

Committee Members
Molly McCullough, Chair
Susan Mailman, Vice-Chair
Jermoh Kamara

Administrative Representative
Marie Morse, EdD.

OFFICE OF THE
CLERK OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE
WORCESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS
20 IRVING STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01609

AGENDA #5

The Standing Committee on TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENT SUPPORTS will hold a virtual meeting:

on: April 24, 2023
at: 4:30 p.m.
in: [Virtual Only - Zoom Link HERE](#)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ROLL CALL

III. GENERAL BUSINESS

gb 3-102 .1 Administration

(April 3, 2023)

To request that the School Committee consider formal recommendation of an elementary ELA core curriculum program for implementation in the 2023-2024 school year.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Helen A. Friel, Ed.D.
Clerk of the School Committee

O. General Business
Administration
(April 3, 2023)

ITEM: gb 3-102.1
S.C. MEETING: 4-24-23

ITEM:

To request that the School Committee consider formal recommendation of an elementary ELA core curriculum program for implementation in the 2023-2024 school year.

PRIOR ACTION:

4-13-23 Referred to the Standing Committee on Teaching, Learning, and Student Supports

BACKUP:

Annex A (34 pages) contains an overview of the Elementary ELA Curriculum Program Pilot.

RECOMMENDATION OF MAKER:

Approve.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION:

Approve.

Elementary ELA Curriculum Program Pilot

April 24, 2023

From Here, Anywhere....

Together



WORCESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Desired Outcome

Select an elementary ELA curriculum program that supports the evidence-based teaching of English Language Arts standards in grades K-6 for implementation starting in SY24





Curriculum Program Pilot Process

Urgency for New ELA Curriculum Program

- WPS teacher feedback survey in May 2022 about current curricular materials indicated gaps with current curriculum (i.e., Fountas & Pinnell Classroom)
- Current curriculum “Does Not Meet Expectations” on EdReports
- MCAS ELA performance reflects low performance in 2021 and 2022; not recovering since COVID

Fountas & Pinnell Classroom
2020
Fountas & Pinnell Classroom

PUBLISHER
Heinemann

SUBJECT **GRADES** **REPORT RELEASE**
ELA K-5 11/9/2021

ALIGNMENT ⓘ **USABILITY** ⓘ

Does Not Meet **Not Rated**

EdReports

EdReports is an independent nonprofit committed to ensuring all students have access to high-quality instructional materials. They publish free reviews of K–12 instructional materials, using an educator led approach that measures standards alignment, usability, and other quality criteria.

For ELA, EdReports reviews and evaluates materials based on:

- Text Quality and Complexity, and Alignment to Standards with Tasks Grounded in Evidence
- Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks
- Instructional Supports and Usability

**Does Not Meet
Expectations**

**Partially Meets
Expectations**

Meets Expectations

Initial Program Overview

All elementary staff were invited to an open review of the following programs that “Meet Expectations” on EdReports.

- American Reading Company
- Core Knowledge Language Arts
- EL Education
- Into Reading
- myView
- Wit & Wisdom
- Wonders

Initial Program Overview - Pilot Program Selection Annex A

Staff were asked to give feedback on the following criteria:

- Curriculum alignment
- Systematic and explicit phonics instruction
- Content skills and understanding
- Universal Design for Learning
- Multilingual supports strategically embedded
- Special Education supports and scaffolds
- Culturally Responsive Pedagogy
- Quality of formative and summative assessments

Programs selected for piloting

- Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)
- Wit & Wisdom

Elements of CKLA from Amplify

- Aligns to standards and research-based practices for foundational skills instruction with a synthetic approach to phonics and a clear and an explicit and systematic instructional sequence in K-2
- Included texts are rich and rigorous, offering a balance of informational and literary reading over the course of the school year
- Texts are organized to support students' building knowledge of different topics, and sets of text-dependent questions and tasks provide opportunities for students to analyze ideas and grow their vocabulary
- Writing instruction is integrated, consistent ,and organized to support students' development of different types of writing
- Offers resources and tools to collect ongoing data about student progress
- Provides teachers with strategies for meeting the needs of a range of learners
- Supports effective use of technology to enhance learning

