



# Oak Park Elementary School District 97

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**To:** District 97 Board of Education  
Dr. Carol Kelley, Superintendent of Schools

**From:** Dr. Amy Warke, Chief Academic and Accountability Officer  
Dr. Tawanda Lawrence, Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

**Re:** Word Study Committee Pilot Review and Findings

**Date:** February 20, 2019

## **Type of Report: Informational**

**Purpose of Report:** The purpose of this report is to provide the Board of Education with a review of the District 97 K-5 Word Study Pilot and share the word study programs the teaching and learning department is recommending for district-wide adoption during the 2019-2020 school year. The information in this report is divided into the following sections:

- K-5 Word Study Pilot Program Selection
- Overview of Word Study Pilot Programs
- K-5 Word Study Pilot Analysis and Findings
- K-5 Word Study Program Recommendation for Adoption
- 2019-2020 Projected Budget and Resource Requirements
- Word Study Committee Next Steps

## **Introduction:**

The District 97 vision is to create a positive learning environment for all District 97 students that is equitable, inclusive, and focused on the whole child. The work of the K-5 Word Study Committee contributes to helping all of our students experience or achieve the following goals:

- Known, nurtured, and celebrated LEARNER
- Empowered and passionate SCHOLAR
- Confident and persistent ACHIEVER
- Creative CRITICAL THINKER & GLOBAL CITIZEN

Word Study is explicit and systematic learning on a continuum of foundational literacy skills (including early literacy skills, phonological awareness, phonics, high frequency words, and vocabulary), so that all students will become efficient word solvers, readers, and writers. In order for students to develop a balanced and efficient reading process, they must be able to read the print as well as make meaning from the print.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Burkins and Yaris, *Who's Doing the Work? How to Say Less So Readers Can Do More*, 2016

Lucy Calkins recommends to teachers that “you balance your instruction so that some of the work with words occurs in isolation and much of it occurs within the context of reading and writing.”<sup>2</sup>

She goes on to write, “While there are opportunities in reading workshop to provide explicit instruction on letters and words, the units of study are written with the assumption that children will have word study instruction and practice during a twenty-minute-a-day word study time, which is separate from reading workshop time.”<sup>3</sup> In order to teach students word study skills outside of reading workshop, District 97 established the Word Study Committee to pilot four word study programs with the intent to adopt common materials across the district.

### **K-5 Word Study Pilot Program Selection:**

**2017-2018**

The K-5 Word Study Committee began meeting spring of 2017 with the purpose of reviewing word study materials for grades K-5. At that time, the committee was comprised of the following District 97 staff:

- (2) Special Education Teachers
- (3) Kindergarten Teachers
- (2) First Grade Teachers
- (2) Second Grade Teachers
- (1) Third Grade Teacher
- (1) Fourth Grade Teacher
- (2) Fifth Grade Teachers
- (3) Instructional Coaches
- (2) Language Arts Specialists

During spring and summer of 2017, the K-5 Word Study Committee accomplished the following:

- Defined Word Study and created the [D97 Word Study Continuum](#)
- Developed a [Word Study Pilot & Adoption Timeline](#)
- Developed and shared K-5 Word Study expectations for the district
- Created a [Word Study Review Tool](#) with criteria for the curricular review
- Reviewed the following six word study resources:
  - Words Their Way
  - Fountas & Pinnell Phonics and Word Study Lessons
  - Foundations
  - Mondo Bookshop Phonics
  - SPELL-Links
  - Wordly Wise
- Selected three resources to pilot during the 2017-2018 school year:
  - Words Their Way (Pearson)
  - Mondo Bookshop Phonics (Mondo Education) - *Considered for Spanish Immersion only*
  - Foundations (Wilson Language)

During the 2017-2018 school year, the committee was informed that Lucy Calkins would be releasing Phonics Units of Study for grades K-2 in summer of 2018 and decided to pilot Phonics Units of Study

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<sup>2</sup> Calkins, *A Guide to the Reading Workshop, Primary Grades*, 2015, p. 122

<sup>3</sup> Calkins, *A Guide to the Reading Workshop, Primary Grades*, 2015, p. 124

during the 2018-2019 school year along with Words Their Way, Mondo Bookshop Phonics for Spanish Immersion only, and Foundations. In order to prepare for the pilots, the teaching and learning department purchased resources for each pilot teacher and provided professional learning opportunities prior to conducting the pilot.

### 2018-2019

During the 2018-2019 school year, the K-5 Word Study Committee piloted at least one of the four selected resources.

