LYME-OLD LYME SCHOOLS

Regional School District #18

A Private School Experience *in a Public School Setting*

Regular Board of Education Meeting
December 4, 2024

Board Present: Jason Kemp, Chair; Anna James, Vice Chair; Christopher Staab, Treasurer; Martha Shoemaker, Secretary; Scott Brown; Laura Dean-Frazier; Susan Fogliano; Gavin Lodge; Alexander Lowry

Administration Present: Ian Neviaser, Superintendent of Schools; Mark Ambruso, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum; Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services; Kelly Enoch, Principal of Mile Creek School; Allison Hine, Principal of Lyme Consolidated School; Sean Kennedy, Assistant Principal of Mile Creek School; Holly McCalla, Business Manager; Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School; Ron Turner, Director of Facilities & Technology; Noah Ventola, Assistant Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School; James Wygonik, Principal of Lyme-Old Lyme High School

Others Present: Olivia Hersant, RETA Co-President; Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti, High School Student Representatives; several members of the LOLHS Student Council

I. Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Superintendent Neviaser. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. Election of Board Officers
MOTION: Mrs. James made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lowry, to nominate Jason Kemp as Chairman of the Board of Education. There were no further nominations.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion by paper ballot vote.

MOTION: Mr. Lodge made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Fogliano, to nominate Anna James as Vice Chairman of the Board of Education. There were no further nominations.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion by paper ballot vote.

MOTION: Mr. Lodge made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to nominate Christoper Staab as Treasurer of the Board of Education. There were no further nominations.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion by paper ballot vote.

MOTION: Mrs. James made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lodge, to nominate Martha Shoemaker as Secretary of the Board of Education. There were no further nominations.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion by paper ballot vote.

III. Consent Agenda

1. Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Mr. Lowry made a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lodge, to approve the minutes of Special Meeting and Regular Meeting of November 6, 2024 as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

IV. Visitors

1. LOLHS Student Council Overview

Jeanne Manfredi, Assistant Principal of LOLHS, and co-presidents of the Student Council (Bella Ziegler, Colette Marchant, Nick Turtoro and Micah Bass) gave a presentation on the work of the Student Council. It included information on positions of leadership and their annual events.

2. Report from Student Representatives

Chloe Datum and Ada LaConti reported on the following activities taking place at the schools:

At LOLHS: At the high school, November was an exciting month. The Old Lyme Players put on their production of *The Drama Department* which was a hit and also provided an opportunity for class fundraisers through the bake sale at intermission. Parents got the opportunity to speak to their students' teachers on report card night. At the annual Veterans Day assembly, students heard from Mark and Sarah Walsh who shared their experience in the Coast Guard and shared how everyone can carry the ideals of the armed forces in everyday life. Student council held a blood drive where they hit their goal of 20 donors. To finish off the month strong before break, we had our first "new" pep rally which was a huge success and had everyone showing their wildcat spirit. Liam Corrigan came to speak to students about his gold medal experience in the Olympics, which reminded us why it is so important to keep going even after failure. Winter sports have begun, and rehearsals for the musical *Newsies* have begun for the upcoming performances in March. In December there are many things to look forward to including the annual National Honor Society toy drive and holiday spirit week and assembly at the end of the month.

At LOLMS: November was a busy and exciting month at LOLMS. We kicked off with the first dance of the school year, which saw over 170 students dressed in creative costumes. Later in the month, LOLMS hosted 50 students from Norwich and Canterbury who joined 30 of our students in collaborative workshops focused on leadership and communication skills. On November 19, we held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the renovated greenhouse with the support and collaboration of the Lyme-Old Lyme Food Share Garden. Before Thanksgiving, we held parent-teacher conferences, achieving an impressive 80% parent participation rate. Students have successfully completed quarter one and are making great progress toward their academic goals. We ended the month on a high note with a surprise visit from Olympic gold medalist Liam Corrigan who inspired the students with his powerful message about grit and perseverance on his journey to achieving Olympic success.

