

Meeting Notes for Joint Primaries Curriculum Meeting 2/1/2022

Attendees: Ms. Bellovin, Dr. Viscovich, Mr. Vespe

Reps: Anna Allsbrook (PTA Chair), Neha Bajaj (SEPTA Coordinator), Liz Ahern, Ali Calame, Elizabeth Cendan, Megan Conlon, Maria Khawaja

1. NWEA/MTSS

On the district website, there are a number of resources under Parents>NWEA Parent Information. Parents are encouraged to contact the child's teacher with any questions concerning the NWEA. School personnel are able to explain in detail the results of a child's NWEA and how it relates to the child's performance. It is important to note that the RIT score has a standard error of +/-3, and this range is listed with the RIT score on the report. We should be mindful of this range when we are analyzing growth scores.

The NWEA serves multiple purposes. State regulations require that the district administer a universal academic screener 2-3 times per year, and the NWEA is a well-established measure that fulfills this requirement. Results may flag an academic weakness not otherwise discovered, but more often, scores reflect academic weaknesses already identified by the teacher or parents. As such, the NWEA fits in the MTSS process as one of multiple data points used to identify children who require some academic intervention. Other data points include, but are not limited to, teacher running records, Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment, and parent report. In the spring of 2021, when the district used American Rescue Plan Act funds for summer math and ELA support services, the NWEA was used as a screener to identify the children who would most benefit from the program.

2. Literacy/Reading

The district uses a comprehensive approach to reading in which the science of reading is paramount and all aspects of reading are addressed (i.e., phonemic awareness, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary). A comprehensive approach allows the district to pull the best practices and resources from a variety of programs rather than adhering to only one ideology. Mr. Vespe explained that teaching phonics, for example, must be explicit, systematic, and multi-sensory. Currently, Foundations is used to teach phonics in Kindergarten and 1st grade because it is a research-based program that addresses all three criteria.

The comprehensive approach also allows teachers to provide individual and small group instruction. For example, the use of guided reading in which children can explore text that is a little bit above reading level with the help of a teacher in a small group. This allows teachers to hone in on the individual needs of the students.

There are many helpful links on the district's Curriculum web page related to this topic. The district's Comprehensive Approach to Literacy is a document on the district website under

Curriculum and Instruction>Curriculum Resources for K-5. It details the balanced literacy approach that is provided to all students in the classroom, and it is considered Tier I in the MTSS plan. The MTSS Plan can also be found on the Curriculum and Instruction>Curriculum Resources for K-5. Tier I - Enhanced consists of consultation and coordination among the primary teachers and the reading teacher, some of whom are trained in such reading programs as Wilson, Spire, and Orton-Gillingham. Sometimes a student's needs are met in the classroom by this method without moving on to Tier II. Tier II is a targeted intervention provided by the reading teacher in or out of the classroom. Students who do not respond to Tier II intervention receive targeted intervention at a higher frequency and lower teacher:student ratio with frequent progress monitoring outside the classroom.

The district is using a workshop model. To help parents and guardians as their children's primary literacy supporters, a resource with links to activities for any given level of reading instruction is being put together.

3. Writing

While a detailed Comprehensive Approach to Writing is a future goal, some information is provided in the Comprehensive Approach to Literacy document about writing instruction. In the primary grades, Writer's Workshop is a bit different from the elementary grades in that the writing is kept in a folder, not a notebook, and they have different focuses at each grade.

4. Classroom Libraries

To make the most of the classroom take-home libraries, teachers regularly borrow from each other, pulling books for what they need in their classroom. The reading levels of books in Kindergarten range from A to H. In 1st grade, the reading levels are E-M. Books are reviewed for age-appropriate content. There is a limited selection of decodable books on the market that align with the scope and sequence of classroom phonics instruction. Schools are looking into new titles available from Fly Leaf Publishing. There are also more books available on the iPad, but they are used minimally in order to avoid extra screen time.