.

*Literacy is the ability to use language to read, write, listen and speak in order to successfully participate in a social, economic, family and community life. (IRA, 2009)*

- **Identity** is defined as discovering who they are, who others say they are, and who they desire to be.
- **Skill** is defined as students demonstrating proficiency in reading (decoding, vocabulary, phonics, etc.).
- **Intellectualism** is defined as citing textual evidence and writing.
- **Criticality** is defined as critical thinking, students understanding power, humanity, inequities, oppression, anti-sexism and anti-racism.
- **Joy** is defined as students expressing happiness and a love for learning.

# Literacy Instruction



Core Instruction (Tier 1) is general instruction for all students and designed to represent on-grade level curriculum and instruction as intended for the general language arts classroom. All students are part of core instruction daily. Intervention is provided in addition to Tier 1 where instruction is based on academic standards and benchmarks. Students who need supplementary support receive small group instruction in addition to the core instruction provided in the classroom. Intervention is designed to bridge the learning gap for students who are approaching grade-level mastery and reading at grade level.

In other words, our instructional plan is designed so that ALL students can read well by the end of third grade. This is defined as all students demonstrating proficiency on standardized tests AND student performance that is not predictable by race.

Examples includes the ability for each student to:

- Use text evidence to quote accurately and make logical conclusions
- Identify relevant details that support conclusions from text
- Make generalizations and predictions
- Make inferences based on implicit text
- Distinguish fact from opinion in explicit text
- Summarize from a section of text or text as a whole
- Distinguish among literary elements
- Identify literary devices (e.g., puns, end rhyme)
- Identify figures of speech
- Use reasoning and evidence to understand word meanings
- Recognize how parts of text relate to the whole
- Identify author's use of perspective (point of view) and tone (attitude)
- Interpret authors' purposes and style(s) within and across text(s)
- Analyze author's credibility based methods of argumentation

In an effort to ensure all learners' proficiency in Language Arts (reading, writing, listening and speaking), a comprehensive curriculum study began in the Fall of 2013 to align curriculum, instruction and assessment and provide a comprehensive structure for Language Arts. Through the continuous improvement process, the findings of this study resulted in a curricular framework that will serve as a guide for balanced literacy instruction. Individual schools align curriculum to Units of Study/Integrated Units based on the needs of their community of learners and the intended rigor of the Language Arts Standards. Teachers from every grade level in every school participated in this study and lent their expertise and knowledge to the study process.

The outcomes of the study support closing the achievement gap by creating common understanding of grade level expectations, deepening our understanding of academic standards, enacting culturally relevant pedagogical practices, and creating common assessments. Implementation of this plan is ongoing through 2018.

A comprehensive approach to reading includes learning that follows the academic standards, and allows for flexibility, construction of meaning, critical thinking, and problem solving. Literacy is also the connection between other content areas as reading and writing all day is essential to academic success.

## Literacy Instruction: Guiding Principles

- Literacy begins at home; therefore, instruction must reflect connections to self, the community, and the world.
- Early intervention and timely instruction are essential to build a foundation for literacy success.
- Daily instructional decisions will be based on data and the developmental needs of individual students.
- Standards based curriculum is a key component of our literacy instruction.
- Quality, trained teachers are the most effective resource for closing the achievement gap.
- A strong literacy focus will be embedded into all content areas.
- Multiple perspectives are an essential part of instructional practice.
- Teachers use a variety of assessment data – including formative assessments and progress monitoring data - to guide instruction and/or measure student growth.
- All students will have access to high interest books that they are able to read.
- Rigorous academic instruction will be provided for students at all levels to ensure individual student growth.
- Effective instruction develops strategic readers who construct meaning from a wide variety of texts.
- Multiple purposes for writing must be explicitly taught with regular opportunities to practice writing.
- A combination of teacher and student choice is most effective for student learning.
- Sustained and purposeful independent reading must be a part of each academic day, an essential ingredient for student growth.
- Reading a text multiple times can deepen understanding. Teachers will model strategies for reading a text multiple times.
- Digital learning opportunities will be available to all learners.
- The preferred instructional model for teaching literacy is inclusive, collaborative and interactive.
- In order to close achievement gaps, it is important to accelerate student growth beyond a typical one-year growth target.