At Mile Creek and Lyme School: At both Lyme and Mile Creek School, we welcomed many veterans and were honored to have them participate in the Veterans Day program. Students at each grade level performed various presentations for the event. All elementary teachers came together in November for grade level meetings. These provide an opportunity for teachers across the district to attend targeted professional development with the math and ELA specialists and share best practices. Parent-teacher conferences were held just before the recent break and were a valuable chance for families to learn about their individual child's growth and development since the start of the school year. At Lyme School, the fifth graders visited the Mashantucket Pequot Museum as a culmination of their study of the Indigenous peoples of Connecticut. At Mile Creek School, fifth graders were visited by staff from Bushy Hill and engaged in a variety of outdoor activities to help them better understand the lives of Indigenous peoples. At both schools, individual projects created by students based on their studies of Indigenous peoples are on display in the library media center. First graders at both schools are enjoying visits from mystery readers, a long-standing tradition of having guests come into the classrooms to read their favorite picture books.

In the Preschool Program: November was a busy month at the preschool. We celebrated Veterans Day with a walking trip to the town hall, we made "thankful turkeys" with our middle school buddies and our families visited for the annual Stone Soup celebration. In December we will be learning about family, the five senses and gingerbread. Later this week, we will welcome representatives from the Florence Griswold Museum who will help us make special gifts for our families, and we are looking forward to welcoming families on December 13 for the annual gingerbread celebration during which we will show our artwork and build gingerbread houses. We are looking forward to participating in PJ Day for the Kids on December 19, which is a fundraiser for the Connecticut Children's Cancer Hospital, and we are excited to have the high school choir sing at Center School on December 20. This month we will learn the letters J, K and L, the AABB pattern and numbers 1-7. The artist of the month is Helen Frankenthaler, the color is green and the shape of the month is the rectangle.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

V. Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

VI. Administrative Reports

1. Superintendent's Report

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the December personnel report which reflected the following:

Vacancies	
Instructional Assistants	All Levels

Appointments			
Name	**Position**	**Location**	**Effective Date**
Leah Grear	Art Teacher (.5 FTE – long-term substitute position)	Lyme School	March 2025
Matthew Guevara	Music Teacher	Mile Creek School	January 2, 2025

Mr. Neviaser reviewed the December enrollment report which reflected a total of 1,282 students in-house, an increase of three students from last month this time.

Mr. Neviaser gave an update on the progress towards the district goals.

Curriculum

Utilize Panorama to track and monitor progress across all domains in order to make informed decisions about individual student programming.

Continue to use Panorama with students to monitor interventions and data.

Human Resources

In alignment with state guidelines, implement the newly created Region 18 Educator Support Plan and gather feedback on the process to inform any plan revisions for year two.

Continue to make changes to the plan based on feedback from CSDE and update staff on those changes.

Community

In order to streamline communication to our students and families, evaluate school and district processes to determine the most efficient and effective methods of disseminating information.

Developing a guide for parents/community members detailing where to go for specific information.

Facilities

In preparation for construction to begin, develop strategies to minimize classroom disruption, adhere to the approved budget and design, and continue to maintain existing facilities via the five-year plan.

Construction continues; final round of bids out for Mile Creek.

Sustainability
Maintain and expand "Green Teams" at each building to identify, address, and support student, staff and community-driven sustainability initiatives.
Center School: This month, preschool students are learning to turn off the water while washing their hands, and they are being reminded to use a reasonable number of paper towels to dry their hands. Students continue to practice recycling in their classrooms and in the cafeteria.

Lyme School: Green Team created a video to promote Trex and is showing it to students. They are also utilizing donated UV planter systems to germinate seeds and grow plants inside this winter.

Mile Creek School: Green Team is continuing to transfer ownership of the TREX program responsibilities to students. Students are collecting, weighing and charting all of the plastic film, and parents are transporting the bags to Big Y.

LOLMS: Prepared for and held the ribbon cutting ceremony for the greenhouse.

LOLHS: Annual Food Drive collected 573 pounds of food and personal care items. Planning "save the silverware" campaign, movie night and researching waste/recycling improvements for cafe/commons area.