Elements of Wit & Wisdom from Great Minds

Annex A

- Includes opportunities to apply reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills across a variety of tasks designed to grow students' literacy skills over the course of the year while providing options to differentiate where appropriate
- Provides ample opportunities for students to build knowledge through content-rich texts
- Supports students in growing knowledge and vocabulary as they practice and apply skills in new texts and tasks
- Materials include comprehensive instruction in writing, building research skills, and supporting students' developing independent reading
- Does not include a formal foundational skills component - supplemented with Foundations and Geodes decodable readers for phonics instruction and Heggerty's Phonemic Awareness Curriculum

Elementary ELA Pilot Structure

- All elementary schools were given the opportunity to request to pilot one of the programs in grades K, 2, 4
- Selected schools received grade level materials and targeted training
- Ongoing supports from OCPL were provided for piloting teachers and coaches
- Data collection from teachers and principals - biweekly survey; classroom visits; feedback sessions for final recommendations used for evaluation of the programs

Participating Pilot Schools and Grades

Annex A

CKLA by Amplify

- Burncoat Prep (2)
- Elm Park (K)
- Heard St. (4)
- Rice Square (K)
- Roosevelt (2, 4)
- Woodland (2, 4)

21 total classrooms

Wit & Wisdom

- Belmont (4)
- Columbus Park (K)
- Flagg St. (2, 4)
- Grafton St. (2, 4)
- Nelson Place (K)
- Norrback (2)

22 total classrooms



Curriculum Program Selection

Comparing and Rating

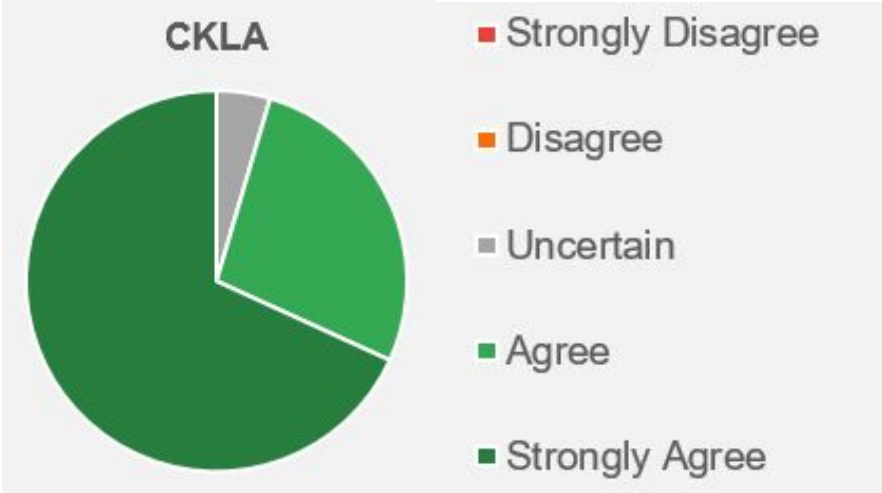
Participating teachers piloted the program materials over a six to eight week period. Teachers piloted only one of the programs - their point of comparison is to what they currently implement (Fountas & Pinnell Classroom, Heinemann).

The teachers did not compare the two pilot programs to one another. Their perspectives and experiences about the strengths and weaknesses of the program they piloted are independent of the other program.

- Pilot teachers gave input on select criteria through bi-weekly surveys (March 10, March 24, and April 7)
- There were some classroom observations and notes taken during common planning times
- Pilot teachers and principals provided input through an end-pilot group interview

Elementary ELA Curriculum Recommendation

The majority of teachers piloting the Amplify CKLA program strongly agreed to recommend its adoption on the April 7th bi-weekly survey.