To ensure all students are reading well by third grade and beyond, elementary sites will follow a cycle of continuous improvement. This begins with examining student data to determine the areas of greatest student need that leads to: pinpointing areas where additional educator learning is necessary, identifying and creating learning experiences to address these adult needs, developing powerful lessons and assessments, applying new strategies in the

classroom, examining perspectives on the impact of race in our teaching and learning ideals, refining new learning into more powerful lessons and assessments, reflecting on the impact on student learning, and repeating the cycle with new goals. Collaborative Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), grade level teams, and other professional development opportunities are in place to support educator growth and development to meet student needs.

## Literacy Instruction: The Structure of Classroom Literacy Instruction

In a balanced literacy classroom there must be, at a minimum, 90 minutes dedicated to reading, with an additional 30 minutes of writing instruction. These 120 minutes are part of the language arts block. This block should not be split into more than two halves as sustained and dedicated time is important.

Example of how reading instructional time might be scheduled:

### Whole Group Instruction

(All students participating in the same learning at the same time) (15 - 20 Minutes)

- **Introduction:** The teacher introduces and explicitly instructs the main learning of the day that is aligned to the ELA grade level benchmarks and IB Planner/Integrated Unit of Study. This includes interactive reading aloud with our Making Meaning curriculum.
- **Modeling:** The teacher shows the students how by modeling the learning of the lesson.
- **Setting the Purpose:** The teacher clearly explains what students will learn and be able to demonstrate after which they have time for guided practice and independent work relating to this lesson.



This is also a time to reinforce before-reading, during-reading, and after-reading, writing, and thinking strategies.

### This looks like:

- Teacher reads to students. Students join in with teacher at appropriate places.
- Students participate in reading texts they are not yet able to read independently.
- Reading level crosses instructional reading levels.
- The expectation is to engage 100% of students in reading.
- Teachers ask questions that are robust and open ended, and encourage students to ask questions that lead to understanding of text using our Making Meaning curriculum as the primary teaching resource.

## Small Group Instruction and Independent Learning

(Groups of students or individual students participating in a variety of learning opportunities simultaneously as assigned by the teacher) (60-80 minutes)

During this time, the teacher is meeting in small groups, conferring with and observing and assessing individual students.

### Small Group

#### Guided Reading:

- The teachers provide support for small, flexible groups of readers and continually monitor growth and development.
- Readers are grouped according to need, not just reading level.
- During guided reading, teachers work with students at their instructional level to guide them in using text to make meaning.
- The teacher helps students learn to use reading strategies, such as context clues, letter and sound knowledge, phonics

- strategies, syntax or word structure, as they read a text that is unfamiliar to them.
- The goal of guided reading is for students to use these strategies independently on their way to becoming fluent, on-grade level skilled readers through practice and guided support.
- Children have the opportunity to: develop as individual readers, develop reading strategies, enjoy success while reading for meaning, and learn how to select and enjoy texts on their own.

#### Paired Reading:

- Students work with a partner(s) to read and discuss text.
- Students apply and practice the skills and strategies learned in whole group and guided reading lessons.

Classroom teachers are expected to meet with their lowest ability readers every day in guided reading. If paraprofessional or volunteer support is available, higher ability students should read with these other adults more regularly than lower ability students. All students below grade level are regularly monitored for progress toward grade level goals, and instruction is planned accordingly.

### Traditional Grouping

- Based on reading ability
- Change is rare
- One group prevails
- Set progression of text and planning
- Skill focus
- Limited variety

### Flexible Grouping

- Based on ability to process
- Continuous change based on assessment
- Different grouping for different purposes
- Instruction based on assessed needs
- Reading for meaning and problem solving

## Independent Learning

### Independent Reading:

- Children read books that are engaging, easy, or comfortable for them to read and must often be self-selected.
- The teacher guides students to increase the challenge of their selections.
- Students learn to independently select books or revisit books previously used for instruction and respond in book logs and response journals.