Board of Education
Attend professional development opportunities offered through CABE including the CABE/CAPSS Convention and other statewide board of education activities.
Four Board members attended CABE/CAPSS Convention.

Mr. Neviaser reminded the Board about the upcoming budget presentations scheduled in January.

2. Business Manager's Report
Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Executive Budget Summary as of November 30, 2024. Fluctuations of note: The district spending is on track with last year. Plant operations and maintenance is down year over year due to encumbrances, mostly in purchased service accounts, as well as limited spending on contingency this year versus about $41,000 at this point last year. Special education overage is based upon student need.

Mr. Staab asked about the increase in special education costs and whether they might exceed budget. Mrs. McCalla explained the unknowns and fluctuations that can occur in this account.

Mrs. McCalla reported on the funds received from the towns year to date.

	2024-2025 Received YTD
Town of Old Lyme	$10,683,425
Town of Lyme	$2,410,232

Mrs. McCalla reviewed the Contingency Maintenance Report. There was no new spending, and the balance remains at $186,000.

VII. Educational Presentation

1. Bookworms Program

Michelle Dean, Director of Curriculum, gave a presentation on a new program called Bookworms which is a comprehensive literacy program designed for K-5 students. It focuses on improving reading skills through structured activities including daily fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and writing work. This program applies the science of reading but also promotes the love of reading. Mrs. Dean's presentation is attached to these minutes for informational purposes.

The following elementary teachers were present at the meeting because of their involvement in the research and selection of this program: Kristen Hatchel, Susan Oliver, Ashlie Sobus, Molly Watson and Erin Kennedy (not present).

Follow-up and lengthy discussion followed the presentation. Comments and questions centered on these subjects: length of instruction; feedback from teachers on positives of program; genres of books being read; number of books made available per class; instruction at higher level (grades 4-5); particulars of state mandate on implementation of program; reasons for choice selection of this program; excessive screen time effect on students; artwork in books and engagement of students; the decline of waiver from the state and their reasoning behind their evaluation; and comments from parents at recent conferences.

VIII. Chairman & Committee Reports:

a. *Facilities*. No report.

b. *Finance*. No report.

c. *Communications*. Mrs. James reported that the sex discrimination/harassment policy was reviewed and revised at their meeting on November 12. A first reading will occur under New Business.

d. *Policy*. Mrs. Dean-Frazier commended Bridget Compagno for her communication and marketing strategies. She also provided highlights of their meeting of November 12, which included discussion on submissions to the local *Events* magazine and development of a guide on where to find specific information. The *Focus on Education* newsletter is at the printer and will be published soon. A new district video is also near completion.

e. *LEARN*. No report.

f. *LOL Prevention Coalition*. A meeting with the new prevention coordinator was recently held. The 2023 student survey was reviewed.

g. *PreK-8 Building Committee.* Mrs. Fogliano provided the following update:

Our Superintendent Ian Neviaser, our Director of Facilities Ron Turner and his associate Brian Howe have been hard at work overseeing the Downes Construction crews at the LOLMS, Center School and Lyme Consolidated since the commencement of construction on November 4. Acoustical ceiling tiles are down in those three schools where necessary. Precise measurements have been taken so that HVAC ductwork can be fabricated. Construction crews work after 3:00 p.m. and clean up each night. (Reminder: All contractors who work on our campuses have had security checks.) Last month the Building Committee and the Board of Education approved the vast majority of the bids for the Mile Creek portion of the project. We had to rework the Mile Creek sitework design to exclude the underground water tank and the pump house. The newly designed sitework proposal is out to bid, and those bids are expected back on December 18. The Building Committee and Board of Ed should have these bids in hand for approval in early January. This will allow us to break ground for the addition to Mile Creek School later that month. So, we are launched! The Building Committee's primary role going forward will be tight oversight of the construction progress, deadlines and, of course, the bottom lines. A subgroup of the Building Committee continues to attend the weekly Owner's Meetings with Downes Construction, SP&A Architects and our Administrative Team. We will start to see a monthly accounting of work completed and billed. Please feel free to contact myself or Ian if you or members of the public have questions.

