BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING · NOVEMBER 2026

District Elementary Updates

Math & Literacy

Instructional Facilitator: Nicole Breslauer

Literacy Coaches: Caitlin Crimmins, Abigail Emerson & Staci Kaplan

OUR DISTRICT GOAL

“Connect educational opportunities to the real world through inquiry and project-based learning that develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.”

Curriculum Review

At the elementary level, the District will conduct and analyze an audit of the elementary math curriculum to advance critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Assessment Alignment

Expand the current math assessment review committee to align instructional practices to state Standards of Mathematics Practice.

WHY THIS WORK

The Purpose Behind the Changes

01

Measure Student Understanding

Assessments designed to provide a clearer picture of what students know, understand, and can apply in mathematics.

02

Assess a Range of Skills

A thoughtful balance of questions that measure foundational knowledge, application, and higher-level mathematical reasoning.

03

Make Informed Instructional Decisions

Meaningful, consistent data that helps teachers identify student needs, guide instruction, and support future math placement decisions.

OUR PROCESS AND KEY CHANGES

Strengthening the Quality and Consistency of Math Assessments

01

Balanced Assessment Design

Incorporated a purposeful range of Skill 1, 2, and 3 questions to assess foundational knowledge, application, and higher-order mathematical thinking.

02

Improved Question Clarity

Refined question wording to improve clarity, reduce ambiguity, and ensure assessments accurately measure intended mathematical skills.

03

Enhanced Opportunities to Demonstrate Understanding

Expanded workspace to allow students to communicate their mathematical thinking through calculations, visual models, and written explanations.

04

Consistent Scoring Practices

Developed common scoring guidelines to promote consistency, fairness, and reliable interpretation of student performance across schools.

OUR REVISION PROCESS

1. Teacher Committee Review → 2. Assessment Refinement → 3. Teacher Feedback → 4. Scoring Alignment

Measuring Mathematical Understanding Beyond the Answer

A rectangular yoga studio is 25.15 feet long and 13.62 feet wide.

A Round to the nearest whole number, then estimate the perimeter.

B Round to the nearest tenth, then estimate the perimeter.

C Find the exact perimeter. Which estimate is closer? **Explain why.**

Why It Matters

Assessing More Than the Correct Answer

Students demonstrate their ability to estimate, calculate accurately, compare strategies, and justify their mathematical reasoning.

Informing Instructional Decisions

Student responses provide insight into both procedural fluency and conceptual understanding, helping teachers identify strengths, misconceptions, and opportunities for targeted instruction.

STUDENT OWNERSHIP · WORK IN PROGRESS

Developing Executive Functioning Through Assessment

BEFORE

Plan & Prepare

Students use topic reviews to identify areas of strength, recognize skills requiring additional practice, and develop effective study habits.

DURING

Monitor & Apply

Students practice managing their time, organizing their mathematical thinking, showing their work, and reviewing responses for accuracy.

AFTER

Reflect & Grow

Students analyze their performance, identify areas for improvement, and set goals for future learning. In Grades 4–5, this process also includes assessment corrections.

DISTRICTWIDE ALIGNMENT

Through ongoing K–5 vertical articulation, we are working to establish developmentally appropriate, consistent practices that strengthen student independence, self-monitoring, and reflection.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Strengthening School–Family Communication

BEFORE EACH TOPIC

Previewing Upcoming Learning

Families receive an introductory letter outlining the mathematical concepts and skills students will learn, along with suggestions for supporting learning at home.

AFTER EACH ASSESSMENT

Communicating Student Progress

A standardized, two-sided cover letter provides families with:

- **Front:** A clear, family-friendly overview of the mathematical concepts and skills assessed.
- **Back:** The student's assessment score, positioned to maintain privacy, along with a space for parent/guardian acknowledgment.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to shift the focus from simply receiving a score to understanding student learning, celebrating progress, and identifying opportunities for growth.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Strengthening Instruction Through Collaboration and Support

STRUCTURE & PRACTICE

A Flexible, Responsive Math Block

Core Instruction: Teachers deliver standards-aligned lessons focused on essential mathematical concepts and skills.

Differentiated Small Groups: Targeted instruction provides opportunities for reteaching, enrichment, and reinforcement based on student needs.

Independent & Collaborative Practice: Students apply mathematical concepts, develop problem-solving strategies, and strengthen understanding.

TEACHER COLLABORATION

Instructional Facilitator Support

Differentiated Resources: Develop grade-level materials supporting core instruction, intervention, and enrichment.

Assessment Alignment: Provide topic reviews and strategies promoting student preparedness and understanding.

Data-Driven Collaboration: Partner with grade-level teams to analyze performance and plan Tier 2 support.

Ongoing Professional Learning: Support teachers through collaborative planning, modeling, and coaching.

OUR GOAL

Our goal is to provide teachers with the resources, data, and collaborative support needed to meet the diverse learning needs of all students.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next Steps: Continuous Improvement & Alignment

K–2 REVISION TIMELINE

K–2 Assessment Revision Timeline

COMPLETED — INITIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Updated assessment formatting, clarified question wording, and expanded workspace to improve readability and provide a more consistent assessment experience across K–5.

NEXT PHASE — COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Convene K–2 teacher committees to review and refine assessments using the collaborative process established in Grades 3–5, with a focus on developmental appropriateness, question quality, and scoring consistency.

DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY

Using Data to Drive Improvement

Topic Assessment Results

Analyze student performance to identify learning trends, evaluate assessment effectiveness, and inform instructional adjustments.

