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The following items will be discussed at a virtual meeting of the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports to be held on Tuesday, March 15, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. in Room 410 in the Durkin Administration Building:

gb #9-349 - Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (October 14, 2019)

Request that the Administration invite educators who currently teach or train NoticeAbility Curriculum and consider implementing it for students with dyslexia.

c&p #0-2 -Clerk (January 2, 2020)

To consider a communication from Gordon T. Davis, Chair of the Education Committee, Worcester Branch NAACP, relative to a uniform districtwide policy on age appropriate touching.

gb #1-104 -Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms.Novick (March 25, 2021)

To explore the feasibility of including recess for students in grades seven and eight.

gb #1-312 - Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (November 9, 2021)

Request that the Administration explore utilizing virtual tutoring services for the students of the WPS.

gb #1-323 - Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (November 19, 2021)

Request that the Administration provide an update on the use of Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Program in light of recent data.

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

ITEM: Miss McCullough/Mr. Foley/Mr. Monfredo (October 14, 2019)

Request that the Administration invite educators who currently teach or train NoticeAbility Curriculum and consider implementing it for students with dyslexia.

PRIOR ACTION

- 11-7-19 - Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.
- 1-29-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
(Considered with gb #8-356.1.)
Mrs. Seale stated that the Worcester Public School's team visited schools that currently incorporate Orton-Gillingham to assess what the program provided. Worcester Public Schools currently uses Wilson language and reading. The Administration was asked to do a cost analysis of the Orton-Gillingham model which is a very intensive training and is not a curriculum but rather a methodology. The system does have some teachers that are certified in the program.
Mrs. Seale stated that early identification is the first step in the needs assessment process. The Administration is meeting with principals to review the data, look at an educational plan and train special needs teachers.
There will be a Dyslexia Forum held on February 12, 2020 at the Worcester Art Museum and the Administration is inviting consultants to look at adding additional supports. It is essential to get feedback from parents.

BACKUP: The Administration recommends that the item be filed based on the previous presentation.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

1-29-20 - Ms. Gallagher discussed the collaboration between the WPS and
(continued) Mass General. All kindergarten students have been screened to determine the number of at risk students in order to provide early support to children with dyslexia with the consent of the parent.

Ms. Pelletier discussed the Lindamood-Bell Program with the three tier approach as follows:

- Tier 1 is the Core Instructional Program.
- Tier 2 is the Targeted Group Intervention.
- Tier 3 is the Intensive Intervention which is a small group setting.

Ms. McCullough questioned whether the students with a multitude of disabilities that are in a smaller group setting benefit more from the smaller group. Ms. Seale stated that each student's disability is addressed differently depending on their IEP, evaluations and recommendations from the special education teachers. It is on a case by case basis.

It was moved to allow the following individuals to speak regarding the item:

Ms. Rodriguez stated that all student disabilities should be individualized and commented that the Wilson Program is an excellent one. She added that she would like to see the district adopt a special education research based reading program because the current one is in contrast to what a student with dyslexia needs to succeed. She asked what evidence based reading is used to identify the Kindergarten and 1st grade students with dyslexia because Wilson doesn't start until 2nd grade.

Mrs. Seale stated that she believes the system is not using anything right now as targeted evidence based tools.

Ms. Rodriguez stated that is very important and thinks the district is doing a phenomenal job with the help of Mass General to test the students in Kindergarten but there are no next steps for students in first grade.

Mrs. Portuondo stated that there are about 1,000 students in the WPS that have dyslexia. She asked if Foundations is being provided at all the schools. Dr. O'Neil responded that it is not being implemented at all schools.

Mrs. Portuondo would like to have Foundations used again in all schools in the system. She appreciated the backup that was provided at the meeting and asked that it be provided to all teachers in the school system.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

1-29-20 - Mrs. Seale stated that the Administration has started training at the beginning of 2018 with the Evaluation Team Chairs and the next step is providing more specific information at the Professional Development meeting in May to all the Special Education teachers across the district.