### Literacy Centers:

- A literacy center is designed as a place where students complete independent activities while other students are in guided reading.
- Specific tasks lead children to explore and practice the concepts taught in classroom lessons and experienced in guided reading lessons, shared reading or writing experiences.
- The centers should regularly include word work, listening to reading, reading independently, and a wide variety of writing activities.

### Ongoing Assessment:

- The teacher schedules time to observe, conference, assess and monitor progress of students while they work using our Making Meaning curriculum resources as the primary tool.

*From the moment they enter elementary school, every encounter students have with text should involve thoughtful interaction with print and story that translates into deep understanding. (Preventing Misguided Reading, Burkins & Croft. p. 84)*

## Return to Whole Group Learning

(10-20 minutes)

The teacher revisits the purpose and talks about the learning of the day. Students share and turn in their work to show their progress. Readers share celebrations, reflections and new understanding—usually related to the teaching done during the mini-lesson.



# Literacy Instruction: Rituals, Routines and Responsibilities

In order for this model to work and work well, the teacher must do several things including:

## **Classroom Management**

The teacher must create an environment that is productive and organized. Students must have a clear understanding of what they are supposed to be doing at all times and be aware of opportunities to practice new routines.

## **The Belief that All Students Can Learn to Read**

Believe that all students, especially our Black, Brown, and indigenous students, can learn and become independent learners. Work with students to design classroom routines and rituals. Explain the responsibilities of all classroom members. Design rubrics and checklists that can assist students in their work.

## **Clear, Aligned Instructional Goals and Assessments**

Ensure that the learning goals are aligned to the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in a culturally relevant manner. In thinking of each learning area, the teacher must determine if that learning is new and will be introduced, if students were exposed to the learning before, if the learning is ongoing, or if it must be mastered during that school year. At this time, the teacher can determine initial assessments to determine the depth of student knowledge on these learning areas, progress monitoring assessments to ensure that the instruction is working, and summative assessments to determine if students can demonstrate the learning.

## **A Variety of Instructional Tools, Resources and Strategies**

Balanced literacy is a philosophy of teaching. Any given materials will need to be used as dictated by the needs of the students.



Balanced literacy is a combination of the art and science of teaching literacy. Assessments guide the instruction, identify learning needs, and determine if the instructions works. It is important to have resources, such as a classroom library with a balance of fiction and nonfiction, and hands-on manipulatives to assist in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, and word analysis. If one understands the philosophy of balanced literacy instruction, one can use any set of materials or leveled books for instruction. The district has adopted a variety of research-based instructional resources and practices to support student learning in this manner.

## **Instructional Materials, Programs and Practices**

In a balanced literacy classroom, instruction is based on developing each reader, moving and supporting a minimum of a full year of reading growth in each school year for students at grade level, and more than a year's growth for students below grade level. Curriculum goals, academic standards, and assessment data are used to inform and drive instruction

## Defining the Balanced Literacy Approach



“In a truly balanced literacy program, how you teach is as important as what you teach... We wonder: How can we maintain the good practices of the past without ignoring current evidence about how children learn? Have we gone too far in one direction? What we're searching for, then, is balance, and in that search, concerns common to all teachers have surfaced. In this article, I focus on some of them – and how we have found middle ground” (Strickland, 2007).

“It is important to underscore the place of phonics in a beginning literacy program. Systematic phonics instruction by itself does not help students acquire all the processes they need to become successful readers and writers. It needs to be combined with other essential instructional components to create a complete and balanced program” (Willows, 2002).



“There is no single method or single combination of methods that can successfully teach all children to read. Therefore, teachers must have a strong knowledge of multiple methods for teaching reading and a strong knowledge of the children in their care so they can create the appropriate balance of methods needed for the children they teach.” There is a strong research base supporting this position. Largescale studies of reading methods have shown that no one method is better than any other method in all settings and situations (Adams, 1990; Bond & Dykstra, 1967; Foorman et al., 1998; Hoffman, 1994; Stallings, 1975)

***“Here is a simple fact: Wide, abundant reading is the surest route out of poverty and the limitations that impose themselves on the less literate. Reading changes everything. According to Jacques Barzun, ‘No subject of study is more important than reading... all other intellectual powers depend on it.’ (p.95) - Focus, Schmoker***

# Assessments

A key component of balanced literacy is the use of systematic assessment to inform instruction. This includes assessments for screening, diagnostic, progress monitoring and summative purposes. It is imperative that teachers know the current strengths and needs of each student, specifically: phonemic awareness; phonics and word analysis; fluency; vocabulary development; and comprehension. To succeed at reading, a child must be able to identify or "read" printed words and to understand the story or text composed of those words. Both identifying words and understanding text are critical to reading success. By regularly assessing students' progress in reading development, educators can identify which students need more intensive help and which are likely to make good progress with quality core instruction alone.