NJSLA-A Results

Review state assessment data to identify broader trends in student achievement and areas for continued instructional growth.

Teacher Feedback & Collaboration

Gather ongoing feedback to refine assessment questions, strengthen scoring practices, and ensure assessments remain aligned with classroom instruction.

PART TWO

K–5 Literacy Updates

UFLI Foundations phonics · Cursive handwriting

Caitlin Crimmins, Abigail Emerson, Staci Kaplan

District elementary Coaches

Simple yet explicit evidence-based phonics instruction

UFLI Foundations



Why We Moved to UFLI

• **Simple Yet Explicit:** We transitioned to UFLI because it is simple yet highly explicit, providing direct, systematic instruction without unnecessary cognitive clutter.

• **Science of Reading Principles:** Rooted in empirical literacy research to ensure every learner builds a robust, dependable phonics foundation.



What UFLI Offers

• **Modeling & Practice:** Clear, step-by-step teacher modeling paired immediately with guided student practice.

• **Systematic Progression:** Logical skill sequence that prevents learning gaps and reinforces mastery.

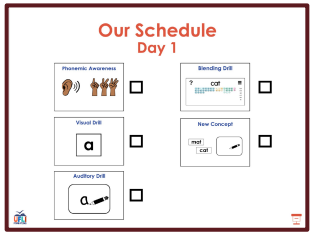
• **Multi-Sensory Engagement:** High engagement through sound boxes, letter tiles, and blending drills

• **Weekly Progress Monitoring:** Identifies skill mastery and need for additional small group instruction.

STRUCTURED 2-DAY INSTRUCTIONAL ROUTINE

UFLI in a Classroom

Day 1: Explicit Drills & New Skill



1. Phonemic Awareness: Children listen to and work with sounds in spoken words, blending or segmenting sounds.

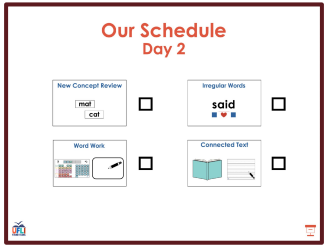
2. Visual Drill: Children see letters/letter combinations and say the corresponding sounds.

3. Auditory Drill: Children hear a sound and write the letter(s) that represent it.

4. Blending Drill: Children say sounds in a word and blend them together smoothly to build word level automaticity.

5. New Concept: Teacher introduces a new phonics skill, guiding reading and spelling.

Day 2: Review & Application



5. New Concept Review: Children briefly revisit the phonics skill introduced on Day 1.

6. Word Work: Children use letters to build, read, and manipulate words to see sound changes.

7. Irregular Words: Children identify phonetically regular parts and memorize tricky parts (heart words).

8. Connected Text: Children apply phonics skills by reading and writing sentences. The lessons end with a short decodable passage.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Strengthening School–Family Connection

Kindergarten and First Grade

- ➔ Build phonemic awareness
- ➔ Connect sounds to letters
- ➔ Support developing decoding skills
- ➔ Provide interactive reading experiences

Second Grade

Reading Multisyllabic Words

→ Mark the vowel in each syllable
→ Read each part, then blend the whole word
→ Check that it sounds like a real word

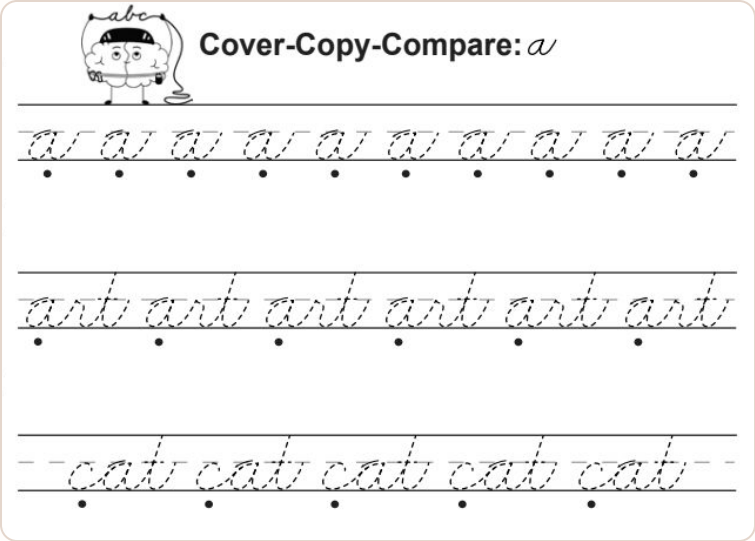
Building Fluency

→ Reread the same text more than once
→ Read with a family member and give feedback
→ Focus on accuracy first, then phrasing and expression

EVIDENCE-BASED HANDWRITING ROUTINE

Cursive: Grades 3–5

Cover-Copy-Compare Practice Sheet



Instructional Highlights

Weekly Practice

Done weekly using pencil and paper to build handwriting fluency and muscle memory.

Stroke Pattern Structure

Organized systematically by stroke pattern for efficient learning and motor planning.

Explicit Formation Guidance

Students receive direct, explicit instruction on accurate letter formation and connections.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Strengthening School–Family Connection



Real Life Writing

Children can use cursive to write in real life situations:

- To Do Lists
- Thank You Notes
- Grocery Lists

Encourage children to read cursive, too!

- Write your children notes in cursive
- Read greeting card messages



Thank you

Questions?

Nicole Breslauer · K–5 Instructional Facilitators

Abigail Emerson, Caitlin Crimmins, and Staci Kaplan · K–5 Literacy Coaches