AMPLIFY CKLA

- **Serving students since 2000**
- **38,000+ classrooms**
- **Over 3 million students in 50 states representing 9% of the total population of primary students in the US**
- **Some of the largest urban districts that Amplify CKLA supports:**
 - Arlington Public Schools, Virginia
 - Denver Public Schools, Colorado
 - Fort Worth ISD, Texas
 - Guilford County Schools, North Carolina
 - Los Angeles USD, California
 - San Antonio ISD, Texas
- **Massachusetts districts using CKLA:**
 - Weymouth Public Schools
 - Beverly Public Schools
 - North Andover Public Schools
 - Gloucester Public Schools
 - East Longmeadow Public Schools
 - Pentucket Regional School District
 - Ashburnham Westminster Regional School District
 - Lynnfield School District
 - Amesbury Public Schools
 - Clinton Public Schools
 - Saugus Public Schools

Annex A

Research Base

- Knowledge-based approach to reading comprehension
 - Based on science of reading, teaches mechanics of reading in combination with general knowledge of social studies and science and context to help comprehend what they are reading, teach vocabulary, and go deeper into a topic over time and builds across grades
 - Recent study found that “children who got a content-rich, knowledge-building curriculum for at least four years, beginning in kindergarten, significantly outperformed their peers on standardized reading comprehension tests. Students from low-income families made such dramatic gains that their performance on state tests equaled that of children from higher-income families.”
(Reported by Natalie Wexler, April 9, 2023, Forbes, [Dramatic New Evidence That Building Knowledge Can Boost Comprehension And Close Gaps](#))
- John Hattie’s work on [effect sizes](#) from meta-analyses suggest the following elements of CKLA have the potential to accelerate student achievement:
 - Phonics instruction (.60 effect size)
 - Direct instruction (.59 effect size)
 - Scaffolding (.58 effect size)
 - Comprehension programs (.55 effect size)

Science of Reading

- The Reading Rope, developed by Dr. Hollis Scarborough in 2001, further deconstructs decoding and language comprehension, the two parts of the Simple View of Reading, into explicit skills and instruction.
- The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.

The Reading Rope

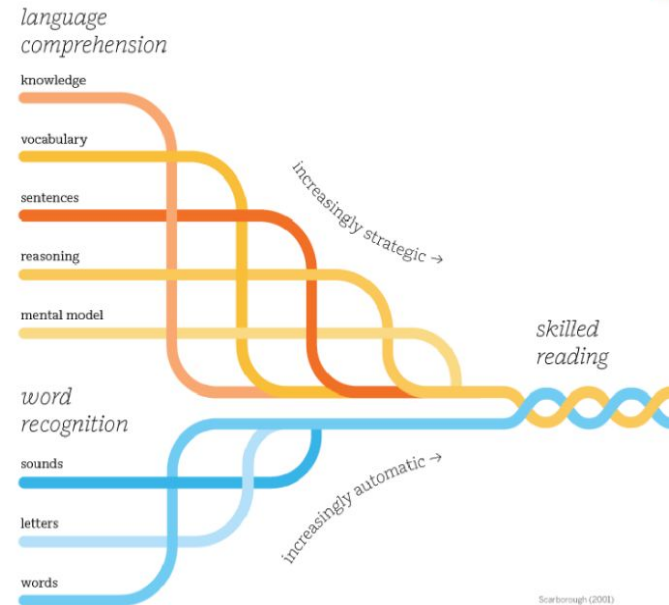
Language comprehension

- Vocabulary: breadth, precision, links, etc
- Background knowledge: facts, concepts, etc.
- Language structure: syntax, semantics, etc.
- Verbal reasoning: inference, metaphor, etc.
- Literacy knowledge: print concepts, genres, etc.

Word recognition

- Phonological awareness: syllables, phonemes, etc.
- Decoding: alphabetic principle, letter-sound correspondences.
- Sight recognition of familiar words.

[Download our free Reading Rope placemat.](#)



CKLA Supports Learners

- Students engage in discussion and critical thinking every day.
 - The program's scope and sequence is designed to include the introduction of new concepts and skills, practice, review, and application within and across grade levels.
- Students build a broad and deep knowledge base, connecting knowledge within and across grades.
 - Connects knowledge within and across grades with exposure to a broad range of topics across history, science, literature, and the arts
- Explicit Phonics Instruction
 - The materials include explicit, systematic teacher-level instruction and modeling to demonstrate the use of phonics to encode sounds to letters and words in writing tasks through dictation work.