Teachers and leaders at all grade levels need reliable and valid assessments so that they can identify those students who are learning as expected, and those who need extra help. It is useful to collect information on oral language development, acquisition of high frequency words, reading fluency, concepts of print, and other emergent literacy indicators of reading readiness. Some skills are more easily measured as they develop over a limited time (i.e., letter naming, consonant sounds, etc.) where language, comprehension and vocabulary development are more difficult to measure as they develop over a lifetime. The comprehension assessments that are widely used today focus on only a few tasks and may inadvertently limit the reading curriculum to preparation for those isolated tasks, especially in the early grades. This is why St. Louis Park Schools takes a comprehensive approach to collecting proficiency, growth, and grade level data on all students.

## Multiple measures used to determine students' level of proficiency include:

- **FAST early Reading Assessment** (ERA) is used by classroom teachers in Grades K-1 to assess and monitor students in: concepts of print, onset sounds, letter name fluency, letter sound fluency, rhyming, segmenting phonemes, blending, final phoneme and word and sentence fluency.
  - The reason why we use the FAST assessment is because it is on MDE's "List of Universal Screening Tools for Identifying Characteristics of Dyslexia" (p. 15). The link to the list of approved assessments is located on this site: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/prof/Dyslexia/>
- **FAST Curriculum-based Measures** (CBM) is used by teachers in grades 1 and 2, and is available to all teachers in grades 3-5 as a tool for screening students and progress to assess and monitor students reading fluency. This has been proven to be a highly effective tool for monitoring reading proficiency.
- **Measures of Academic Progress** (MAP) is used by classroom teachers in Grades 2-5 to assess and monitor students in key areas of growth and reading development.
- **WIDA/ACCESS** is used as a screener and an assessment for English Language proficiency. This annual assessment. This annual assessment gives educators and parents information about the ELP level of ELs in Kindergarten through grade 12 in the skill areas of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- **Individualized Daily Reading Conferences and Grade Level Common Assessments** are used by classroom teachers to assess proficiency using one-on-one conferencing and text analysis.

### **Screening Assessments**

Screening assessments (CBM and ERA) are quick and efficient measures of overall ability and critical skills known to be strong indicators of student performance on grade level tests. Screening of all students three times a year helps to establish expected proficiency outcomes and informs program effectiveness. Results can be used as a starting point for instruction or to indicate a need for further evaluation.

### **Progress Monitoring Assessments**

Progress monitoring (FAST) tools are brief and administered with more regularity than screening and diagnostic tools. Progress monitoring assessment data is collected, evaluated, and used on an ongoing basis. This information is used to determine student's progress toward grade level outcomes, to provide information on the effectiveness of intervention and to modify the intervention protocols if necessary. In general, assessment is used to measure development and learning, to guide program planning and decision making, to identify children who might benefit from special services, and to report to and communicate to families and other stakeholders.