The current Word Study Committee consists of representatives from all eight elementary schools and is comprised of the following:

- (6) Kindergarten Teachers
- (2) First Grade Teachers
- (2) Second Grade Teachers
- (1) Third Grade Teacher
- (2) Instructional Coaches
- (5) Language Arts Specialists

#### Overview of Word Study Pilot Programs:

The table below includes an overview of the piloted word study programs.

Word Study Program	Overview	Word Study Committee Pilot Classrooms
<b>Words Their Way</b>	Words Their Way is a hands-on, developmentally-driven approach to word study that illustrates how to integrate and teach phonics, vocabulary, and spelling skills to all students. Words Their Way offers a systematic, teacher-directed, child-centered plan for the study of words from kindergarten to high school.	(1) Kindergarten - Lincoln (1) Second - Holmes (1) Third - Holmes (1) Fourth - Whittier
<b>Mondo Bookshop Phonics</b>	Mondo Bookshop Phonics offers explicit instruction through a loop of new and reviewed phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition skills in English and Spanish for kindergarten and first grade students. Mondo Bookshop Phonics program provides an array of materials and opportunities for students to apply and practice their phonics knowledge.	(1) Kindergarten - Lincoln (Spanish Immersion) (1) Kindergarten - Lincoln
<b>Foundations</b>	Wilson Foundations provides research-based materials and strategies essential to a comprehensive reading, spelling, and handwriting program. Students in grades K-3 receive a systematic program in critical foundational skills, emphasizing phonemic	(1) Kindergarten - Irving (1) Kindergarten - Lincoln (1) First - Whittier (1) Second - Longfellow

	awareness, phonics, word study, high frequency word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, handwriting, and spelling.	
<b>Phonics Units of Study</b>	Phonics Units of Study introduces high-leverage phonics concepts and strategies to students in grades K-2 in a way that keeps pace with students' reading and writing. It also helps students understand when, how, and why they can use phonics to read and write. Phonics units include print concepts, phonological awareness, letter knowledge, word knowledge/word solving, phonics, and high-frequency words.	(1) Kindergarten - Lincoln (1) Kindergarten - Irving (1) Kindergarten - Hatch (1) Kindergarten - Beye (2) First - Longfellow (1) First - Whittier (1) First - Mann

### **K-5 Word Study Pilot Analysis of Findings:**

The teaching and learning department would like to thank all of the members of the Word Study Committee for their hard work and dedication during this process. We would also like to acknowledge there were a few flaws we identified during the pilot that had an impact on the process and resulted in some inconsistencies in the data analysis and findings.

- The pilot began in September 2017 and was originally scheduled to end in January 2018. The word study pilot was extended an additional year to allow teachers the opportunity to pilot Phonics Units of Study during the 2018-2019 school year. However, the extension of the pilot and considerable focus on word study programs for grades K-3 resulted in 4th and 5th grade representatives discontinuing their participation.
- During the course of the two-year pilot, all members of the Word Study Committee should have received an opportunity to pilot each program. Unfortunately, this did not occur which led to some discourse between committee members during the selection process as all teachers did not have the opportunity to pilot each program.

**Equity:** What are the differential experiences of children by achievement level and by household income? (Could be a slightly different set of categories, for example, single parents, households with and without internet access, etc.) What is being done to achieve equity or balance in other ways?

- Common assessments for grades K-3 were not developed before the word study pilot began to adequately assess student growth in foundational skills. Nevertheless, the common assessments the committee selected to measure student growth for all kindergarten students is the Early Literacy Assessments and the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) for 1st through 3rd grade students. The BAS is not an appropriate assessment to determine student growth as it identifies a student's current reading level and progress along a gradient of text levels over time. The assessment is not designed to be a growth assessment as it is an attainment assessment and identifies where students are in a particular point in time. Additionally, the BAS does not include growth targets or identify how much a student should grow at each benchmark. Finally, the cut score/performance expectations for exceeds, meets, approaches,

and does not meet changed during the winter benchmark resulting is some students not meeting or exceeding on the winter benchmark. This may appear as though growth did not occur between the fall and winter benchmarks as the data does not show the increase in reading levels that students demonstrated.

- Additionally, when we analyzed the data for each pilot program by various demographic groups (race, lunch status, and IEP status) we found there were fewer than 10 students in particular subgroups. In general, we do not make data available publicly if there are fewer than 10 students in a particular subgroup to protect student privacy. In this case, all of the demographic breakdowns were excluded.

