

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

English Language Arts (ELA) programming plays a vital role in the K - 12 instructional programming within BHM Schools. The district provides courses in ELA to students that align with standards and benchmarks to assist students in their growth and development. This supports them in college and career readiness - preparing them to be productive, well-informed members of society.

At the elementary level, students spend about 120 minutes daily engaged in a variety of literacy experiences. The youngest students begin with foundational skills which introduce learning letter sounds, rhymes, phonemic awareness, and phonics. All grade levels build vocabulary knowledge and work on improving comprehension. The state standards for writing are met with a focus on the writing process, grammar, and forms of writing. Spelling focuses on the word patterns. Handwriting skills start with printing in Kindergarten and then cursive in third grade. The current core English Language Arts curriculum is Wonders (2017). The Heggerty Phonemic Awareness curriculum was purchased for Kindergarten and 1st grade to strengthen the phonemic awareness portion of the Wonders curriculum. Some second grade teachers also requested to use the additional Heggerty curriculum to supplement when data shows their students are weak in phonological awareness.

At the secondary level, the BHM District employs 20 full-time English Language Arts staff. Each of these educators provides instruction to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms. Students have access to course content that furthers their understanding and engagement in literacy, writing, and critical thinking.

	Required	Elective
Buffalo Community Middle School (BCMS)	English 6 or Quest English 6	No electives at BCMS
	English 7 or Quest English 7	
	English 8 or Quest English 8	
Buffalo High	English 9 or Quest English 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> English Literature + Composition

School (BHS)	English 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Essentials in English ● Speech Communications ● Creative Writing ● Mass Media ● World Literature ● English Grammar + Usage ● College Prep Writing ● Journalism ● Stage Acting ● CIS Literature ● CIS University Writing ● Publications Writing
	+ 2 additional ELA elective credits (need 4 credits for graduation)	
	Beginning 2024-2025, English Literature + Composition <i>or</i> CIS Literature will be required in grade 11 (only 1 additional elective)	

STATE STANDARDS AND REQUIREMENTS

The 2020 Minnesota Academic Standards in English Language Arts were adopted by the State in 2023, and are scheduled for full implementation in the 2025-26 school year. The previous update to standards was 2010. The next expected revision of the standards is in 2030. The new standards will first be assessed in Spring of 2026 with the updated MCA and MTAS assessments.

Examples of the updated standards and benchmarks are listed below. The Anchor Standard states the main concept for K-12. The benchmarks specify to the degree that students at a certain grade level will interact with that anchor standard.

- Anchor Standard - R4 Read critically to comprehend, interpret and analyze themes and central ideas in complex literary and informational texts.
 - Kindergarten: 0.1.4.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text, with prompting and support.
 - 3rd Grade: 3.1.4.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of both literal and nonliteral language in a text, referring explicitly to the texts as the basis for the answers; summarize the text.
 - 5th Grade: 5.1.4.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text; summarize the text.
 - 8th Grade: 8.1.4.1 Cite textual evidence that most strongly supports conclusions of what a text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including analysis of what characters or individuals are saying in the text (dialogue and quotations); objectively summarize the text.
 - 11/12 Grade: 11.1.4.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support conclusions of what a text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from literature and informational text, including determining where the text leaves matter uncertain; objectively summarize the text.

Read Well by Third Grade legislation required districts to collect data on K-3 student achievement and report it to the state annually. Elementary staff has been screening students and providing interventions using a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model for over 15 years. This has been replaced by the READ Act legislation. READ Act states which K-12 students will be screened and which should review interventions. More information about this will come as information is released by the Minnesota Department of Education.