# Interventions

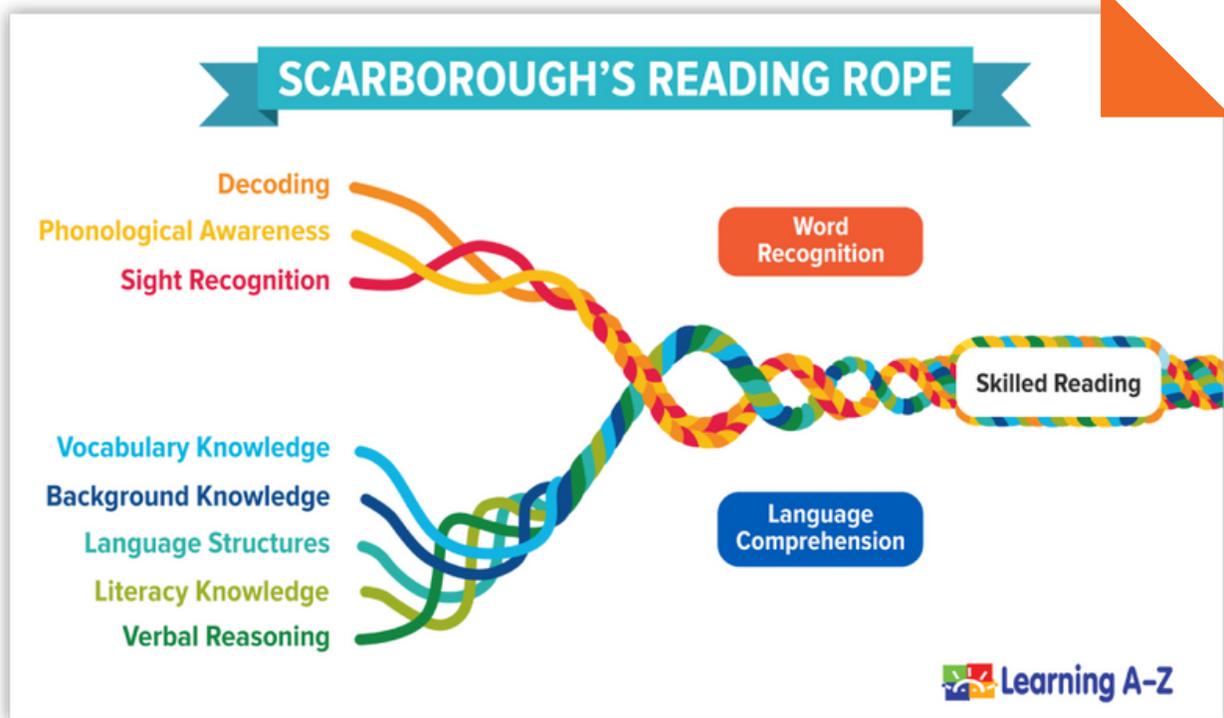
Classroom teachers, talent development teacher, multilingual teachers, special education teachers, and literacy specialists support students not yet at grade level in a wide variety of ways. For specific information on individual school programs and practices, please contact your building principal. District-wide, we strive to provide programs and time within the school day to best meet the needs of our learners through additional time for instruction, common assessments, ongoing professional development and regular progress monitoring.

We offer a continuum of services based on a multi-tiered level of services for all students, whether it's intervention for a student who needs more support or enrichment for a student who needs extension. Based on data and observation, teachers can develop purposeful, targeted intervention to meet the specific needs of each individual child. Intervention is provided in addition to classroom instruction for students at risk of not reaching grade level outcomes without additional support.

Such interventions can take place in several different situations: (a) in regular classrooms through differentiated instruction; (b) through co teaching and modeling by literacy specialists during the school day; (c) before and after school opportunities, including summer school.



## Guiding Principles of Interventions



1. Interventions must be guided by student data and be in response to the data on student progress.
2. Interventions must be offered as soon as it is clear the student is not meeting expectations that are critical to reading growth.
3. Progress is monitored regularly to determine whether or not students are responding adequately to the instruction/intervention. This information is used to match the level, intensity, duration, and frequency of instruction/ intervention to the identified student needs.
4. Interventions must significantly increase the intensity of instruction and practice, which is accomplished primarily by increasing instructional time or reducing the size of the instructional group, or doing both.
5. Interventions must provide the opportunity for explicit (direct) and systematic instruction and practice along with cumulative review to insure mastery.
6. Interventions must be motivating, engaging, and supportive—a positive atmosphere is essential.
7. Research-based practices must not only provide information about “what works,” but also what works with whom, by whom, in what contexts, and on which outcomes.
8. Interventions can be administered by a range of professionals, however the more severe the reading difficulty, the greater the need for expertise in the area of reading. The impact of the teacher is the single most powerful variable in explaining student reading achievement.
9. Interventions should be based on research and successful outcomes.
10. Pairing effective supplementary instruction with appropriate classroom lessons produces better gains than classroom reading alone.