### *Word Study Pilot Survey Results*

**Communication with key stakeholders:** What is being done/has been done to elicit include feedback/ideas from teachers, parents, older students, administrators, or other key stakeholders. What are the most common concerns and positive comments received and how are they being addressed?

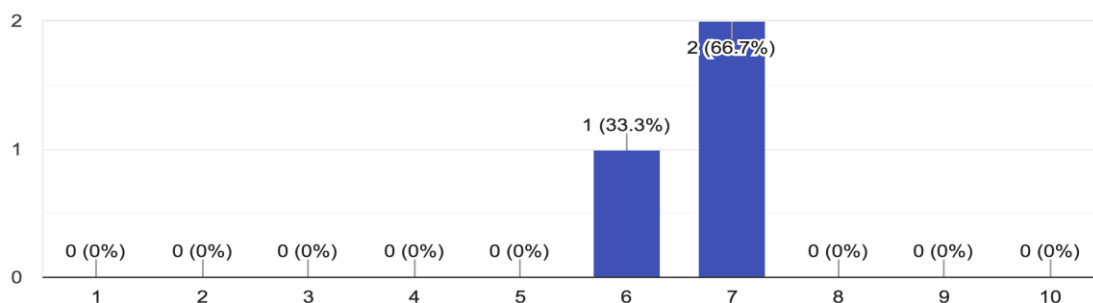
The teaching and learning department gathered feedback from various stakeholders on each pilot program. All pilot teachers, principals, Instructional Coaches, and Language Arts Specialists were invited to participate in a survey that allowed them to reflect on the following areas as it relates to the program that was piloted at their school: Phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, word study analysis, assessments, and differentiation.

The survey data below reveal how D 97 staff rated each program overall on a scale of 1-10. The three D 97 staff who took the survey for **Words Their Way** rated the program as follows: 1 response - 6 overall score and 2 responses - 7 overall score. The two D 97 staff who took the survey for **Mondo Bookshop Phonics** rated the program as follows: 1 response - 4 overall score and 1 response - 6 overall score. The eight D 97 staff who took the survey for **Fundations** rated the program as follows: 1 response - 7 overall score, 1 response - 8 overall score, 1 response - 9 overall score, and 5 responses - 10 overall score. The eight D 97 staff who took the survey for **Phonics Units of Study** rated the program as follows: 3 responses - 8 overall score, 1 response - 9 overall score, and 4 responses - 10 overall score.

#### Words Their Way

**In ranking this word study program, how do you rate this program overall?**

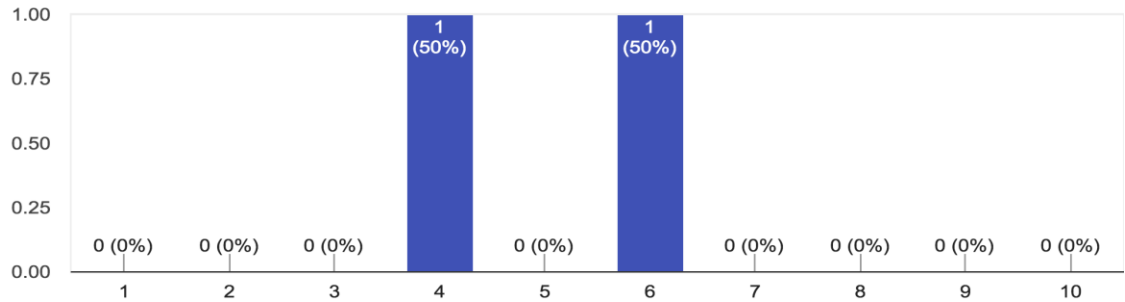
3 responses



## Mondo Bookshop Phonics

In ranking this word study program, how do you rate this program overall?

2 responses

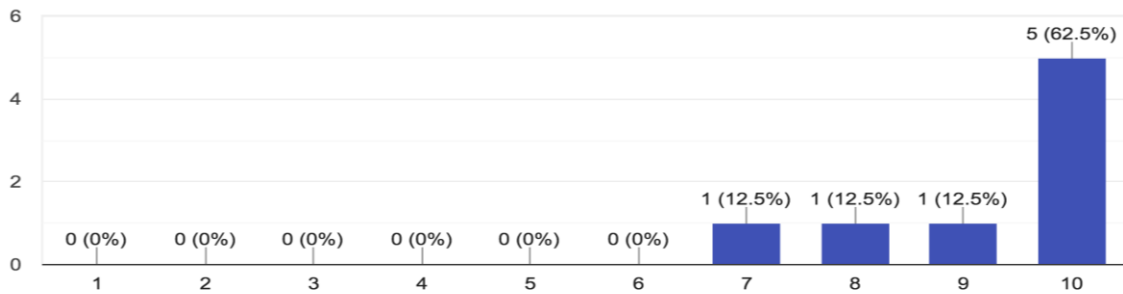


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## Foundations

In ranking this word study program, how do you rate this program overall?

