

Mountain View Whisman School District

Agenda Item for Board Meeting of May 16, 2024

Agenda Category: Discussion Agenda

Agenda Item Title: Elementary English Language Arts & PK/TK Curriculum Adoption Update

Persons Responsible: Swati Dagar - Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
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Background: MVWSD's elementary English Language Arts curriculum adoption is aligned with our Strategic Plan 2027 Goal #1 - Providing effective and consistent instructional practices for all students.

The district's current Elementary ELA curriculum, Benchmark Advance, follows a balanced literacy approach. This approach has been proven to not be effective for all students. Research has shown that a systematic and explicit approach, structured literacy, is effective in ensuring all students become skilled readers. The goal of the K-5 ELA curriculum adoption committee was to adopt a curriculum that follows the Science of Reading (SoR) and meets the needs of MVWSD's students, including supports for multilingual learners and a parallel Spanish Language Arts curriculum.

The committee spent significant time studying the SoR and used their collective understanding as a guide throughout the curriculum review and pilot process. The key understandings from the SoR that guided the committee's work included:

1. Skilled reading and reading comprehension are the outcome as students become increasingly automatic in their word recognition skills and increasingly strategic in their use of language comprehension. There are many strands of reading within the larger ropes of language comprehension and word recognition that are strengthened as they are interwoven together. Students cannot be skilled readers if they do not have strong word recognition or language comprehension.
2. Written language is not biologically natural. Our brains are wired for spoken language, but not written language. The word form area of the brain needs to be built. The most effective and efficient way to build the word form area for the majority of students is through structured literacy and phonics instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and responsive. The research states that 95% of students will be able to learn to decode (read words) if provided this type of instruction.
3. Background knowledge is a significant factor that affects students' reading comprehension. In order to provide access and educational equity for all students, in addition to providing explicit and systematic phonics instruction, we also need to build

lots of background knowledge across the sciences, humanities, history, arts, and literature with students.

There was also a need to align the PK and TK curriculum as our TK students become younger with the state's adjusted age requirements. The goal for the PK/TK curriculum adoption committee was to adopt an integrated PK/TK curriculum that aligns with the elementary's SoR focus, is built from the research around how students learn and build language in early childhood, follows the continuum of pedagogical strategies for play-based learning, and build a strong foundation for Kindergarten success.

The PK/TK curriculum adoption committee spent significant time learning about the SoR and the research around effective early childhood education. The common principles that guided the committee's curriculum review and pilot were:

1. Early predictors of later reading ability include oral language comprehension, receptive and expressive vocabulary, phonological and phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge. Three and four year olds' performance in these areas are predictors of later reading comprehension in third and fourth grades. Additionally, phonological awareness is necessary for word recognition development.
2. We know that background knowledge is cumulative and the more knowledge and vocabulary that students have about a topic, the more knowledge and vocabulary that they are able to learn and remember. Spending significant time learning about different topics in early childhood builds a large bank of vocabulary and background knowledge that will yield huge dividends as students learn to read in later grades.
3. Early childhood education should be integrated with rich language opportunities through language arts, math, science, social studies, and social emotional learning.
4. Research shows the impact of socio-economic factors on language development in early childhood; children from wealthier families have exposure and working knowledge of many more words than children from less wealthy families. However, research and evidence also show that schools can close that word gap through intentional instruction, playful learning, and adult-student interactions.
5. There is a continuum of pedagogical strategies for play based learning, ranging from child centered free play to educator directed learning games. Different types of play-based learning are used to meet different objectives. Playful learning with intentional adult-student language interactions are an effective and efficient way to build knowledge and vocabulary with students.

Elementary K-5 ELA Adoption Process and Timeline

MVWSD sought Elementary ELA adoption committee members in August 2023, with the goal of gathering a team of primarily teachers, along with interested other staff members and parents. The district office team reviewed all applications and selected committee members that represent schools across the district, as well as all elementary grade levels. The final committee members were selected and notified in early September. The K-5 ELA curriculum adoption committee consists of 12 classroom teachers, 2 district teachers on special assignment (TOSA) for ELD and reading intervention, two parents, and three district office administrators. The district office members served as facilitators for the group, but were not voting members. All grade levels and the dual immersion program were represented on the committee.

The curriculum adoption process was comprehensive and rigorous. The committee spent 34 hours in committee meetings both after school and during full day Saturday sessions. During these meetings, committee members participated in professional development in SoR, received curriculum training from the publishers, and engaged in rich discussions around curriculum review and pilot. In addition, each teacher spent at least 6 hours to prepare for piloting curriculum materials, along with the time typically needed to prep and plan lessons. The committee reviewed the materials in four rounds, using rubrics that the committee created from existing research-based rubrics. After 4 rounds, the committee narrowed the curriculum down to two curriculums for pilot. Each curriculum was piloted for 6 weeks each, covering at least one full unit of instruction. The committee also held three public review sessions so that community members could preview pilot materials.

In the first round of review, the curriculum used Ed Reports ratings to eliminate curriculums that scored red (does not meet) and/or yellow (partially meets) on any of the gateway criteria: text quality and complexity, alignment to the standards, tasks, and questions grounded in evidence, foundational skills development, and building knowledge and coherence.

