



ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS PROJECT TEAM UPDATE

POLICY ISSUE/SITUATION:

At the September 29, 2014 School Board meeting, the Board charged the Superintendent to form the English Language Arts Project Team. The work of the Project Team for the 2014-15 school year is contained in the ELA Phase I report presented to the School Board in May, 2015.

ACTION:

It is recommended that the School Board receive the attached document for review.

ELA ADOPTION SCHOOL BOARD UPDATE

December, 2015

In September of 2014, the Beaverton School District Board charged the English Language Arts Project Team with the task of evaluating and making specific programmatic recommendations for the District. The English Language Arts curriculum review, as outlined in Board policy and administrative regulation for the Quality Curriculum Cycle, was to include learning targets, instructional practices, assessment, instructional materials and staff development.

In May of 2015, the Board approved the English Language Arts Report – Phase I. This report includes an update of the adoption implementation since May, 2015.

ELEMENTARY

Professional Development:

Based on the English Language Arts (ELA) Project Team data statements and school board approved ELA Best Practices, the following professional development goal was established in June of 2015:

“Our collective goal is to know our readers well and
use this information to inform the responsive teaching of reading.”

In order to accomplish this goal, Beaverton teachers needed to develop a vision for teaching literacy that included a responsive and balanced approach. A shift to formative reading assessment and a new reading assessment tool would require thoughtful and specific training. Intervention Teachers would also need instruction on how strategic intervention strategies, using authentic text, could help support our most striving readers.

In August 2015, 800 elementary teachers and all elementary administrators began this learning. Kathy Collins, a nationally recognized teacher leader, presented a vision and provided inspiration to begin implementing balanced and responsive reading instruction. A framework for implementing a 90 minute literacy block was shared and time was provided for teachers to collaborate in this process.

Additionally, the American Reading Company supported teachers to begin learning about a new formative reading assessment tool, the Independent Reading Level Assessment (IRLA). Any teacher who was not able to attend the August ELA Institute received a similar training this fall in follow-up professional development sessions.

In addition to supporting core classroom reading instruction, the ELA Adoption included support for Intervention Teachers who work directly with students who are below grade-level in reading. Intervention Teachers received a 3-day training from Heinemann that focused on using individual student’s strengths and needs in order to tailor instruction.

Curriculum / Resources:

In late August, resources began arriving in schools. Each instructional classroom received 200 *authentic* books for classroom library collections that had previously been hand selected by BSD grade specific teacher teams. All Elementary schools were informed that in late fall, each classroom would be given the opportunity to hand select an additional 100 books in order to meet the specific needs of their readers. Additionally, teachers received a subscription to BookShelf, an online eLibrary that all students can access to read high-interest texts at varying reading levels. In addition, each teacher received a formative reading assessment tool called the IRLA (Independent Reading Level Assessment). Every elementary school received a Booksource Leveled Book Room which contains 580 sets of leveled books for the purpose of tailoring core instruction to individual and small group needs. Finally, every elementary school in BSD received a comprehensive and strategic reading intervention for our below grade-level readers called Leveled Literacy Intervention.

MIDDLE & HIGH

"To be college and career-ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. The overwhelming focus of writing to prepare for both career and college validates students having expertise as writers of arguments and informative texts above all."

--U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education

The ELA adoption and implementation plan for secondary schools supports the school district strategic measures around college readiness for students leaving our system. Based on the ELA Project Team data statements and school board approved ELA Best Practices, professional development goals were established in June of 2015 for Middle School Humanities teachers and High School English Language Arts teachers. These goals focus on the need for teachers to deeply understand and employ strategies to explicitly teach argumentative, informative and narrative writing with the result of students achieving independence, confidence and demonstrating growth as writers with these modes.

Professional development and curriculum resources outlined below identify the steps for meeting these goals focusing explicitly on improving instructional practices and student outcomes in writing.

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Professional Development:

Lab Schools and Staff Developers: Four middle schools (Cedar Park, Five Oaks, Mountain View, and Whitford) were identified as lab site middle schools this year and are partnering with staff developers from Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. Within each lab site school, a Teachers College staff developer is spending five days (October and April) working directly with Humanities teachers on implementing the Units of Study, practicing the structures and methods for writing workshop, and partnering in ongoing inquiry to address student learning needs.