8 responses

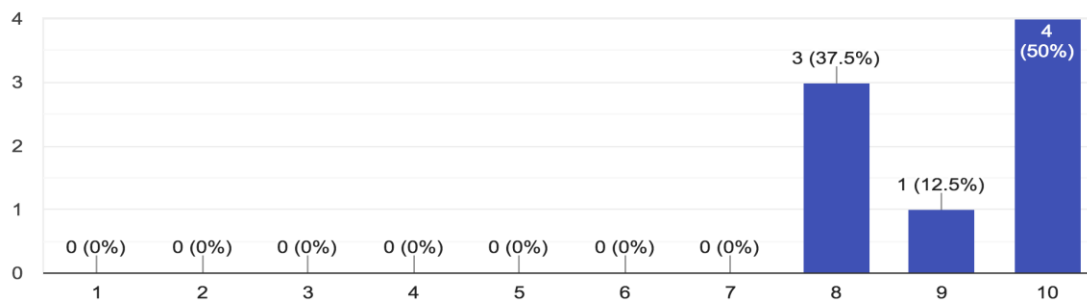


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## Phonics Units of Study

### In ranking this word study program, how do you rate this program overall?

8 responses



Additionally, the Word Study Committee received several opportunities during committee meetings to discuss the areas of strength and opportunities for growth for each pilot program. You may access the committee's comments [here](#). The Word Study Committee's feedback was of great significance when selecting a word study program to recommend to the Board of Education for district adoption. The committee utilized a decision matrix, which allowed committee members to evaluate each program by providing a score for each criteria of the Word Study Review Tool.

The table below represents the results of the Word Study Pilot Decision Matrix, which reveals a difference in two points between Foundations and Phonics Units of Study programs. As a result of the total scores, it was difficult for the Word Study Committee to select between the two programs to recommend for adoption. Furthermore, the Word Study Committee came to a consensus and requested that principals be included in the decision-making process to select between Foundations or Phonics Units of Study to recommend for district-wide adoption.

Word Study Pilot Decision Matrix Total Score			
Foundations	Phonics Units of Study	Words Their Way	Mondo
2,483	2,485	2,007	2,438

Immediately following the Word Study Committee's decision, the teaching and learning department formed a small group of principals to review presentations of both programs and complete a research-based evaluation of each program aligned to the foundational standards and IL Classrooms in Action. Principals were asked to evaluate each program according to the following areas and share their thoughts to the entire elementary principal team for discussion:

- Provides ample opportunity for student of all abilities to practice newly acquired foundational skills
- Provides explicit and systematic instruction and diagnostic support
- Allows for flexibility in meeting the needs of a wide range of students
- Incorporates high-quality, extension activities and assignments for students who are able to reach facility with less practice
- Offers assessment opportunities that measure progress in the foundations of reading

- Aligns with the components of a Balanced Literacy approach
- Rigorous and calls for all students to be held to the same challenging academic standards and expectations
- Coherent: (1) well organized and purposefully designed to facilitate learning, (2) free of academic gaps and needless repetitions, and (3) aligned across lessons, courses, subject areas, and grade levels

All eight principals agreed that both programs are research-based and aligned to the Illinois Learning Standards, but the results of the evaluation of Foundations and Phonics Units of Study revealed a difference in the philosophy of teaching phonics. According to the principals, Foundations provides direct and explicit phonics instruction in isolation and Phonics Units of Study provides phonics lessons that are coherent and connected to the core reading and writing programs. The elementary principals recommended a word study program for adoption for grades K-2 and K-5.

### **Word Study Program Recommendation for Adoption:**

After careful consideration, the teaching and learning department is recommending that District 97 adopt the following word study programs to be implemented district-wide during the 2019-2020 school year.

- Phonics Units of Study - Tier 1 core phonics program for students in grades K-2
- Words Their Way - Tier 1 supplemental program that includes word sorts and Greek/Latin root for students in grades K-5

We have provided research to support each program below.