Mrs. Fogliano was commended by several Board members for her communication of information to the Board on the building project.

IX. New Business

1. Approval of Bookworms Program

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to approve the Bookworms Program as an enhancement to the current reading program as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted in favor of the motion. Mrs. James voted against the motion because of her opposition to state mandates. Motion passed 8-1.

2. Tuition Student Requests at LOLMS, Center School and Mile Creek School

Mr. Neviaser reviewed three tuition student requests of a 7th grade student, a PK-4 student for the 2025-2026 school year (child of staff member) and a 3rd grade student. He recommended approval of the requests with the caveat that the request for the PK-4 program be contingent on enrollment numbers for next year.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. James, to approve the three tuition student requests for LOLMS, Center School and Mile Creek School as presented. The request for enrollment in the PK-4 program for the 2025-2026 school year is contingent on enrollment numbers.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

3. Childrearing Leave Requests

Mr. Neviaser reviewed a childrearing leave request of Kelliann Regan, Physical Education Teacher at LOLHS, and Megan Wilson, Kindergarten Teacher at Mile Creek School.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to approve the childrearing leave request of Kelliann Regan and Megan Wilson as presented.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

4. Policy Review – Prohibition of Sex Discrimination

Mr. Neviaser reviewed this revised policy recommended by Shipman and Goodwin (personnel and student versions and the administrative regulations) which would replace the current Board policy. Mr. Neviaser explained that although there is not much change to the policy, the newer version provides more guidance on prompt and equitable resolution of complaints made by students and staff.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Shoemaker, to waive the first reading and approve Policy 4118.112/4218.112 (personnel) and Policy 5145.44 (students) Prohibition of Sex Discrimination, Including Sex-Based Harassment.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

5. Builder's Risk Insurance Policy for Mile Creek School

Mrs. McCalla provided the following background information on this agenda item: insurances and bonding fees related to the building project were to be paid from the general fund budget; however, pricing and timing of expenditures were unknown at the time of budget development. Multiple vendors/policies were reviewed and priced prior to selection. Costs are expected to be covered by the interest earned off the bond funds, currently in a short term investment fund.

MOTION: Mr. Staab made a motion, which was seconded by Mrs. Dean-Frazier, to approve the Builder's Risk Insurance Policy for Mile Creek School in the amount of $91,533.

VOTE: the Board voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

X. Old Business

There was no old business to report.

XI. Executive Session

Mrs. Shoemaker made a motion, which was seconded by Dr. Brown, to move into executive session for the purpose of discussing pending litigation and the 2025-2028 contract for the Region 18 Teachers' Association. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Neviaser and Melissa Dougherty, Director of Special Services, were invited to attend the executive session.

