



Academy for Sciences & Agriculture (AFSA)

Local Literacy Plan

in response to Minnesota's 2024-25 Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act

About AFSA:

Our Mission

The Academy for Sciences and Agriculture (AFSA), a public charter school for grades K-12, engages learners in academically rigorous, student-centered, hands-on experiences and leadership opportunities within a science, environmental education, and agricultural context.

Our Vision

AFSA will develop lifelong learners who are curious, care for others, and have high skill levels in applied sciences, and will be prepared for a future in a diverse, global and changing society.

Our History

AFSA Charter School for grades K - 12 was founded in 2001 with the purpose of providing agricultural literacy to an urban and suburban population. The school has expanded to include career opportunities in five areas of science, including: Engineering, Animal Science, Plant Science, Environmental Science, and Food Science. In 2005, the location in Vadnais Heights opened its doors. This facility was purposefully designed to fit our curriculum and mission. AFSA's location allows the inclusion of students from all northern Twin Cities areas to attend. In 2014, AFSA added grades 5 - 6. AFSA expanded again in the 2019-2020 school year, adding grades K - 4. In 2024, AFSA added a PreK class at the Elementary building.

Overview of AFSA's Local Literacy Plan

The Minnesota Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act, known as the READ Act, was passed and signed into law by Governor Tim Walz on May 24, 2023. The goal of this legislation is to have every Minnesota child reading at or above grade level every year, beginning in kindergarten, and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. The READ Act replaces Read Well by Third Grade (RWBTG) and is in effect as of July 1, 2023. Minn. Stat. 120B.12 (2023).

In accordance with the READ Act, AFSA will:

1. Identify all students not performing at grade level and implement timely interventions to ensure reading success.
2. Form a support team for students including homeroom/advisory teacher, intervention support and families.
3. Ensure that all students, including those who exceed benchmarks in the fall, are challenged to reach their projected growth targets by spring.

How is literacy taught at AFSA?

A necessary and important component of an effective reading program is that it is structured to develop proficient readers who have the capacity to think critically, read fluently, and comprehend texts across a range of text structures. The foundations of reading will be met through our core curriculum. Teachers will foster students' understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and other basic conventions. AFSA utilizes evidence-based literacy curricula in grade K-3 including *Read Well*, *UFLI Foundations* (phonics) and *Handwriting Without Tears* (writing). Grades 4 and up currently utilize teacher-created curricula. AFSA will review and consider future Minnesota Department of Education-approved reading curricula.

In addition, AFSA hosts a family information night at least once per year. This literacy-focused event aims to promote family involvement in students' literacy development.

What opportunities do AFSA teachers have for professional development in the area of literacy instruction?

Teachers will meet in Professional Learning Communities to evaluate data and make collaborative, student-centered instructional decisions. Grade level planning time will be built into the schedule to allow teachers to analyze student work and brainstorm innovative instructional strategies. Classroom teachers will also work in conjunction with the EL teacher to provide EL students equal access to the classroom curriculum. Teachers who attend off-site professional development training will bring their knowledge back to the larger group to share and further innovate as a school. Through the READ Act, all K-12 teachers who teach reading will be required to complete science of reading training. K-6 teachers and special educators will

be trained through *Lexia LETRS* training, beginning the 2024-25 school year. Currently, AFSA has two teachers who have completed *Lexia LETRS* training. Eight teachers' training is in progress.

How will AFSA teachers know if students are reading at grade level?

A student is considered proficient at reading when they score at or above grade level benchmarks and meet grade level expectations on classroom literacy tasks. Reading proficiency will be the goal for all students from kindergarten to grade 12. It will be achieved through multiple measures of assessment, data driven decision-making and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Students who are not reading at grade level will receive research-based interventions and their progress will be monitored until proficiency is attained. Interventions will happen in addition to core reading instruction. Core curriculum is aligned to the Minnesota English Language Arts Standards. Curriculum maps will be updated annually.