Additionally, middle school Humanities teachers met by grade level in October, 2015 with Mary Ehrenworth, Ed.D., Deputy Director of the TCRWP, for an additional day of training and ongoing support of writing instruction. Ehrenworth demonstrated methods for reading and writing analytically, and helping students increase writing stamina. She will provide an additional day of training for all Humanities teachers in February, 2016. This work will enhance teachers' understanding of analytical and argument writing and methods to provide students with timely and specific feedback.

Curriculum / Resources:

The adopted writing curriculum, The Units of Study in Writing (6th-8th), includes plans for teaching narrative, information, and argument writing modes. This curriculum was introduced to more than 100 middle school Humanities teachers and all middle school administrators at a four-day Middle School Summer Writing Institute in August 2015. The four days of training were led by curriculum authors and staff developers from Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP).

During the summer institute, Beaverton teachers and administrators learned and practiced the instructional process known as The Writing Workshop Model. Teachers were trained in modeling their own writing, using mentor texts and writing exemplars, and teaching students to use checklists as self-assessment tools. Humanities teachers also learned to conduct formative assessments of student writing in order to differentiate instruction in small group conferences. Middle school Special Education teachers and teachers of English Language Learners and Humanities teachers who were not able to attend the August Writing Institute received a similar training in September.

Middle school Humanities teachers will have taught at least one Unit of Study by the end of first semester and the other two Units of Study by the end of second semester. The overall goal of the year is to immerse middle school students in the structures, methods, and expectations of the writing workshop model, as well as to increase student confidence and proficiency in all types of writing.

HIGH SCHOOL

Professional Development:

In August, 2015 more than 100 HS English Language Arts (ELA) teachers, administrators, ELL and SPED support specialists attended a two-day High School Summer Writing Institute with Mary Ehrenworth from Columbia University Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). The Institute covered narrative, informative/literary analysis, and argumentative modes of writing with a focus on the writing workshop model. Teachers learned how to model their own writing with students, how to lead students to do rhetorical analysis, how to choose and develop mentor texts and text sets, and how to engage students in self-assessment.

As part of the ELA adoption, teachers were then charged with planning, designing, and implementing an argumentative writing unit by the end of the first semester and a literary/informative writing unit by the end of the second semester.

Additionally, all high school ELA teachers were invited to an optional professional development session with Mary Ehrenworth in October, 2015 that focused on conferring with high school writers in the classroom. Ehrenworth is projected to offer another optional session for ELA teachers in February 2016 that will focus on the writing workshop model.

During the 2015-16 school year, all high school ELA teachers will also receive professional development from staff developer and literacy expert Carol Jago. Jago has completed two sessions with teachers: one in October and one in December. Both sessions focused on how to develop argumentative writing units to implement in the classroom. Teachers also learned about use of mentor texts, how to develop text sets, and how to provide feedback on student writing. Jago is scheduled to hold a session with teachers in February 2016 that will specifically focus on designing a literary/informative writing unit to support teacher development and implementation of this unit by June 2016.

Curriculum/Resources:

In the fall, all high school ELA teachers were invited to apply to be on school-based Intensive Learning Teams (ILT). The ILT's purpose is to develop writing units to be implemented in the 2016-17 school year. Each ILT is comprised of two-four teachers, with 22 ILT teachers across seven high school sites. ILT members receive 30 hours to work together with other members on their team on collaborative study, classroom observations, co-teaching, debriefs, research, and design.

Each ILT will develop one argumentative writing unit by the end of the first semester and one literary/informative writing unit by the end of the second semester. Writing units will include the following components: writing learning targets, mentor texts, text sets, checklists, mini-lessons, and student exemplars. They will range in grade level (9-12) and approaches. Those developed writing units will be published on TeacherSource to serve as a resource for both current and future HS ELA teachers.

Teaching & Learning

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District Goal for 2009-2015

All students will show continuous progress toward their personal learning goals, developed in collaboration with teachers and parents, and will be prepared for post-secondary education and career success.