XII. Adjournment

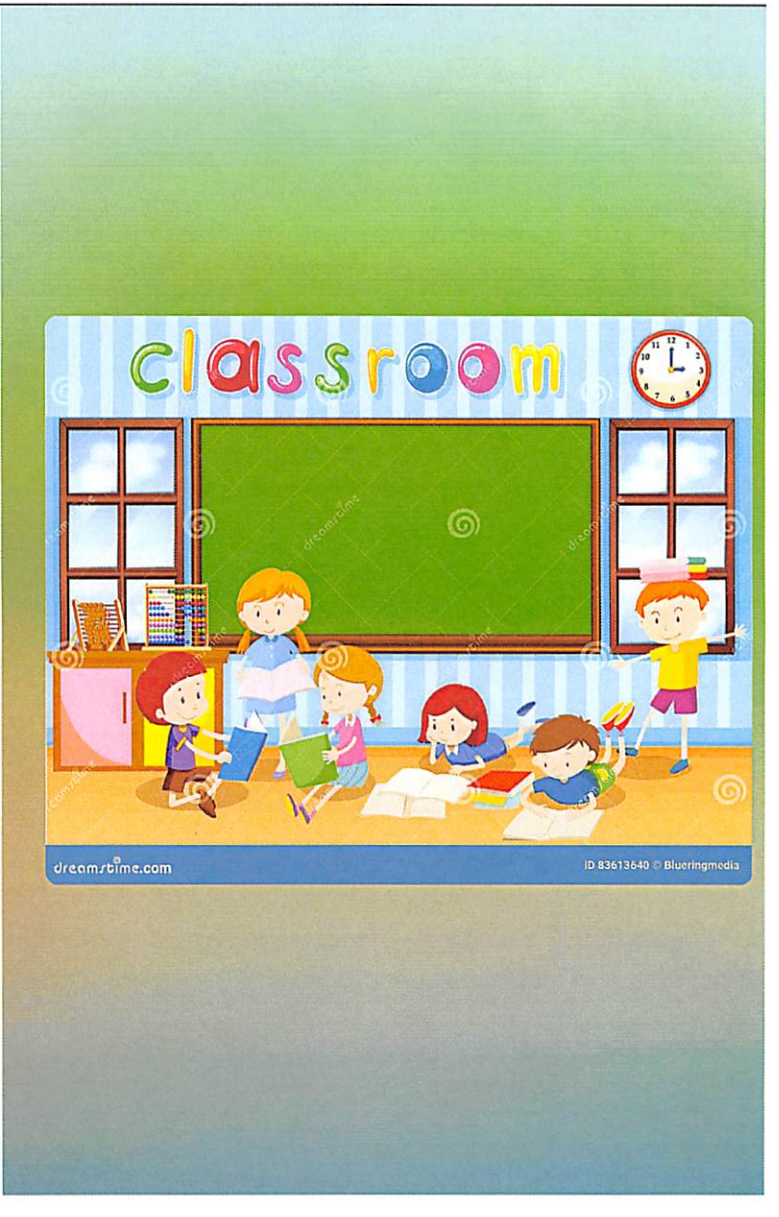
The regular meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m. upon a motion by Mrs. Shoemaker and a second by Dr. Brown.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha Shoemaker, Secretary

Bookworms: Components, Research, and Outcomes

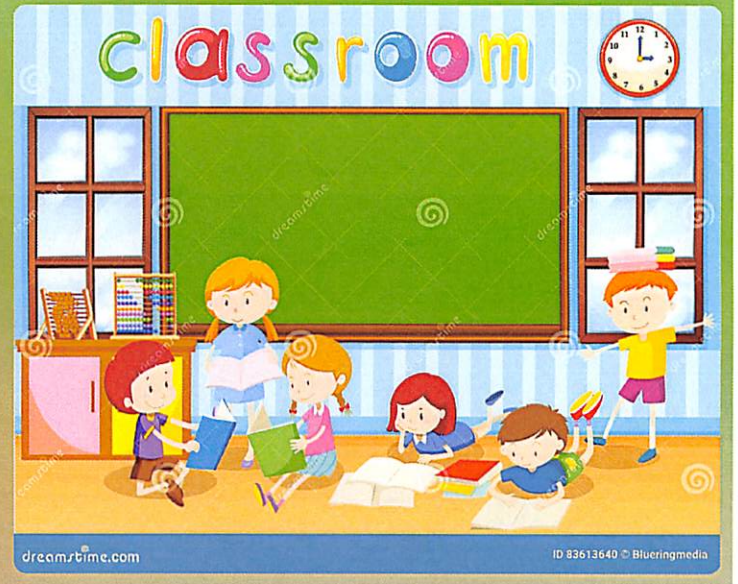
Bookworms is a comprehensive literacy program designed for K-5 students. It focuses on improving reading skills through structured activities including daily fluency, comprehension, vocabulary and writing work. This program applies the science of reading but also promotes the love of reading.



Right to Read Mandate

Connecticut's Right to Read Mandate is a statewide plan for early literacy that requires school districts to use evidence-based reading programs in grades K-3.