In St. Louis Park, we use a wide variety of evidence-based intervention materials to ensure students are receiving high quality instruction. The needs of students drive instructional decisions, so not all students need all intervention options. Some of the most commonly used intervention materials are listed below. Additional resources may be added at any time as we continue to monitor the needs of students. For more detailed information about the specific interventions available at your child's school, contact your building principal.

**Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)** is a structured, peer-mediated reading activity to build phonics and fluency understanding in which all students in a class work in pairs and take turns being coach and reader. St. Louis Park Public Schools: Curriculum & Instruction, Sept. 2019 | Page 15

**Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS)** Driven by research-based approaches to literacy, PRESS incorporates quality core instruction, data-driven instructional decisions and interventions, and meaningful professional development to support systemic change.

**Orton-Gillingham** is a multisensory approach in teaching reading and language skills that utilizes sequential teaching of reading skills in a direct, systemic way with an emphasis on decoding.

**Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)** is a research-based approach for teaching. There are 8 components for lesson planning and instruction that teach content while developing academic English for English learners.



**Systematic Instruction in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, and Sight Words (SIPPS®)** is a research-based foundational skills program proven to help both new and struggling readers in grades K–12, including English learners and students identified with dyslexia. The program's systematic scope and sequence provides a structured-literacy approach to instruction through explicit routines focused on phonological awareness, spelling-sounds, and sight words.

**Reading A-Z Online Books** and resources correlated to state and Common Core Standards, Reading lessons, decodable books, reader's theater scripts, reading worksheets and assessments, Leveled readers spanned across 29 levels of difficulty; Fluency passages to improve reading rate, accuracy and expression; Phonological awareness and phonics lessons, and flashcards.

# Parental, Caregiver and Family Involvement

Communicating with parents about how their children are doing in school is essential to our success. The purpose and benefits of including families in educational programming are well substantiated in research. The more that schools, communities, and family partners collaborate, the more learning is enhanced for all. We strive for ongoing and clear communication on learning, assessments, and outside of school activities that support literacy development for all of our stakeholders. We work toward this goal in many ways:



- **School newsletters and communications** from classroom teachers include information for all families on how to support reading development at home. This communication should be provided in multiple languages whenever necessary. Examples include digital learning opportunities with links from the school website, book bags to encourage reading outside of school, ideas on how to talk to learners about what they are reading, etc.
- **Parent/teacher conferences** are held two times per year. This gives the teacher the opportunity to ensure that parents are notified of their child's progress and ongoing reading development goals. (See your child's school for specific conference times and dates.)
- **Report cards** are mailed to parents two times per year in K-5. In January report cards indicate a student's progress toward grade level expectations, and in June the report card indicates what students mastered by the end of the school year.
- **MAP and FAST results** are available to parents at the end of fall, winter and spring test windows. In most cases this information is shared face to face or mailed home.
- **MCA results** are available to schools and parents after MDE releases results to schools in late August or early September. Individual Student Reports (ISRs) are sent home to families in the fall and indicate a student's previous year's progress toward grade-level proficiency.
- **Curriculum nights, parent information nights, reading events, and various other activities** are conducted throughout the school year to offer families the opportunity to learn more about what students are doing at school, and how parents and other adults can support reading development at home or outside of school time.
- **Parents are notified** when students are not making adequate progress. Current achievement levels and programming is explained, including intervention and/or supplemental instruction, along with resources that are available for parents to access at home.
- **Information on community events** that include reading and literacy development are publicized and information is provided. This could include events at the public library, community housing organizations, etc.

# Professional Development

Systematic processes for continuous improvement are embedded in all aspects of the district in the pursuit of performance excellence. Introducing new teaching practices or refining instructional practices is challenging and complex. Teacher teamwork and collaboration makes these complex tasks more manageable, stimulates new ideas, and promotes coherence in a school's curriculum and instruction. Working together, teachers have the skills and resources to attempt new practices that would exhaust the energy, skill, or resources of an individual teacher.