- Phonics Units of Study
  - [Teachers College Reading & Writing Project Research](#)
  - [Research & Efficacy - CA Data](#), [Research & Efficacy CT Data](#), and [Research & Efficacy - NY Data](#)
- Words Their Way
  - [Words Their Way Research](#)
  - [Words Their Way Reliability & Validity Analyses](#)

### **2019-2020 Projected Budget and Resource Requirements:**

#### *2019-2020 Projected Budget*

The table below represents a projected budget outlining the anticipated cost for resources and consultant fee for professional learning.

2019-2020 Word Study Adoption Projected Budget Grand Total: \$197,137.00				
Word Study Program	Grade Levels	Student & Teacher Resources	Professional Learning Consultant Fee	Total
Phonics Units of Study	Kdg. 1st	\$11,385 \$11, 385	Training provided with purchase.	\$37,491 (shipping included)



	2nd	\$11,730 (anticipated cost - released late spring 2019)		
<b>Words Their Way</b>	Kdg.-5th	\$156,846	\$2,800 (Pearson will provide a Train the Trainer 6-hour session with Instructional Coaches)	\$159,646 (shipping included)

### ***Resource Requirements***

**Resource requirements:** What resources are involved in this implementation/activity? This should include not just direct dollars, but class time, teacher prep/planning time, parental inputs, school facilities drawn from other purposes, etc. How do we reflect on how well they are being put to use, if greater efficiencies are required, or if more resources could profitably be devoted to the activity?

The teaching and learning department will purchase all resources and materials for both programs and deliver to each school before the start of the 2019-2020 school year. The training for Phonics Units of Study will require approximately 2-3 hours and will be provided during Opening Institute Day. Teachers will need prep/planning time to organize kits before implementing the program. The Word Study Committee will develop a plan to assist teachers with preparing the kits for use. The training for Words Their Way training will require approximately 2-3 hours and will also be provided during Opening Institute Day. There is not a great deal of prep/planning time needed before the start of school for teachers to implement Words Their Way. Additional details regarding professional learning for both programs will be included in the Adoption Plan and shared with the Board of Education.

### **Word Study Committee Next Steps:**

**Evaluation and on-going improvement:** What are the goals of this particular activity - how do we know if it is successful or not? What is the plan for measurement of how implementation is going? What "hard" data will be captured and what 'soft' data (impressions, opinions, etc.) will be incorporate? What information (not anecdotes) is available at this stage?

The goal for implementing Phonics Units of Study and Words Their Way is to help students develop a strong foundation at the primary and intermediate levels essential to strengthening students' literacy skills. We will measure the impact these programs have on students' reading through common assessments developed by the ELA Written Curriculum Committee, NWEA Map, and teacher surveys.

Beginning in March, the Word Study Committee will develop an Adoption Plan that will include the district-wide implementation of Phonics Units of Study and Words Their Way during the 2019-2020 school year. The Adoption Plan will also identify strategies and solutions to address the concerns identified for both programs during the pilot process. Additionally, the committee will establish a Professional Learning Plan that includes training to support teachers with implementing Phonics Units of Study and Words Their Way.

The Word Study Pilot analysis and findings indicate that Foundations and Mondo Bookshop Phonics programs demonstrated growth for students in foundation literacy skills and was highly favored by pilot teachers. Furthermore, the teaching and learning department and the Word Study Committee will schedule a meeting with the MTSS Committee to review the Foundations program as a potential resource for Tier 3 students in phonemic awareness, phonics, word study, high frequency word study, reading fluency, vocabulary, comprehension strategies, handwriting, and spelling. We will also schedule a meeting with all Spanish Immersion teachers to review the Mondo Bookshop Phonics program as a potential resource for phonics support in Spanish for grades K-1 and Mondo Word Recognition Study in Spanish for grades 2-5.

Phonics Units of Study and Words Their Way have very little support for explicitly teaching grammar. The benefits of teaching grammar, the study of the internal structure of words and the study of the internal structure of words not only improves writing skills but also has an impact on reading, listening, and speaking. Furthermore, next year the committee will explore various programs and resources that provide support in grammar for grades 3-5. The teaching and learning department will seek more teacher representatives from grades 3-5 to pilot resources to teach these standards in grades 3-5. The teaching and learning department will also identify a resource for all 3rd through 5th grade teachers to implement while this pilot is occurring during next school year.

Finally, we sincerely thank the K-2 staff who dedicated their time to pilot these resources for the past two years.