

MEMO

TO: Superintendent Gina Butters, Board President Jon Ritchie, WSD Board Members

FROM: Sheri Heiter

DATE: September 27, 2022

SUBJECT: Curriculum Presentation - Secondary English Language Arts Support

Elementary schools have specific resources, personnel and tools to support struggling readers. However, statewide, there have been no resources we can offer to these students in grades seven through 12. We know that some students still experience reading difficulty even in the secondary setting and we have done considerable research to find a combination of strategies and tools that offer evidence-based, targeted support to address these deficiencies with older students.

First, we have partnered with the University of Utah in a Tier I Text research project to develop a set of reading skills and techniques to use with all students in order to digest complex text. It is currently being piloted in seven classrooms across the district with plans to expand as we continue to learn more. This research project has facilitated the professional growth of these teachers and has resulted in impressive student growth data across the district.

Second, we are excited to offer our secondary English Language Arts (ELA) teachers an opportunity to collaborate with authentic reading assessment data. For the first time in Weber School District, our secondary teachers have access to a district wide reading assessment. CommonLit is a non-profit organization designed by teachers for teachers. Its powerful data collection process is recognized nationally as effective and valid. However, the most exciting part of this data collection process is the ease of use for teachers. Our ELA teachers are pleased with how simple it is to assign rigorous texts aligned with Core Standards that provide excellent differentiation and scaffolding opportunities based on the unique and specific needs of their students.

We are certain that these two resources will support struggling students in the secondary classrooms as they strive to become successful readers. Kim Irvine has expertly led both projects and will share the process and data with the Board.