Mrs. Portuondo stated that the class sizes are a concern and the district should be concerned also. Teachers are not able to teach a child with dyslexia when there are 26 students to one teacher. She further requested to know the number of teachers that are Orton-Gillingham certified and what is being done to screen first and second graders. She also wants to know what schools are using Lively Letters.

Mrs. Seale stated that she will get the information and stated that if a parent requests that a child be screened for a disability it is the district's obligation to screen that child.

Ms. McCullough stated that the Administration should let parents know that if they want their student screened for dyslexia, the district will provide it.

Mrs. Portuondo asked if there would be a summer intervention program for dyslexic students.

Mrs. Seale stated that she has spoken to Lindamood-Bell and Dr. O'Neil and the system is looking into partnering with some of the general education programs to put together a program for students with language based disabilities for the summer.

Mr. Portuondo asked if the system is training or is going to train teachers in the Orton-Gillingham program.

Mrs. Seale stated that it is one of the initiatives that the Administration is looking at for the FY22 Budget.

Mr. Monfredo made the following motions:

Request that the Administration provide a report on what is being done to bridge the gap between K and 1st grade students.

Request that the Administration study the feasibility of including students from outside the district on a tuition basis, which would provide the funding to meet the needs of students.

Mr. Foley made an amendment to Mr. Monfredo motion:

Request that the district study the feasibility of in-house cost effective solutions to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

On a roll call of 3-0, the motions collectively were approved.

Mr. Foley asked if the blended approach allows flexibility for the students when Wilson is not working and inquired as to whether the system can move to Orton-Gillingham or other programs easily.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 1-29-20 - Mrs. Seale stated that the district is looking into a 4 year literacy (continued) plan for students with disabilities. Wilson will not be the only intervention tool that will be used in the district.
It was moved and voice voted to hold the item at the Standing Committee level.
- 2-6-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.
- 10-22-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
Mrs. Seale stated that, due to current circumstances, there is no additional information to provide, but that a follow-up conversation with representatives from NoticeAbility will be forthcoming.
Chairman McCullough made the following motion:
Request that the item be held for a report in February.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion to hold the item was approved.
- 11-5-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

ITEM: Clerk (January 2, 2020)

To consider a communication from Gordon T. Davis, Chair of the Education Committee, Worcester Branch NAACP, relative to a uniform districtwide policy on age appropriate touching.

PRIOR ACTION:

- 1-16-20 - Gordon Davis, Chair of the Education Committee, Worcester Branch NAACP, Gwen Davis, member of the Progressive Labor Party and Ruth Rodriguez spoke to the Communications and Petitions filed by Mr. Davis regarding suspensions and the adverse impact on the black and Latino community.
Referred to the Standing Committee on Governance and Employee Issues.
- 5-13-20 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNANCE AND EMPLOYEE ISSUES
Mr. Davis referenced an incident in which a student was suspended for hugging a teacher and he would like the Administration to develop a policy regarding age appropriate touching.
Attorney Tobin stated that both Title IX and the Sexual Harassment Policy (ACAB) make references to unwanted touching of students and staff.
Ms. Novick suggested that a policy may not need to be drafted, but that the topic of inappropriate touching should be addressed when the health curriculum is discussed in subcommittee.
Mrs. Clancey made the following motion:
Request that the item be referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports for discussion when selecting a health curriculum.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motion was approved.
- 5-21-20 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING – The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as amended.
On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP: The Administration is waiting for a legal opinion regarding the request.

ITEM: gb #1-104

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

ITEM: -Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (March 25, 2021)

To explore the feasibility of including recess for students in grades seven and eight.

PRIOR ACTION:

4-15-21 - On a roll call of 7-0, the item was referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP: The Massachusetts Department of Education sets structured learning time requirements under 603 CMR 27.00: "No later than the 1997 – 1998 school year, all schools shall ensure that every secondary school student is scheduled to receive a minimum of 990 hours per school year of structured learning time, as defined in 603 CMR 27.02. Time which a student spends at school breakfast and lunch, passing between classes, in homeroom, at recess, in non-directed study periods, receiving school services, and participating in optional school programs shall not count toward meeting the minimum structured learning time requirement for that student."
(See <https://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr27.html?section=all>)
Including a recess in middle schools would require lengthening the school day. This would have a budget impact and need to be negotiated through the union/s.