In the second round of review, the committee created a rubric by choosing relevant descriptors and criteria from several existing research-based rubrics to define MVWSD’s Must Haves, including support for multilingual learners, engagement, and a parallel Spanish Language Arts (SLA) program. ARC Core and Fishtank Plus were eliminated during this round for not having a parallel SLA curriculum. Benchmark Advance and Savvas My View Literacy had low scores on the rubric.

In the third round of review, the committee created another set of rubrics focusing on content and pedagogy, following a similar process as in round two. EL Education and Houghton Mifflin Into Reading had the lowest scores on the rubric. Additionally, after additional research, the committee found that EL Education’s Spanish materials were not parallel to their English materials.

In the fourth round of review, the committee combined all of their previous rubrics to create a longer, more comprehensive pilot rubric. The committee reviewed the same criteria through deeper engagement and understanding of the curriculums through their extensive pilot reviews.

A summary of the curriculum review results are shown in the table below:

Curriculum	Ed Reports	Must Haves	Content & Pedagogy
American Reading Company CORE	✓	X	X
Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)	✓	✓	✓
Benchmark Advance	✓	X	X
Bookworms	X	X	X
Calvert Education Curriculum	X	X	X

Center for the Collaborative Classroom Collaborative Literacy	X	X	X
Expeditionary Learning (EL Education)	✓	X	X
Fishtank Plus ELA	X	X	X
Fountas & Pinnell Classroom	X	X	X
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Into Reading	✓	✓	X
Lucy Calkins Units of Study	X	X	X
McGraw Hill Wonders	✓	✓	✓
National Geographic Reach for Reading	X	X	X
Savvas MyView Literacy	✓	X	X

After engaging in multiple discussions and reviewing rubric ratings, the voting members of the K-5 ELA curriculum adoption committee unanimously recommended Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (and the Spanish version, Caminos) for adoption in the 24-25 school year. The committee highly recommended Amplify CKLA and Caminos because:

- It is built from the SoR and substantially supports the committee’s key common understandings from the SoR.
- The K-2 skills strand is explicit, systematic, and aligned with Orton-Gillingham principles for instruction.
- The K-2 knowledge strand and 3rd-5th grade integrated curriculum provides in-depth, engaging, and rigorous content across the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and literature to build deep background knowledge and vocabulary.
- The materials are easy to use. Piloting teachers reported that teachers will need to spend some time initially to understand the content and pedagogy of the lessons, but not a lot of time locating the materials through many different books or boxes. The routines are repetitive; once teachers learn and teach these routines to students, teachers can spend more of their lesson planning time internalizing the content.
- There is diversity across the texts. Students of different backgrounds are represented in the text. The content across the K-5 span covers many different cultures. The Spanish Language Arts materials include texts that are important to Spanish and Latin culture and language.

In order to set up teachers for success with implementing the new curriculum and structured literacy, professional development and coaching will be provided in multiple ways throughout the school year. This past spring, all elementary teachers received three PD sessions about SoR and the instructional shifts. New to the district teachers will receive this training as part of their new teacher orientation in August. All elementary teachers will receive curriculum training in August. They will also receive additional PD and support through district-wide PD days, site-based coaching, and Literacy PLCs. Lit PLCs are facilitated, district-wide, grade-level PLCs that meet approximately every 6 weeks to provide teachers with the information and support that they need to implement the upcoming ELA curriculum units. During the Lit PLCs, teachers will learn the background literacy knowledge needed to teach the content, modeling and guided practice of the research and evidence based pedagogy and instructional strategies, and guided time for lesson preparation. These Lit PLCs will occur on Thursdays as an option for collaboration.

PK and TK Adoption Process and Timeline

The PK and TK adoption committee utilized an adoption process that mirrored the K-5 ELA adoption process, as there is no defined process for PK and TK adoptions. MVWSD sought PK and TK adoption committee members in October 2023. Director Kemper and the district office team reviewed all applications. The final committee members were selected and notified in early November. The PK/TK curriculum adoption committee consists of all 8 preschool teachers and 4 TK teachers from Castro, Mistral, and Theurkauf. Directors Kemper and Nguyen served as facilitators for the group, but were not voting members.

The committee spent over 8 hours in committee meetings after school. During these meetings, committee members participated in professional development in SoR, early childhood, and playful learning, received curriculum training from the publishers, and engaged in rich discussions around curriculum review and pilot. In addition, each teacher spent at least 6 hours to prepare for piloting curriculum materials, along with the time typically needed to prep and plan lessons. The committee reviewed the materials using a rubric that the committee created from existing research-based rubrics. The committee also held three public review sessions so that community members could preview pilot materials.

Considerations

Learning how to implement a new curriculum and shifting from a balanced literacy to a structured literacy model will require continued professional development and reflection. Ongoing PD and support through site-based coaching, district wide PD, and grade level Lit PLCs will be critical to a successful implementation. Additionally, the committee has discussed a 2 year curriculum rollout and professional development plan, in which learning in year 1 focuses on implementing the core curricular components, while year 2 adds in ancillary and supplemental components.

Next Steps

The district is seeking approval from the Board on curriculum adoption for the 2024-25 school year: Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts and Caminos for K-5 English Language Arts, and Savvas Three Cheers for PreK for PK and TK. Staff and members of the public may view curriculum samples of the two recommendations in DO Conference Room C on 5/22 @ 5:30-6:30 or 5/23 @ 12:15-1:15.