1	2	3
ELA Team Reviewed initial five mandated programs	ELA Team submitted waiver to state	Waiver denied. New state compendiums offered



Proposal

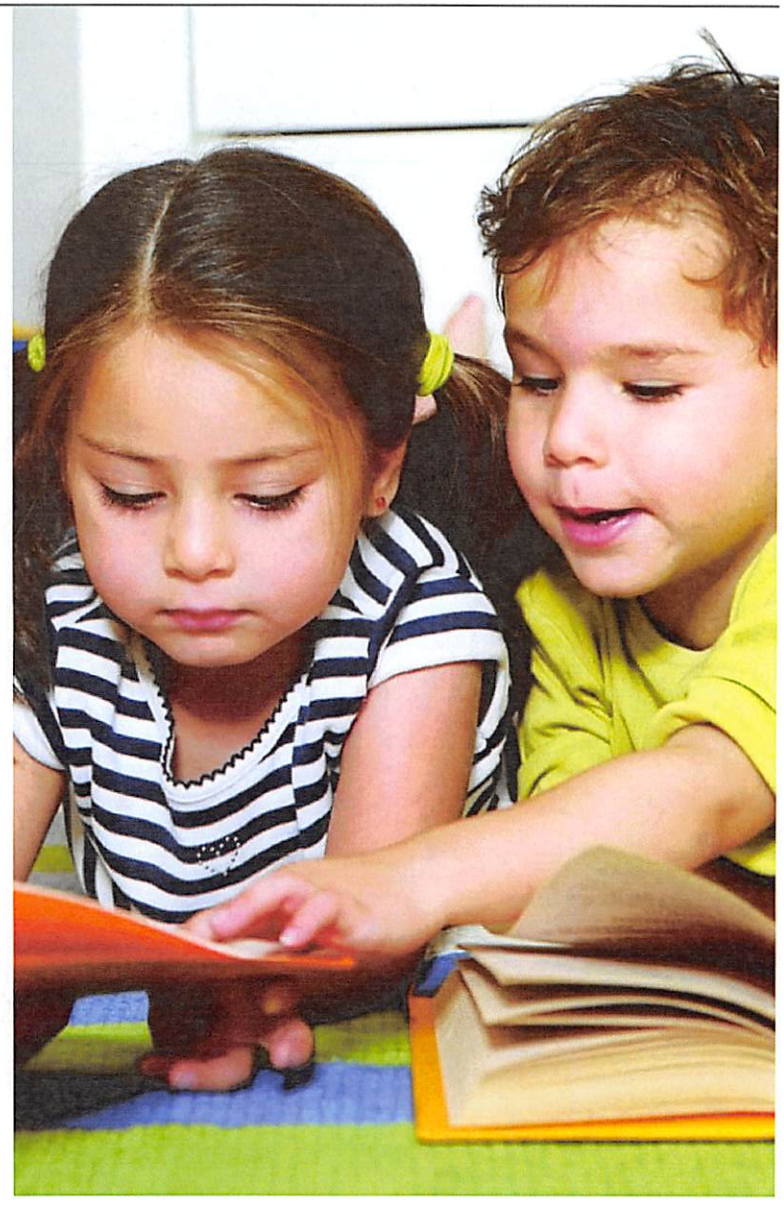
Enhance existing science of reading resources K-3 with daily fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and writing using Bookworms.

Regional District 18 Compendium Model to comply with the mandate:

- *Bookworms Reading Program**
- Fundations Structured Literacy (Foundational Skills)/Geodes Books
- Heggerty - Phonemic Awareness Activities