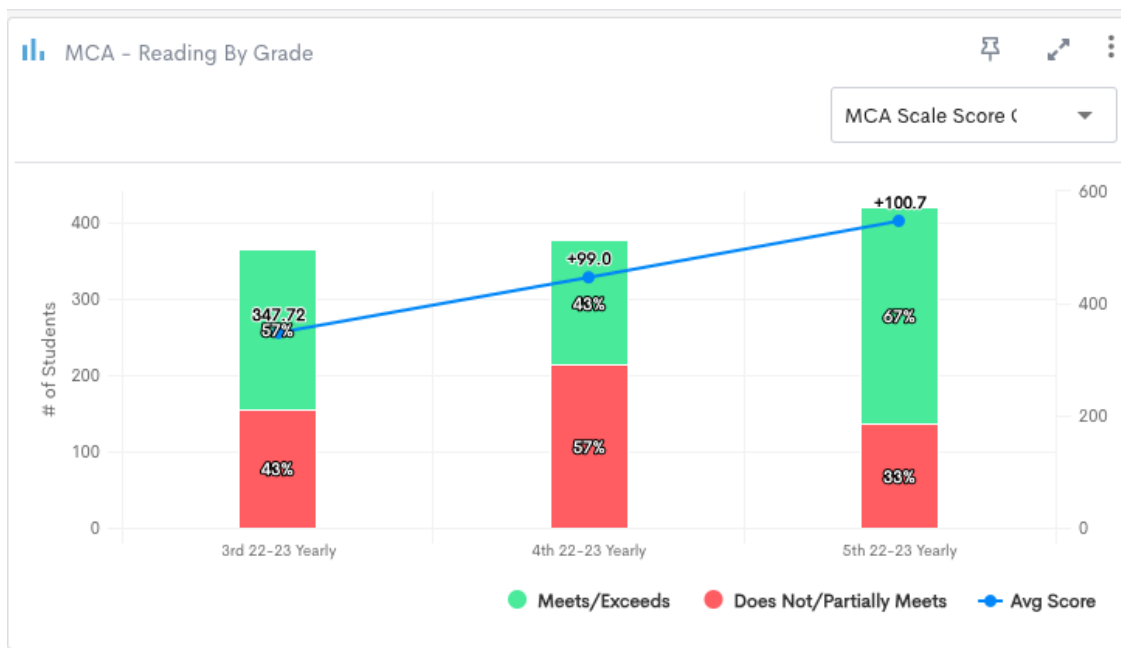
BHM EVIDENCE OF ACHIEVEMENT

During the 2022-2023 school year, the English Language Arts teams completed the Evaluate phase of the Continuous Improvement Process. During this phase of the cycle, the teams evaluated the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction.

ELA: Read Well by Third Grade District Data Collected and Reported - Winter

	K- Letter Sound Fluency		1st - Nonsense Word Fluency		2nd -Oral Reading Fluency		3rd- Oral Reading Fluency		4th -Oral Reading Fluency		5th -Oral Reading Fluency	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
Total Proficient	67.3	71.2	62.1	57.8	72.8	70.3	78.8	76.1	82.4	85.2	81.8	80.6

Last year’s MCA data for grades 3-4-5.



The 6-12 team developed rubrics that would inform their work regarding the writing process. Through this work, the teams determined that more evidence was necessary and a deeper dive into the scope and sequence of each grade level team and the instruction happening therein would inform educators regarding their grade banded results.

With the Minnesota State Standards in English Language Arts as a guide, the team began linking a new scope and sequence from each grade level in March of 2023 and identified areas of strength and growth. This informed their work in creating a survey for students that would include questions regarding their experiences in ELA at both BCMS and BHS.

Through this work, the teams connected each grade level and standard in a learning progression and found that there were many areas where the standards progressed positively. Moving into the REFLECT phase of the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) cycle, conversations and work continue to surround vertical alignment among standards and courses taught within the BHM School District.

STATE AND NATIONAL TRENDS

Following the REFLECT phase, the English Language Arts teams will begin the EXPLORE phase of the CIP cycle. This phase assists the team in reviewing state standards and the READ Act legislation while exploring programming in neighboring and comparative school districts.

Staff may have the possibility of attending conferences and participating in classroom visits. This work will foster through into the following phase - RESEARCH - to begin thinking about programming that would be appropriate for a pilot in the 2026-2027 school year.

Over the past few years, state and national trends include legislative action on screening for characteristics of dyslexia. As a result of this legislation, the K-5 students falling below the 25th

percentile were given an additional screener to check their phonological awareness skills. This is one area that many students with dyslexia can struggle in. The Minnesota Department of Education has provided various resources to support districts in talking with families about dyslexia. At the K-5 level, these resources have been shared with teachers and administrators.

READ Act legislation was enacted July 1, 2023. The Minnesota Department of Education and CAREI have been working to interpret the legislation to support districts to implement the various requirements. Some of these requirements include changing our K-5 screeners to a new program, updating our Local Literacy Plan, providing professional development to staff, and ensuring future reading curriculums meet required guidelines.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS

Surveys were given to families with children in K - 12 and to students at the 6 - 12 level. Common themes include that the district programming meets the needs of students, strong positive teacher involvement/support, and students are encouraged to explore a variety of texts.

The family survey was given in January 2024. See high average results below.

Do you feel your child has an appropriate reading level for their age? (K-5 question)	78.4% said yes
Does your child have the tools and resources that they need to readily access classwork and assignments (at school + at home) (6-12 question)	85.4 % said yes
My child's English class is meeting their needs. (6-12 question)	81.8% selected agree or strongly agree

	Strengths in Family Survey
K-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers & Teacher Support (most commented strength) ● Helping students (interventions, Reading Corps, Quest)
6-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The dedication and talent of teachers to improve their students' reading and writing skills ● The variety of texts and choice of courses students have.