What kinds of assessments will be used to determine whether students are reading at grade level? How often will students' reading skills be assessed?

Universal Screening - *DIBELS® (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) 8th Edition* (Grades K-3)

A universal screening assessment allows teachers to see how students are performing relative to one another and to identify students that may be having difficulties. At the start of each school year, classroom teachers assess students to get baseline data for the grade level. AFSA uses *Read Well* as the core literacy curriculum in grades K-3, and screens all students with *DIBELS® 8th Edition* in grades K-3. *DIBELS®* assessments will be used as a universal screener to help identify students with characteristics of dyslexia. Students who score below the benchmark composite for their grade level qualify for reading intervention services.

Universal Screening - *Star Assessments* (Grades 3-12)

All students in grades 3-12 will be assessed during enrollment with placement testing, as well as progress monitoring in the fall, winter, and spring using *Star Assessments* to measure growth and progress throughout the school year. This assessment is adaptive, which means that it adjusts based on a student's performance. The adaptability allows the test to pinpoint skill gaps that may have occurred in the instruction of previous years, rather than simply attending to the standards of the students' current grade level. Students who score below their grade level equivalent as determined by the State of Minnesota qualify for reading intervention services.

Diagnostic Assessment - *Test of Integrated Language & Literacy Skills™ (TILLS™)*

Students who are identified as having possible reading difficulties on the school-wide screener will be further assessed using the *TILLS™* diagnostic assessment. This is used to narrow down the possible source of a problem so that the teacher can tailor instruction to fill in gaps in learning. Concepts of print, letter-sound fluency, and components of phonological awareness

will be checked in the diagnostic assessment to determine if a foundational reading skill needs remediation, or if reading comprehension or vocabulary can be addressed directly.

Literacy Intervention

Students in grades K-6 who demonstrate a reading deficit of one or more grade levels will be referred for Title-I services. These supplemental services offer intensive instruction within a small group setting. Students who are less than one grade level behind will receive individualized, targeted skills interventions within their regular classroom setting. Classroom teachers who have identified a student who may need supplemental instruction may inform the family of their observed concerns. A teacher may also refer a student to the school's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) team for further suggestions on interventions that may help the student make progress. In addition, a student's family may provide outside testing results, student work samples or evidence of difficulty which demonstrates below-grade level progress.

How will a family be informed their child has qualified for reading intervention?

All families will be notified of universal screening results within two weeks of the school-wide completion of the *Star Assessments* placement test during enrollment. Additionally, progress monitoring reports will be shared with families of students who are not making expected grade-level growth during the universal trimester progress monitoring sessions in grades K, 1 and 2. Typically these reports, along with conversations about setting goals and supporting the student's progress at home, are discussed as time permits during conferences. In addition to report cards, teachers also connect with families in a variety of ways to share progress and concerns in the classroom.

Students in grades K-12 identified as benefiting from additional instruction will be contacted with details of the perceived need and proposed action plan. Families will be invited to participate in building a student's intervention plan. In addition to report cards and universal screening communication, families can expect a report on a student's progress at mid-trimester.

How will intervention supports be determined and how will they be used?

Intervention programs assist students who are not meeting grade-level expectations in the area of literacy. Based on the results of screening, diagnostic assessments and teacher recommendation, students will receive a multitiered level of support that includes research-based interventions. These interventions target skill deficits in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

If a student is identified as not reading at or above grade level and/or not meeting some or all benchmarks during the previous school year, they will automatically qualify for support.