**Note: Only new purchase to current curricula*

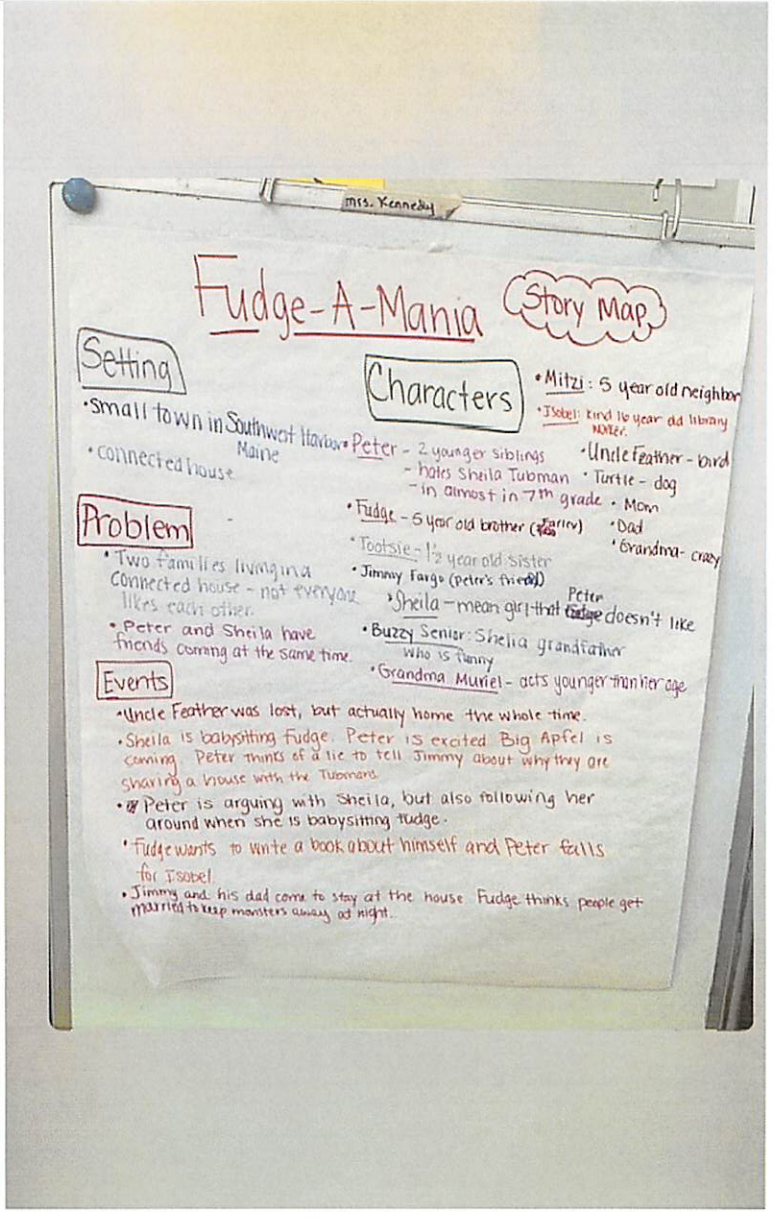
List of approved programs/compendiums



Scarborough Braid/Reading Rope

Bookworms: Scientifically research-based and aligned to the Science of Reading







Key Components of Bookworms

Shared Reading

- Reading fluency and comprehension
- Complex vocabulary and text structures

Intervention (DI block)

- Teacher led differentiated reading instruction
- Station learning

Interactive Read-Aloud (ELA)

- Listening comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills
- Develop a love of reading

Writing Instruction

- Integrate writing instruction with reading activities
- Writing mechanics, structure, and conventions in genres

Introduction to Bookworms

1 **Pilot in K-3 Classes**

Understand ease of use, impact on students, quality of resources

2 **Training for Teachers**

Initial pilot training (asynchronous and live); two coaching calls

3 **Tracking Progress**

Qualitative and quantitative data collected

4 **Positive Results**

Students and teachers are enthusiastic about using Bookworms and want to continue using it for the remainder of the school year.