The Administration recommends that the item be filed.

ITEM: gb #1-312

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

ITEM: Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick (November 9, 2021)

ITEM:

Request that the Administration explore utilizing virtual tutoring services for the students of the WPS.

PRIOR ACTION:

11-18-21 - Ms. McCullough requested that the Administration provide a report at a meeting of the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

It was moved and voice voted to refer the item to the Standing Committee of Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

1-18-22 STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS

Ellen Kelley stated that City View, Flagg Street and Norrback Avenue Schools will be utilizing Catapult Learning and the Ignite Program will be used at Quinsigamond Avenue School beginning in February. The programs are being funded by the One 8 Program and through DESE. The programs focus on foundational reading skills, are all virtual and will be held after school. The Catapult Learning Program at Flagg Street School will take place in the evening hours with assistance from families.

Dr. Sippel stated that the district has just begun looking at tutoring services at the secondary level. They did meet with representatives from Paper Education Company, but are also exploring other options.

(continued on Page 2)

BACKUP: Annex A (2 pages) contains the Administration's response to the item.

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 1-18-22 - Bruce Duncan, representing Paper Education Company, presented an overview stating that it is a twenty-four hour platform with unlimited essay review and is currently available in four languages, English, Spanish, French and Mandarin. Students would be able to receive annotated feedback from tutors and is accessible on all platforms. Teachers are trained to apply the Socratic teaching method. He provided a demonstration of the program detailing the different search methods for students including typing in a question or logging in with a tutor. Tutors will not be sharing answers with the students. Files can be uploaded and assessed by the tutor for review and returned back to the student within 24 hours with feedback from the tutor. WPS teachers can access their student's usage and tutor comments. Chair McCullough was impressed with the 24/7 availability and the variety of subject areas. She asked if the Administration could explore piloting the program for one grade or a certain subset. Superintendent Binienda stated that the company does not prefer to do a pilot and that the cost would be over 1.4 million dollars and would have to go out for bid. Lydia Rodriguez, Assistant Superintendent of Springfield Public Schools, stated that Springfield has been using Paper for over four years and teachers are also using it in the classroom allowing them to work with smaller class groups. She stated that it has been very helpful with staffing shortages and provided equity to learning and acceleration. Vice-Chair Mailman asked if the elementary teachers suggest the tutoring or do the students ask for the help. Ms. Kelley stated that all three principals meet with the project managers and receive input from the teachers, but families also can request the extra help. Ms. Kamara asked if there is any video component with Paper and Mr. Duncan stated that most students preferred the anonymity and video could pose a privacy issue.

(the following motions were considered together)

Chair McCullough made the following motions:

Request that the Administration provide an update in March on the Catapult and Ignite tutoring programs in the elementary schools.

Request that the Administration continue a conversation with Paper and explore what the opportunities are for utilizing their virtual tutoring services and consider sending out a bid for comparison and provide an update at the February 8, 2022 meeting of Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

(continued on Page 3)

PRIOR ACTION (continued)

- 1-18-22 - Ms. Kamara made the following motion:
Request that the Administration provide a report on the elementary quadrants' use of Catapult and Ignite.
On a roll call of 3-0, the motions were approved.
On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held for the meeting of February 8, 2022.
- 2-3-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.
Superintendent Binienda stated that she met with Mr. Duncan regarding a pilot for grades 9-12.
Vice-Chair Mailman requested that an update be provided with the scope and cost of the program.
On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held.
- 2-17-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved the action of the Standing Committee as stated.
- 2-8-22 - STANDING COMMITTEE ON TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS
Superintendent Binienda stated that she met with Mr. Duncan regarding a pilot for grades 9-12.
Vice-Chair Mailman requested that an update be provided with the scope and cost of the program.
On a roll call of 3-0, the item was held.
- 2-17-22 - SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING - The School Committee approved on a roll call of 7-0, the action of the Standing Committee as stated.

