



# River Trails

## SCHOOL DISTRICT 26

To: River Trails Board of Education

From: Kristine Seifert - Assistant Superintendent Teaching & Learning

Date: April 8, 2025

Subject: River Trails Middle School ELA Curriculum Review and Adoption Recommendation

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### **Introduction**

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the middle school English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum audit and to present a formal recommendation for new instructional materials based on this extensive review. This recommendation supports our ongoing commitment to ensuring high-quality, equitable literacy instruction aligned with best practices and the Illinois Literacy Plan.

### **Recommendation**

I recommend the district adopt Into Literature (HMH) with the Writable platform for a six-year term beginning in the 2025–26 school year. This recommendation is based on pilot feedback, comprehensive rubric-based evaluation, and alignment with district priorities.

Into Literature was rated highly by all participating teachers in several areas: alignment to Illinois Learning Standards and RTMS priority standards, comprehensiveness of literacy components, effective support for Tier 2 and Tier 3 learners, user-friendly platform design, and well-aligned assessments. The program includes diverse, engaging texts and interactive tools that address a wide range of learner needs.

Expected outcomes and benefits include:

- Improved alignment of instruction to the full scope of literacy components outlined in the Illinois Literacy Plan.
- Increased teacher capacity through strong planning resources and PD support.
- More engaging, culturally responsive instructional materials for students.
- Enhanced intervention opportunities and accessibility features within the core curriculum.

### **Background**

In fall 2024, RTMS launched a comprehensive ELA curriculum audit in response to identified gaps in the current program (Collections, HMH 2017). Baseline survey results revealed strengths in foundational structure and digital tools, but highlighted shortcomings in grammar instruction, comprehensive skill development, differentiation, and resources for intervention to support Tier 2 and Tier 3 learners.

Following the audit timeline, a team of RTMS teachers:

- Reviewed survey data and developed a comprehensive evaluation tool.
- Narrowed down publisher options based on EdReports and independent research.
- Piloted selected programs in classrooms during January–March 2025.
- Evaluated materials using the district's ELA Curriculum Evaluation Tool.

Pilot feedback for Into Literature was overwhelmingly positive. Teachers reported:

- “The curriculum very clearly identifies which skill the students are tackling for each selection.”
- “The unit overview pages with active links were helpful and easy to use.”
- “The planning guides and assessment feedback were extremely informative.”
- “Stories were challenging and high-interest; the online interface was easy to navigate.”

### **Analysis of Options**

The audit committee evaluated multiple curriculum options, but Into Literature most effectively addressed the areas of growth identified through the baseline survey and needs assessment. In comparison to other options:

- It provides the most robust support for diverse learners.
- Offers a comprehensive, user-friendly digital integration.
- Includes consistent alignment to instructional standards and assessment practices.

The team considered alternative publishers but found gaps in either assessment alignment, intervention tools, or digital ease of use. While other programs showed strength in one or two areas, Into Literature emerged as the only program that provided a well-rounded, research-based framework for literacy instruction that fully supported both core instruction and differentiated needs.

Importantly, the program’s intentional integration of the Seven Components of Literacy as defined by the IL Literacy Plan positions it to make an immediate impact on student outcomes. Its platform design allows for flexibility, teacher customization, and student engagement, all of which are critical to sustained instructional success. This comprehensive solution best meets the instructional demands and vision of River Trails Middle School.

### **Financial Impact**

The total cost of adoption is estimated **not to exceed \$139,000** for a six-year term. This includes:

- All student and teacher materials
- Full online access for students and staff
- Writable platform integration
- First-year professional development

This cost will be covered by the curriculum and instructional new text adoption budget for the 2025-26 school year.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

Pending Board approval in May 2025, purchase orders will be submitted by June 2025 to ensure materials are delivered ahead of the 2025–26 school year. Professional development for staff will begin in April 2025 and continue into summer and fall.

### **Attachments**

- [Quote](#)
- [Evaluation Rubric](#)
- [Initial Team Memo \(October 2024\)](#)