CKLA Supports Learners

- **Explicit, systematic foundational skills**
 - The Skills Strand provides students with systematic, explicit, and comprehensive instruction in the code of the English language, particularly supportive of Multilingual Learners and students with reading difficulties.
- **Multilingual Learner supports aligned to WIDA are embedded in every lesson.**
 - Multilingual Learner Supports provide tiered support for multiple levels of English proficiency—Entering/Emerging, Transitioning/Expanding, and Bridging—and are specific to the mastery of standards for the lesson and aligned to the Primary Focus objectives of the lesson.
 - The suggestions incorporate best practices for Multilingual Learners, including additional support for academic language such as sentence stems, images and realia, and other recommendations.

CKLA Supports Learners

- **Multilingual Glossaries for grades 3–5**
 - Features the availability of a multilingual glossary with translations of all unit vocabulary in ten languages: Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Urdu, and Vietnamese.
- **Language Studio, an English Language Development companion, provides dedicated support for Multilingual Learners**
 - Aligned to WIDA, Language Studio provides daily 30-minute targeted instruction to meet the specific needs of Multilingual Learners.
 - Language Studio lessons address the four language domains: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking.
 - Every lesson includes Features of Academic Language supports for discourse, language forms and functions, and vocabulary as well as a language proficiency evaluation tool.
 - Embedded differentiation further supports all levels of Multilingual Learners.



Pilot Teacher Feedback

Instructional Benefits - Curriculum Design

The curriculum is designed with a “very systematic approach” to instruction. Pilot teachers observed that lessons were connected. The curriculum is aligned to grade level frameworks for ELA with a focus on building knowledge and vocabulary development.

- Explicit phonics instruction is a core aspect of the program in grades K-2. “There is extremely explicit phonics instruction every day and the skills learned are repeatedly reviewed throughout the week.” Phonics follows a systematic lesson sequence with daily opportunities for application of phonics concepts in reading and writing.
- Knowledge units have science and social studies topics integrated. These sometimes directly align with grade level frameworks in those content areas. When not in grade-level alignment, they help to build vocabulary and background knowledge for future study.
- Writing is integrated into every lesson and is developmentally appropriate in Kindergarten and aligns with standards in grades 2 and 4.

Instructional Benefits - Assessment

There are a variety of accessible and easy-to-use formative assessment “quick checks” included in every lesson. These are checks of skills and knowledge taught for a particular lesson and informs grouping decisions. The assessments give teachers information on whether their students are understanding the content; and who may need support.

- “The built in assessments that are part of the skills and knowledge strands are very helpful for helping me to understand how much of the content my students are understanding and retaining. The assessments are quick and easy to administer. The data sheets provided in the teachers manuals also make it easy to collect and track anecdotal data during lessons to monitor student progress”
- “Every day, you are able to get formative assessment pieces through the practice pages. This is great information for teachers!”

Instructional Benefits - Student Experience

Students have been highly engaged and enjoying the topics. Teachers noticed that students are excited about learning. They are enjoying the read aloud and writing and are retaining more vocabulary. Some students appeared to be feeling more confident and as a result were more willing to take risks in their writing. Students in the 4th grade found it more challenging but were no less engaged and enjoying the new curriculum program.

- “All of my students are so engaged during all components of the curriculum. Students who don't usually participate are raising their hands to answer questions. Students feel empowered and I am seeing evidence that they are learning.”
- “I am impressed at how much of the content my students have been retaining compared to our previous curriculum. From week-to-week they have been able to retain and apply the content. I am also impressed by the high quality vocabulary instruction and enjoy how the vocabulary they learn comes up in multiple texts across multiple days. I am enjoying teaching the content and I can see that my students are enjoying what they are learning.”

Instructional Benefits - Teacher Experience

Pilot teachers were overwhelmingly positive about their experience with the CKLA program. They found most of the materials to be useful including the online components.