The virtual tutoring project has provided a unique opportunity to support students in a new, and non-traditional way. Currently we have five schools involved in this project. Our participating schools vary in size and scope of the project. Our participating schools include: Quinsigamond, Flagg, City View, Norrback, and most recently we added Clark Street Community School to the project. We have continued to use two companies, Ignite and Catapult Learning as our providers. Each program provides face to face tutoring for selected schools and students, Students meet in either in small groups or in 1-1 settings. Some schools provide time during the school day, others during the after school program, and others provide tutoring in the evening. The feedback to date has been extremely positive and in the short time these sessions have been under way, schools have seen notable gains in foundational reading skills.

Below is a recap for each site:

City View: Principal Tremba reports that the program has been well-received and successful. The school has increased attendance to 40 students involved in the after school, virtual, Catapult Learning, tutoring project. Principal Tremba reports that students enjoy going and anticipates increased academic achievement for all the students and has seen skills improving daily. City View is utilizing Catapult Learning where students are tutored in groups of 4-1. Principal Tremba would like to continue with virtual tutoring next year if the district is able to support this initiative.

Flagg Street: Tutoring takes place in the evening with parents ensuring their children's attendance. In the beginning there were some technical issues which Catapult addressed immediately. As of now families are reporting to the principal that the program is going well. Principal Labuski feels students are making progress and believes the program is most beneficial. Catapult Learning is used with a 4-1 ratio and provides students with small group support and also the opportunity to work together. The school would like to continue with the program next year.

Norrback: Presently, Principal Troiano reports that Norrback has 27 students participating in their tutoring program. The school had a delayed start, and have only been up and running for one week. They report that Catapult Learning has been a great help in providing materials to families and working out technical difficulties. The school is looking forward to analyzing their data to see the students' progress.

Clark Street: At the request of Principal Dukaj, Clark St. School was added for a final 12 week session. Principal Dukaj received positive feedback from other school leaders involved in the project and wanted this program for his school. Clark Street is launching their program on Monday, March 14. The virtual tutoring will take place during the after school program and will provide a 4-1 ratio.

Quinsigamond: Dr. Keu reports that the virtual tutoring project at Quinsigamond Elementary School has made immediate and significant gains in the short time they have been in operation. The Quinsigamond tutoring program is unique, as they are using Ignite as a provider, and 1-1 tutoring takes place at specific times during the literacy block for second graders. Students receive skill building on foundational reading skills each day. This innovative program has been brought to the Worcester Public Schools by the One8 Foundation. The One8 foundation will be visiting Quinsigamond School on March 23.

ITEM: gb #1-323

STANDING COMMITTEE: **TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS**

DATE OF MEETING: Tuesday, March 15, 2022

ITEM: Ms. McCullough/Mrs. Clancey/Mr. Monfredo/Ms. Novick
(November 19, 2021)

Request that the Administration provide an update on the use of Fountas and Pinnell Literacy Program in light of recent data.

PRIOR ACTION:

12-2-21 - Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning and Student Supports.

BACKUP: Annex A (6 pages) contains the Administration's response to the item.

The District began using the Fountas and Pinnell Classroom grades K through 2 in the 2018-2019 school year. Grade 3 was added in 2019-2020. The first two years of traditional implementation were interrupted by the pandemic in early March 2020.

High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)

Teacher effectiveness, a long standing focus, is critical to student outcomes. High quality instructional materials (HQIM), a current focus in the educational field, are important and supportive of teacher effectiveness. EdReports (2015) and CURATE (Curriculum Ratings by Teachers, 2018) are currently popular resources to identify HQIM in Massachusetts.

The EdReports Process

It is important for educators and other consumers of educational literature to note that EdReports is a review of materials by a teacher committee and not outcome data. All curriculum evaluation tools, including EdReports, are based on discrete rubrics informed by subjective criteria on pedagogy and instruction. The EdReports rubric, for example, is anchored in the Common Core Standards. The English Language Arts (ELA) rubric for grades K-2 illustrates this (See: [Ed Reports ELA K-2 rubric final v1](#)). EdReports ranks a program's alignment to the Common Core Standards but does not purport to assess if a program is either effective or evidence based. There is no predictive validity associated with the EdReport reviews by the teacher committee.