R18 Pilot Feedback

1

Student Engagement

Increased student engagement in reading activities

2

Student Impact

Improved writing, stamina, comprehension and procity

3

Teacher Efficacy

Enhanced teacher confidence in our literacy curriculum and instruction

4

Feedback

Positive feedback from educators and students around all components of Bookworms





Bookworms Research

1

Data-Driven Research

Multiple school/district studies showing major gains in reading and writing

2

Impact on Struggling Readers

8,800 student study highlighted students with weaker reading skills in third grade made the most notable progress

3

Skill Improvements in Reading Rope

Improvements in reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development/use, and writing

4

Books in Kids Hands

Students will read between 30-50 books per year, or more



Implementation Considerations

Professional Development	Professional development for all K-3 teachers/admin. Spring/Summer 2025; on-going coaching 2025-2026
Implementation	Full K-3 implementation fall of 2025
Assessment	On-going assessment of pilot K-2 starting in January 2025
Scheduling	Leadership Team to work on scheduling ideas/consult with other districts/Admin. to create schedule spring 2025

Total Cost of Ownership

Initial Investment: $68K

Initial purchase including trade books, shared reading books, DI materials, workbooks, and teacher manuals

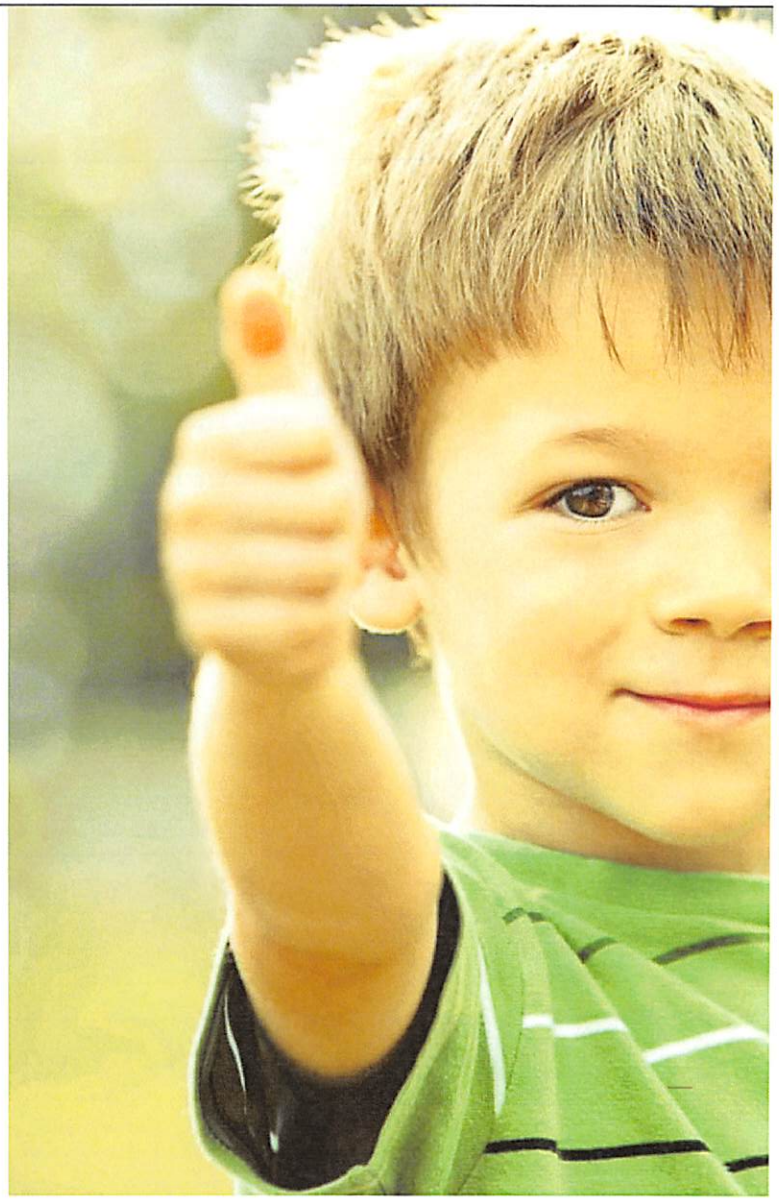
Funding Sources: $65.3K

- Right to Read State Funding
- Other savings incurred from other budgeted areas in current budget

Net District Investment: $2.7K

Total remaining cost to district after state and local funding

Curriculum is free through Open Up Resources





To review detailed information on the pilot, a link to the teacher feedback survey can be found HERE.