

*Mountain View Whisman School District*

**Agenda Item for Board Meeting of September 5, 2024**

**Agenda Category:** Discussion Agenda

**Agenda Item Title:** Early Literacy Update

**Responsible:** Dr. Cyndee Nguyen - Director of Early Literacy

**Background:** In order to support MVWSD's Strategic Plan goal of providing effective and consistent instructional practices that meet the needs of all students, our district has created an early literacy team. The team supports foundational reading skills development through reading intervention, professional development, and family education and engagement. The team also supports the shift to structured literacy, evidence-based instructional practices, and the Science of Reading through collaboration with principal and coach teams, providing professional development for leaders and teachers, and hosting family reading nights.

**Early Literacy Actions 2023-24**

In addition to forming an early literacy team, MVWSD took several actions to support early literacy development across the district. All students in grades K-3 completed Universal Screening for reading difficulties using the i-Ready Reading Diagnostic and the i-Ready Literacy Tasks. The early literacy team provided reading intervention to almost 50% of the students at Castro, Mistral, Monta Loma, and Theuerkauf. All elementary school teachers and leaders participated in several professional development sessions focused on the Science of Reading and the implications for instruction, including more systematic, explicit word recognition instruction and an emphasis on building background and vocabulary. The K-5 ELA and PK/TK curriculum adoption committees adopted new curriculums built from the Science of Reading.

**Reading Intervention**

A key focus of the early literacy team is to provide direct services to students through reading intervention. The early literacy team's approach to intervention is to provide data-driven tiered support as part of our Multi Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). This means that groups are formed based on several data sources including i-Ready, reading difficulty screeners, and other early literacy assessments. This year, Castro is piloting the use of Amplify m-CLASS DIBELS early literacy assessments. DIBELS is an extensively researched, reliable set of measures to benchmark and progress monitor early literacy skills. They are administered to students individually. The Amplify m-CLASS platform simplifies the data collection and analysis process by analyzing the data and grouping students for intervention. All reading intervention students' progress will be monitored at least every 4 weeks, either by using i-Ready Progress Monitoring Literacy Tasks or DIBELS Progress Monitoring measures.

Our RI team utilizes a systematic, evidence-based multimodal approach for teaching, reteaching, practicing, and reinforcing foundational word recognition skills, based on Orton-Gillingham

principles and aligned to our core curriculum, Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA). The purpose of reading intervention is to fill gaps in word recognition (phonics) so that students can more fully access the general education curriculum.

The success of reading intervention is contingent on its alignment with strong core, first teaching. A balanced literacy curriculum and instruction that prompts students to use picture clues and visual memory to read can undo the structured literacy instruction in reading intervention. The research shows that for reading intervention to be most effective, Tier 2 instruction should be an additional dose of instruction that is more targeted and more intense, rather than a fundamentally different program.

### **2023-24 Early Literacy Data**

A comparison of i-Ready Reading Diagnostic 3 data from 22-23 to 23-24 shows that early literacy achievement increased across the district, particularly for students who are English Learners, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and Hispanic/Latino. Additionally, reading proficiency in K-2 increased at all of the early literacy sites, with 9% growth at Castro, 18% growth at Monta Loma, and 10% growth at Theuerkauf. A huge celebration is that 83% of Castro's kindergarten students were proficient at the end of the year, a testament to the impact of aligned instructional approaches and tiered instruction. One of Castro's kindergarten teachers was part of the K-5 ELA curriculum adoption committee; she taught using structured literacy and a routine similar to the reading intervention team.

### **2024-25 Early Literacy Data**

All 1st-3rd grade students recently completed Universal Screening for reading difficulties. Kindergarten through 3rd grade students will also complete another Universal Screening process in the winter. MVWSD is using the same screening process that has been used for the past two years. The team is beginning work to update the screening process following state guidance. An overview of the pilot and selection process for a new Universal Screener will be shared at an upcoming BOT meeting.

Results of this fall's Universal Screener show an increase in students flagged for reading difficulties, as compared to last fall. The early literacy sites (CA, MI, ML, TH, and VA) have the highest percentages of students flagged for reading difficulties. (Although Bubb has 18% of students flagged for reading difficulties, it is important to note that Bubb's student population also includes 4 self-contained special education classes in which students received specialized academic instruction. If not including students in the self-contained special education classes, Bubb has 11% of students flagged for reading difficulties.)

The early literacy team has made adjustments in how it is delivering reading intervention to students this year. Based on the data (both quantitative assessment scores and qualitative data from teachers, principals, and students), reading intervention is now part of a larger multi-grade rotation at several of the early literacy sites. This model allows multiple reading intervention teachers to be part of these rotation blocks, creating smaller groups for all students and increased collaboration and alignment between reading intervention and classroom teachers.

## **K-5 English Language Arts Curriculum**

A key lever for improving early literacy outcomes for all students across the district is adopting an evidence based structured literacy approach. The new ELA curriculum, Amplify CKLA, is built from the Science of Reading and supports teachers with shifting instruction to structured literacy, with a heavy emphasis on systematic, explicit word recognition instruction in the early grades and knowledge building in all grade levels. Amplify CKLA is an educative curriculum: as teachers utilize the curriculum and accompanying resources, they learn more about key literacy principles, such as sound articulation, orthographic mapping, and structured literacy.

Teachers received initial CKLA and Caminos (Spanish language arts) implementation professional development from Amplify trainers as part of the August professional development days. Mistral teachers had an additional half-day to align ELA and SLA. Castro teachers had an additional day to internalize and plan ELA lessons, as part of the Castro Reimagining Plan.

All teachers participated in a Literacy PLC, a district-wide grade level facilitated collaboration. All teachers also attended differentiated language development professional development, depending on the students they will teach during language development block. Some teachers learned how to provide foundational skills intervention. Others learned how to use the Amplify Novel Studies and Research Units to provide reading enrichment.

Teachers will receive continued, ongoing professional development in several ways. Instructional coaches and site leaders will provide site-based coaching. Principal PLCs will be focused on Amplify implementation and core instruction. Literacy PLCs will meet 6-7 more times this school year. These Literacy PLCs are facilitated by teams of district coaches, reading interventionists, and classroom teachers. Participants in the Lit PLCs collaborate and share implementation successes with their grade level colleagues across the district. They align how they utilize evidence-based instructional practices.

## **Considerations**

Within the framework of MTSS, students receive instructional support through a tiered system. All students receive Tier 1 core instruction with universal supports. Students spend the majority of their time in Tier 1 instruction. In a healthy MTSS, 85% of students will be successful with Tier 1 supports alone. 10% will need additional Tier 2 supports (such as reading intervention) in addition to Tier 1 instruction. 5% of students will need Tier 3 and Tier 1 supports (such as reading intervention in a more intensive setting) to be successful. Reviewing last year's reading intervention data, the early literacy team provided reading intervention to approximately 50% of students at the early literacy sites, indicating a heavy reliance on Tier 2 instruction. Currently, a large percentage of students continue to need Tier 2 intervention; however, the goal is to provide robust, rigorous Tier 1 instruction with appropriate universal supports so that fewer students will also require Tier 2 intervention. The most effective and efficient way to improve student outcomes is through Tier 1 instruction.

## **Next Steps**

Reading intervention groups and multi-grade rotations begin early September. The early literacy team is hosting district-wide Parent University sessions on 9/10 and 9/24 to provide an overview

of the Science of Reading, the Amplify curriculum, and strategies families can use to support early literacy at home. The team is beginning the process to adopt a Universal Screening tool, with the goal of selecting the screening tool by June 2025. Early literacy data will continue to be monitored--an update will be provided to the BOT in March.