The Ed Reports review of the Fountas and Pinnell Classroom, grades K through 2, (See: [Fountas & Pinnell Classroom-2020-K report](#)) ranked

Gateway 1: Text Quality as: Kindergarten not meeting expectations (score 22), First Grade not meeting expectations (score 22), and Second Grade not meeting expectations (score 24). A score of 0 to 26 does not meet expectations, 27 to 51 partially meets expectations and a score of 52 to 58 meets expectations. Gateway 2: Building Knowledge was listed as NA at these grade levels. Usability was not rated. In the EdReports process, "Materials must meet or partially meet expectations for the first set of indicators (Gateway 1) to move to the other gateways". Therefore, the reviews of subsequent gateways were not conducted. However, EdReports purchased only a subset of each grade level system, thus omitting three of seven key components from this review: Small Group Teaching in Guided Reading, Book Clubs and Independent Reading.

WPS Response:

The District has been actively working to review, understand and act on the information presented in EdReports in relation to the Worcester Public Schools' early literacy program:

- The Managers of the Teaching and Learning Division met with the state to discuss the EdReport on Wednesday, December 1. The Managers in the Teaching and Learning Division meet regularly with DESE to review state resources and support. The current focus of meetings is on data, acceleration, standards based instruction, and evidence based practices.
- Elementary, Multilingual Learner, Special Education and the Office of Curriculum and Professional Development managers, department heads and coaches met Friday, December 3 to discuss action steps in response to the Ed Report.

It was noted that the Dual Language and Transitional Bilingual Education programs use the ARC reading program for grades kindergarten through 6.

- The Heggerty Curriculum was purchased for all kindergarten and first grade classrooms in 30 of our elementary schools. The remaining schools were given the option to be included in the order but chose not to be. The approximate ship date is June 1 as we are waiting for the release of the 2022 editions. This is a ten-minute-a-day phonological awareness supplement. It was purchased anecdotal teacher observations that students have come into kindergarten with very noticeable gaps in this area, presumably due to a combination of the effects of masking and less social interaction during remote learning.
- Next steps by the District are:
 - Managers will meet with elementary principals to update them on the EdReports review and the development of related action steps;
 - Kindergarten through grade 3 teachers will be provided with an asynchronous phonics review and acceleration plan for use in grade level meetings, professional development or independently, January through April ;
 - Monthly meetings will be scheduled for the interdisciplinary leadership team to continue to coordinate and collaborate on planning through an ongoing review of progress based on student data.
 - Members of the elementary District Literacy Team will be invited to join the interdisciplinary leadership team to incorporate the action steps into the elementary literacy plan action steps.
- During second semester, the interdisciplinary leadership team will specifically:
 - Review district early literacy data;
 - Review assessments used, related parameters and explore assessment needs to support informed early literacy instruction;
 - Identify related staff professional learning needs;
 - Develop explicit early literacy instructional expectations for K-2 (ex. time, components, evidence based best practices);
 - Further investigate early literacy High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)
 - Further investigated early literacy evidence based practices
 - Support the development within the WPS Multi-Tier System of Support (MTSS) of evidence based resources and practices to be responsive to the varied needs of students. [Note that currently available in general education classrooms to support students are: Wilson’s Foundations; Leveled Literacy Intervention; Lexia (adaptive computer program);

Imagine Learning (identified EPL 1 and 2 students, multilingual adaptive computer program); Heggerty: Bridge the Gap Manuals on Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Intervention (new, in process of rolling out in a few places)].

- Related work during the second semester includes:
 - Continuing with kindergarten screenings to identify risk for developmental language delay (DLD) with and without dyslexia using the Dynamic Decoding Measure and the Narrative Language Measure in conjunction with MGH's SAIL Lab's OWL Project;
 - Providing daily Tier 2 intervention for Grade 1 students flagged as at risk through the OWL Project;
 - Providing additional SPED teachers and speech and language therapists a variety of trainings to support varied student needs; and
 - Providing Focused Instructional Coaches training in the Science of Reading.