Secondary ELA teams administered a survey to their students to gauge how students were feeling in relation to their preparation and instruction in grades 6 - 12.

The BCMS student survey asked students how engaged/interested they are in the texts read in their courses. Of the responses, 64.2% of students said they felt engaged. 80.9% of students surveyed said they felt they were offered a variety of topics to read about. 80-90% of BCMS

students also said it was important to them that they can work productively with others, and support their opinions with evidence and examples.

The BHS student survey showed that 78% of students said that BCMS prepared them for the kind of reading they will do in high school, and 74% said that BCMS prepared them for the kind of writing they will do in high school. The Buffalo High School Students echoed the latter sentiment, with 76% saying they encountered a variety of texts and perspectives in the ELA courses they had in high school.

Approximately 75% of Buffalo High School students said they were taught to use a writing process to craft a variety of writing assignments, multimodal projects, and presentations. 80% said they had been taught how to use research tools effectively, and 73% said they had been taught how to evaluate the credibility of their sources.

A significant majority of students (77%) said they feel English 9 and 10 as required courses prepared them well for the kind of reading and writing they encounter in upper-level ELA courses.

WIN (What I Need) and BASE (Bison Academic Support & Enrichment) times at the middle and high school are dedicated to both intervention and enrichment opportunities for students during the school day and will continue to be utilized to support students in their ELA work.

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS OR CHALLENGES

The surveys identified or confirmed areas of limitation in the district ELA programming. The table below provides a quick summary of the largest areas listed for improvement.

	Parent Survey Questions	Parent Survey Comments
K-5	61% reported that their child talked about what they do at school in the area of literacy	Parents wanted more communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In general ● Book lists ● How to support at home
6-12	60.5% reported being familiar with the content of their child's English class.	Want to know more about <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● child's reading level/ability at BCMS ● How to support struggling students at home ● How the district might provide more challenges for students
	54.8% said their child has an understanding of how to use academic research tools and identify credible resources to support their writing.	

At the elementary level, parents would like more communication on a variety of topics. This will be an area of focus for the K-5 ELA team to increase parent information on the topics. The K-5 ELA team also conducted a teacher survey. In the survey, teachers listed areas that they felt

they needed to supplement with resources to support the core curriculum. The team would like to gather more information about why teachers are supplementing.

Based on the survey, BCMS will look into adding more instruction regarding research tools and how students can access and use those tools as it was an area of concern for some parents.

There is some indication in the parent survey that they'd like to see more teaching of grammar and more teaching of writing at the earlier grades in high school; some also said they'd like more rigor in reading and writing assignments across all courses in high school.

At Buffalo High School, challenges that need to be addressed include: revisiting scope and sequence of coursework from the lower to the upper level - 23% of students said they do not feel that their first two years of high school adequately prepared them to take on the rigors of reading and writing in upper ELA courses. Some students specifically said that more challenging writing needs to be done in English 9 and 10, while some felt the progression of difficulty and rigor was effective; this is in line with what teachers are addressing currently in the 2023-24 school year.

25% of students said they did not adequately utilize a writing process to produce written work, 20% did not feel they knew how to adequately use research tools, and 27% did not feel confident in evaluating sources of their research. Additionally, while students felt they had exposure to a variety of texts in their ELA courses, and the middle school adequately prepared them to meet the challenges of reading and writing in high school, several students surveyed said they read more in middle school than they do in high school.

The ELA Department at BHS continues to explore options for how to provide more enrichment opportunities for advanced students in general education courses.

NEXT STEPS

Next year, the ELA team will enter into the EXPLORE phase of the BHM continuous improvement process. The goal will be to examine and combine knowledge of what is happening in neighboring and comparative districts with the work that is being done with BHM Schools to improve student achievement. The phase includes exploring programming in neighboring districts, discovering national trends, attending conferences and classroom visits, and reviewing state / national standards and state requirements.

Legislation continues to make an impact at the state level, and more information will be needed related to the READ Act and what needs to be set in motion at the secondary level. The department will stay informed about decisions that are being made at the state level that impact curriculum and instruction.

The K-5 Literacy team will look at what supports teachers need to fully implement the Wonders program, identify areas that need supplemental programs to meet the needs of the new

standards, and revise assessments that demonstrate how students are progressing towards grade level standards.

To target what the needs are for intervention and enrichment, continuing to look at both WIN and BASE time at BCMS and BHS as models for intervention as well as piloting different programs and instructional strategies will serve as a starting point. Looking at the development of a vertical alignment in reading and writing, providing a choice of texts and adding new texts, giving students more opportunity for research and implementing the writing process, and focusing on a cohesive model for both intervention and enrichment will be areas of focus.