- “I really appreciate how this program is set up. I can easily identify the primary objectives and I can clearly make the connection of how the curriculum is connected to the frameworks.”
- “With how the lessons spiral and are scaffolded, I am able to see my struggling students succeed and feel more confident. Not only that, but there is a lot more opportunity for authentic conversations about the content allowed. I can't wait to see what continues to happen because I am seeing all of this after only doing 5 lessons with my students!”

Supporting All Learners

All students are highly engaged in the curriculum and appear to be benefitting and experiencing success. This includes ML/ELLs, including Levels 1s and 2s, and students with disabilities (SWD). Increased comprehension and participation were observed by some teachers and ML/ELLs in particular were excited about reading the same texts as everyone else.

- “The learning is for ALL students. It can be adjusted to my ELLs and my students with IEP very easily.”
- “I feel as though the program is a necessary shift in instruction. Students are retaining the knowledge they have learned and showing great gains in independent reading of CVC words. However, it can prove to be a struggle to meet the needs of all learners without advanced preparation.”

Supporting All Learners

There were some times when MLs and SWD students needed additional supports. While the program has embedded tools to support all learners, some teachers mentioned needing to do some additional prep to scaffold lessons for struggling MLs and SWD. Some of the embedded UDL and scaffolding supports embedded in the program include:

- The use of visuals, explicit vocabulary instruction, multisensory techniques, gross motor activities, and a text-to-speech option
- Lesson sidebars in the teacher's manual which offer specific suggestions for emerging, transitioning, and bridging MLs, as well as challenge suggestions for high-achieving students
- Vocabulary process has been very successful in teaching ALL students tier 2 and tier 3 vocabulary - students are naturally using the vocabulary terms and making reference to the knowledge concepts introduced in daily conversation and play
- Additional support section offered at the end of every lesson with ideas to help students who may need additional practice to meet the objective

Supporting All Learners

Other aspects of the program that pilot teachers commented on:

- “ML learners and students with disabilities, who needed support previously with tasks, are now completing their work independently.”
- “From what I have seen of the grade 2 program, the curriculum is the same for all students with many opportunities for scaffolding and support. This is my favorite part of the program because it ensures that all students are exposed to grade level curriculum and provided the support to reach grade level standards.”
- “The flexibility and ability to use this curriculum as whole group instruction, small group, partner work, or independent work, and any combination of the aforementioned, allows me to effectively support my students with disabilities and my multilingual learners. Not only that, there are explicit scaffolding questions listed in the teachers manual to assist any students who may need that extra support. Additionally, the incorporation of multiple reads, and multiple means to access the reading shows me the embedded UDL in the curriculum.”



Curriculum Program Implementation

Implementation Plan

Year 1

Initial Training and Implementation



Year 2

Ongoing Supports & Continued Professional Learning

Year 3

Enhanced Instruction & Implementation

Considerations for Adoption & Implementation

Through end of School Year 2023

- Order K-6 classroom materials and provide initial training in June provided by the vendor
- Explore scheduling solutions to ensure appropriate timing for core instruction particularly for students who receive services
- Identify books used in current classroom libraries that may align with new program
- Explore how to align the core program to available program tier 2 and tier 3 resources and supports (for MTSS)
- Continue offering information to teachers on the science of reading to assist with the shift from a leveled reading approach to a knowledge-based approach

Considerations for Adoption & Implementation

Throughout School Year 2024 (Year 1 of Implementation)

- Establish curriculum teams of teachers who will work collaboratively with the district to review and suggest additional culturally responsive resources and materials to supplement the program
- Use literacy and language screeners to monitor student progress compared to prior school years
- Curriculum teams will also do more in-depth review of program alignment with the science and social studies frameworks
- Facilitate district Professional Learning Communities and professional learning offering to support implementation
- Explore supports for students new to Worcester schools and new to the country who will not have background knowledge of what has been taught prior to their enrollment

Acronyms

CKLA- Core Knowledge Language Arts

CVC-Consonant/Vowel/Consonant words

ELA- English Language Arts

ML/ELL- Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners

MTSS- Multi- Tiered Systems of Support

OCPL- Office of Curriculum & Professional Learning

SWD- Students with Disabilities

UDL- Universal Design for Learning

Thank You