The information in EdReports will inform our ongoing work with the knowledge that it is a review of materials using a rubric aligned to the Common Core Standards. There are varied rubric based approaches to assessing curriculum materials available through organizations such as The Council of Great City Schools (2019) with a Curriculum Quality Rubric, a district self-assessment ([Curriculum Quality Rubric.pdf](#)) and Oregon University's Curriculum Merit Checklist ([Seagrant Oregon State Curriculum Merit Checklist](#)). There are also a variety of state and district level tools such as The Connecticut Curriculum Guide ([CT Curriculum Development Guide 2008.pdf](#)) and Quality Curriculum Evaluation Rubric, Fleming County, Kentucky ([Quality Curriculum Evaluation Rubric Rev 110716.pdf](#)).

The Worcester Public School's District Literacy Plan (Spring 2021) explicitly states the values and beliefs educators in the District hold for both students and themselves. In our diverse community, a deep, rich approach is required in literacy instruction to ensure all students succeed. There is strong agreement among educators that a comprehensive literacy system is essential for the development of effective reading, writing and language competencies. Fountas & Pinnell Classroom™ (FPC) rests on 30+ years of the authors' classroom experience and research on how literacy develops in children over time and incorporates leading thinking and research on effective literacy instruction. The IRIS Center at Vanderbilt's Peabody College ([Iris Peabody Vanderbilt.edu](#)) explains:

Educators often use the well established and commonly used practices and strategies that they have seen others use—including their own teachers—never questioning whether these practices are supported by evidence. In fact, some of these practices have been shown to be ineffective or have no data to support them...To improve the quality of instruction students receive and the outcomes that students achieve, the field of education has been making great efforts for a number of years to implement evidence-based practices or programs (EBPs).

Although the terms evidence-based practices and evidence-based programs have been used interchangeably, experts in the field, as well as practitioners, are beginning to differentiate between them. Evidence-Based Practice: Skills, techniques, and strategies that have been proven to work through experimental research studies or large-scale research field studies. Evidence-Based Program: A collection of practices that, when used together, has been proven to work through experimental research studies or large-scale research field studies.

For information on evidence based practices and programs, the prominent resource in the field. is What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), Institute of Educational Sciences (2002). WWC provides, "scientific evidence on education programs, products, practices, and policies...[reviewing] the research, [determining] which studies meet rigorous standards, and [summarizing] the findings. (WCC) focuses on high-quality research to answer the question 'what works in education' ".

While the field of education continues to evolve, a long standing finding underpinning the emphasis of our work in Worcester is that the most important factor influencing a child's learning is the teacher. For example, John Hattie's extensive research (<https://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>) finds:

- "The greatest influence on students' progress is having the highly expert, inspired and passionate teachers and school leaders working together to maximize the effects of their teaching on all students in their care." (Hattie, 2015, p.2)
- "Collective Teacher Efficacy: ranks highest on his list of 252 influences on student achievement.

*Hattie, J. 2015. What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise. London, UK: Pearson

*Hattie, J. (2017). Hattie Ranking: 252 Influences and Effect Sizes Related Student Achievement

Addendum 1: Marshall Memo 913, November 30, 2021

Irene Fountas and Gay Su Pinnell on Systematic Phonics Instruction

In this online article, literacy gurus Irene Fountas (Lesley University) and Gay Su Pinnell (Ohio State University) address the hot topic in early literacy: Do children need systematic phonics instruction? Absolutely, say Fountas and Pinnell: "Even children who 'crack the code' early and appear to have noticed letter-sound relationships and figured out how to use them will benefit from systematizing their knowledge and developing effective, efficient ways to use their knowledge not only of letters and sounds, but also of patterns involving larger chunks of words. At the bottom line, the more rapidly and efficiently children can decode words, the more accurate and fluent their reading will be, making it possible to give greater attention to comprehension and deeper thinking."