Professional development opportunities for teachers are built into the regular school schedule and are available in the summer. All elementary teachers are a part of a collaborative team, including specialists, and are provided regularly scheduled meetings to address students' needs as they arise.

**Our priority for professional learning in 2022-2024 is:**

*Sustain and deepen culturally relevant literacy development through the Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE) Team process.*



This includes dedicated professional development days in our school calendar, time set aside for whole school collaboration as well as grade-level conversations. There is a culture of collaboration that supports school-wide efforts to drive cultural changes and develop district-wide accountability models that support literacy development in all students. During professional development, teachers are encouraged and supported to analyze data, engage in goal setting, and reflect on effectiveness of implementation of their instructional practices. Teachers have opportunities to receive on-going access to relevant evidence-based practices through on-site and off-site workshops, such as grade level trainings in guided reading, instructional coach support, and the district sponsored days for the LETRS program offered during the school year.

## Literacy Specialist

Each site has a Literacy Specialist who assists in the coaching, modeling, and development of literacy strategies with teachers in their classrooms. These Literacy Specialists help build the capacity of all of our teachers in the science of reading an all aspects of culturally relevant literacy.

## CARE Teams

For example, all teachers in St. Louis Park are part of at least one CARE Team (Collaborative Action Research for Equity Team):

- Each CARE team is based on the study and implementation of "Best Practices" in culturally relevant teaching and learning.
- Best practices are identified after student work and assessment data are analyzed by the CARE Team and are discussed with focal students.
- CARE Teams record their work using a CARE log at least twice per month. The log asks them to work on a researchable questions around culturally relevant literacy, which we believe will positively impact the learning of all students and help close the achievement gap.

CARE teams form discussions around guiding questions such as:

- What is it we expect students to learn, especially our marginalized students?
- How will we respond when students don't learn, especially our Black, Brown, and Indigenous learners
- How will we respond when students already know it?

By addressing these questions in a systemic manner, teaching effectiveness increases and student achievement is enhanced. Effective teachers provide culturally responsive instruction by building on students' cultural strengths.

Responsibility is shared among all educators (e.g., general education, special education, related service



personnel, ELL, Title I) for the academic progress of all students. Continuous improvement and professional development work in tandem to address school district efforts in reaching student achievement goals outlined in our Strategic Plan, our World's Best Workforce Plan, and our School Improvement Plans.

In St. Louis Park Schools, CARE Teams are an integral component of a systemic approach to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps. To that end, we are committed to achieving racial equity in education. We engage in professional development and coaching practices that help educators to transform beliefs, behaviors, and results so that all of our students can achieve at their highest levels of literacy and live empowered lives.

## Measurement Areas



- **Identity** - students discover who they are, who others say they are, and who they desire to be
- **Skills** - students and teachers demonstrate proficiency in the science of reading (decoding, vocabulary, phonics, phenomenological awareness, fluency, comprehension, etc.)
- **Intellectualism** - citing textual evidence, writing, and expression of ideas
- **Criticality** - critical thinking, students understand power, humanity, inequities, oppression, anti-sexism and anti-racism in developmentally appropriate ways
- **Joy** - students express happiness and a love for learning

# Summary

Because of the importance of literacy development, especially during the primary grades, it is important to create and sustain systematic approaches to instruction, intervention, and assessment. Beginning at an early age, students must acquire the knowledge, skills, and strategies that will allow them to read, write, and think critically.

In *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Anderson, Heibert, Scott, and Wilkinson, (1985) stated,



“Reading is a basic life skill. It is a cornerstone for a child’s success in schools, and indeed, throughout life. Without the ability to read well, opportunities for personal fulfillment and job success will be lost” (p. 1).

Teachers and leaders use research-based practices with a racial equity lens to design instruction that responds to the learning needs of individual students. By aligning assessments, interventions, and instruction to better meet the needs of all learners, we ensure that students are well prepared for the demands of learning through their PK-12 experience and beyond. St. Louis Park Schools is well on the way to ensuring that all students are reading well by third grade, as this report indicates. We will continue to strive to refine our programs and practices to meet the needs of our learners, and challenge ourselves as educators to model lifelong learning.



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