	Reading Interventions and Classroom Supports Provided
Tier Zero: All Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra time to complete work when requested by the student • Preferential Seating in the classroom • Research –based instructional practices will be utilized in every classroom • All students will have access to the school counselor • After-school tutoring available (grades 7-12) • Placement testing to determine an instructional baseline for all students
Tier 1: Individual Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a quiet workspace when requested • Regular check-ins with staff member (typically homeroom teacher) • Alternate response options for assignments designed and implemented by classroom teachers • Peer-tutoring or mentoring • Participation in Social Skills groups • Classroom-based interventions
Tier 2: Individual Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intervention letter goes home from Title-1 teacher • Small group, skill-based academic support • 1-3x per week • Student check-ins, grade checks, regular family contact by intervention teacher • Regular teacher check-ins, updates, work sampling with intervention teacher • Progress monitoring each trimester
Tier 3: Referral for Special Education Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensive individualized intervention • Skill-based • 3-5x per week • Check ins, grade checks, family contact weekly by Special Education teacher • Teacher check ins, updates, work sampling with Special Education teacher weekly • Progress monitoring monthly • After 6 weeks of intervention, a student may be referred for special education evaluation if no progress is seen

Core, High-Quality Classroom Instruction, Screening, and Group Interventions (Tier Zero-Tier 1)

Within core instruction, all students receive high-quality, evidence-based instruction provided by highly qualified teachers to ensure their difficulties are not due to inadequate instruction. All students will be screened three times per year to establish an academic and behavioral baseline and to identify struggling learners who need additional support. Students identified as at risk for not meeting grade-level progress receive supplemental instruction during the school day in the regular classroom. The length of time for this step can vary, but it generally should not exceed 8 weeks. During that time, student progress is closely monitored using a validated screening system such as curriculum-based measurement. At the end of this period, students showing significant progress will be returned to the regular classroom program. Students not showing adequate progress will be moved to strategic (extra) intervention (Tier 2).

Targeted Title-I Intervention (Tier 2)

Students not making adequate progress in core instruction and classroom intervention will be provided with increasingly intensive intervention, through targeted Title-I services. Intervention is matched to the student's needs based on levels of performance and rates of progress. Intensity varies across group size, frequency and duration of intervention, and level of training of the professionals providing instruction or intervention. These services and interventions will be provided in small group settings in addition to instruction in the general curriculum. In the early grades (kindergarten through 3rd grade), interventions are usually in the areas of reading and math. A longer period of time may be required for this tier, based on student growth. Students who continue to show minimal progress (do not show progress OR whose growth rate is not improving) at this level of intervention will be considered for more intensive interventions as part of Tier 3.

Intensive Intervention & Comprehensive Evaluation (Tier 3)

At this level, students continue to receive individualized, intensive interventions that target the students' skill deficits. Students who do not achieve the desired level of progress in response to these targeted interventions will be referred for a comprehensive evaluation and considered for eligibility for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004. The data collected during core intervention, strategic intervention, and intensive intervention will be included and used to make the eligibility decision.

My student qualified for supplemental reading support. How will their teachers know if my student is making progress?

Progress Monitoring - Curriculum Based or *Star Assessments*

Student progress will be monitored bi-weekly with progress monitoring assessments given by the intervention teacher who is leading the student's intervention. K and 1st grade assessments address skills, while 2nd grade and up have a weekly fluency passage. When a student has met their goal, progress monitoring will scale back to twice per month. After two months of successful progress monitoring, the student will move to once per month progress monitoring until the end of the year to ensure the intervention has been successful. If a student does not perform successfully on a passage, they will participate in the following week's monitoring to determine whether or not they need more intervention.

EL Progress Monitoring and WIDA ACCESS Administration

Upon enrollment in the EL program, students identified as English Learners (EL) will be monitored by the EL teacher working with the classroom teachers to track student progress throughout the year. The EL teacher will provide direct instruction on all aspects of the English language as needed, including reading, writing, listening and speaking, both in the classroom and in small groups outside of the classroom. Once a year all EL students will take the WIDA ACCESS, which will provide a form of progress data to help with the re-enrollment or exiting of EL students in the upcoming year.

What if I suspect my child has a reading disorder?