Fountas and Pinnell summarize twelve research-based principles that should be put to work in a daily block of 30 minutes of phonics in the primary grades:

- Explicit phonics instruction is effective when taught in a cumulative sequence ranging from simple to more complex. Steps include how print works, hearing sounds in words, letter knowledge, letter-sound relationships, spelling patterns, high-frequency words, vocabulary, word structure, and a flexible range of word-solving strategies.
- In kindergarten and first grade, students need to be taught strong phonological awareness, including knowing individual phonemes. Much of this is developed through shared reading of poems, songs, and stories, taking advantage of the pleasure children get from rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration, and fun words like pop.
- Children need to learn how to look at print, name the letters, and see the subtle differences between them – for example, distinguishing n from h, d from b, and u from n. They also need to learn left-to-right directionality, spacing between words, punctuation, and more.
- Children need to internalize the alphabetic principle – that letters and sounds are connected in a systematic way: a graphic form (letter) is related to a specific sound (phoneme). This gets more complicated as students move through the grades and learn, for example, that the a sound can be represented as -a, -ai, -ay, -aigh, and -et.
- Effective phonics instruction teaches students to move through words sound by sound and/or letter by letter (synthetic approaches), and notice parts and patterns in words as they are taken apart (analytic approaches). They have to learn how to deal with silent letters and other irregularities.
- Another essential component is systematically building students' word-solving ability – being able to rapidly and efficiently notice and seek out word patterns and their relationships to sounds. There are 70-75 phonogram patterns in the English language. "Noticing and using these patterns," say Fountas and Pinnell, "gives children power over words."
- Children need to build knowledge about the structure of words (syllables, root words, prefixes, and suffixes) and use this knowledge flexibly to take words apart while reading (sounding them out) and writing (saying a multisyllabic word in parts and writing it that way). "This breaking down and building up process allows the reader/writer to use basic phonics principles," say the authors.
- Students need a repertoire of known words so that as they read and write, they solve problems against a background of accurate reading. After being exposed to tricky high-frequency words (like the and said) several times, children recognize them and have a leg up, freeing cognitive bandwidth for fluency and comprehension. Decodable texts are unnecessary, say Fountas and Pinnell, if the

texts children read are carefully constructed and sequenced with many simple words that are easy to decode and linked to phonics instruction – and the stories are interesting and make sense.

- Children need a flexible range of in-the-head strategies to apply as they read and write – including the ability to solve words, read with fluency, and comprehend. “Without meaning, there is no purpose,” say the authors. Reading and writing are not a mechanical process; readers and writers need to be flexible: “They try things out. They make hypotheses.” They’re not guessing, they’re self-monitoring and problem-solving. And they gradually get better.
- Robust vocabulary and spelling instruction is essential across the grades. Incorrect phonetic spelling – which is natural in the early grades – needs to be quickly replaced with correct spelling as students learn more words, learn how to take words apart, master the irregularities, and draw on Latin and Greek roots to understand and spell more and more words.
- Teacher expertise is essential, including understanding the simple and complex relationships between graphic symbols and phonemic elements, base words, word roots, and etymology. “Being knowledgeable about the acquisition of decoding strategies, vocabulary expansion, and spelling techniques should help a teacher to be more strategic and efficient,” say Fountas and Pinnell. “It underlies the ability to observe closely and to be responsive to them rather than following a program in a rote or robotic way.”
- Explicit phonics instruction should be an integral part of a comprehensive literacy design that gives children ample opportunities to use what they understand in meaningful reading and writing. “Explicit phonics instruction without the opportunity to engage in purposeful and joyful reading and writing is a barren curriculum,” say the authors. Children need to be engaged in seeking connections and patterns and “hands-on” work with letters, sounds, word parts, and words, with explicit links to reading and writing in other contexts.

“Learning to read is complex and individual, especially for children who struggle,” conclude Fountas and Pinnell, noting the equity challenge of doing right by English language learners and children who enter schools with disadvantages; teachers need to draw on their funds of knowledge and individual strengths. “Becoming literate is an enormous achievement, and for most children, one that requires the assistance not only of a skillful and knowledgeable teacher, but the support of a literacy learning community in schools and classrooms.”

[“Twelve Compelling Principles from the Research on Effective Phonics Instruction”](#)
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Addendum 2: [Heinemann Response to Ed Reports](#)

Addendum 3: International Literacy Association. (2016). Dyslexia [Research advisory]. Newark, DE: Author. Retrieved from: [International Literacy Association](#)