Convergence Insufficiency Disorder

Convergence Insufficiency is a vision disorder. Convergence is the inward turning of the eyes, one aspect of accommodation, which is the ability to focus accurately at near such as when reading. A person with convergence insufficiency has a remote near point of convergence or difficulty sustaining convergence which results in visual discomfort. Difficulties in accommodation neither interferes with students' ability to learn to read nor their reading proficiency. However, it can affect their ability to concentrate on print for prolonged periods of time (Handler et al, 2011). Convergence insufficiency is not identified by typical school vision screening. If a child states that he or she gets headaches or eye strain while reading for extended periods, this information can be shared with the family for possible further screening by the family's eye health professional. A student with convergence insufficiency alone would not be served by a teacher of blind/visually impaired. Handler, S.M., Fierson, W.M., et al. (2011). Joint technical report—Learning disabilities, dyslexia, and vision. *Pediatrics* 127(3), e818-e856. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2010-3670 (taken from MDE's Reading Well by Third Grade publication)

Dyslexia

Indicator	Common Standardized Measure	Typical Grade for screening (F) fall, (S) spring, (W) winter	Instructionally meaningful Observation and Interview data
Poor Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic Awareness Initial Sound Fluency Phoneme Building Word Segmentation	Pre-K and K (F, W, S) K (F, W) K (W, S) K (W, S) & 1 (F, W)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mishears letters or sounds. •Difficulty with rhyming. •Difficulty with manipulating phonemes,sequencing, and/or holding letter sounds in mind long

Poor Decoding	<p>Letter-Sound Fluency</p> <p>Nonsense Words</p> <p>Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)</p>	<p>K (W, S)</p> <p>K (W, S) & 1 (F, W, S) & 2 (F)</p> <p>1 (F, W, S) & 3 (F, W, S)</p>	<p>Deletes or mixes up or misses extremely common high-frequency and sight words (was/ saw, left/felt,) skips words like is, the, a, on, etc., inconsistently omits suffix endings (-s, -ed, or -ly).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decodes a word on one page but not on next; one day it is there, next it is not. • Relies on contextual clues to read, guesses at words based on the first few letters. • Accuracy of decoding improves but rate remains persistently lower than benchmark. • Student complains of physical illness or presents with behavioral issues during reading time; either task avoidance or signs of stress.
Poor Spelling (Encoding)	Spelling Inventory	1 (F, W, S) & 3 (F, W, S)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty reproducing letter forms (not a motor coordination problem). • Difficulty recalling the correct sequence of letters in words and/or matching letters, words, objects in different sequences as they get more complex. • Student complains of physical illness or presents with behavioral issues during writing time; either task avoidance or signs of stress. • Error analysis shows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all sounds are represented within a word. Misspellings of words are inconsistent within the same document. Oral stories have greater depth and detail than print, student self-limits to words that can be spelled correctly.
Poor Orthographic Memory and Recall	<p>Rapid Automatic Naming</p> <p>Letter Name Fluency</p> <p>Letter-Sound Fluency (onset sounds, first sound)</p> <p>High Frequency/Sight Words</p>	<p>Pre-K & K (F, W)</p> <p>K (F, W)</p> <p>K (W, S) & 1 (F, W)</p> <p>K (S) & 1 (F, W, S) and 2 (F, W, S)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student has difficulty following 2-3 step directions. Needs directions repeated or written down. • Difficulty naming classmates weeks and months into the school year. • Difficulty calling up the right word despite describing its meaning. • Student's descriptions indicate "she/he knows it one moment but not the next." • Difficulty simultaneously decoding and retrieving word meanings. • Poor recall of sound symbol associations.

Family History			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Shows lack of interest in reading simplebooks or talking about books. •Reports or comments that close family or relatives struggled with learning to read or in school (evidence that dyslexia runs in families). •Records indicate the student repeated pre-school or earlier grade. Family reports that student was recommended to repeat a grade. •Family has sent the student to summer school, interventions,
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Where can you find AFSA's Annual Report detailing school-wide reading progress?

AFSA communicates overall district reading proficiency through its World's Best Workforce and Annual Report. The most recent report can be found on the district website:

<https://mn50000145.schoolwires.net/domain/97>