

Subject: Fwd: WDMESC Feedback
Date: Friday, June 4, 2021 at 2:07:14 PM Central Daylight Time
From: Tally Harp
To: Melissa Matus (ADE), Traci Holland (ADE)

Tally Harp, NBCT EdS
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Public School Accountability
District Support Specialist
501-682-4370

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tally Harp <Tally.Harp@ade.arkansas.gov>
Date: June 3, 2021 at 8:09:32 AM CDT
To: Brad Horn <bhorn@wilbur.k12.ar.us>
Cc: "Melissa Matus (ADE)" <Melissa.Matus@ade.arkansas.gov>, "Traci Holland (ADE)" <Traci.Holland@ade.arkansas.gov>, "Ginny Stroud (ADE)" <Ginny.Stroud@ade.arkansas.gov>
Subject: Re: WDMESC Feedback

Good morning! Thank you so much for sharing this information with us. We appreciate all your hard work and support with this process!

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From: Brad Horn <bhorn@wilbur.k12.ar.us>
Date: Wednesday, June 2, 2021 at 3:34 PM
To: Tally Harp <Tally.Harp@ade.arkansas.gov>
Subject: WDMESC Feedback

Good afternoon, Tally. I have copied and pasted the information we sent to our Superintendents. Our team's feedback is in red. We only sent this information to the districts who are participating in our consortium as well as the Searcy School District since they are using Pearson as well. I do want to be clear that we did simply supply feedback and emailed this to them exactly as you see it. With all other feedback, we have had conversations with individuals or teams within the district we were working with.

Thank you for all of the work that the Division has done on this project. You have all been

amazing.
Brad

Several of you have received an email from Tally Harp regarding your digital learning plans. Our team has included suggestions to her feedback below in red.

Subject: Digital Learning Application Addendum Information

Dear Superintendents,
Based on the feedback from State Board of Education meetings and work sessions (5/13, 5/20, 5/27) to expedite the review process the following recommendations are provided.

ACT 1240 waiver request: It is recommended that all digital learning plans are revised to request no more than three (3) years. **Change from a 5 year request to a 3 year request.**

Teaching load: It is recommended that all digital learning plans are revised to limit teaching load to 190 students or less per day. The State Board of Education has expressed great concern regarding teaching load, and applications that are not revised may not be approved. **The Wilbur Mills consortia (Pearson and Virtual) do not exceed 190. No change needed.**

Asynchronous Only Models: The board has expressed concerns about engagement and availability of interventions for asynchronous only models. It is recommended that applications be reviewed to include clear descriptions of student support and success measures that explain when the students will be working asynchronously and will the student will be working directly with the teacher (synchronously). **The Wilbur Mills consortia outlines synchronous and asynchronous learning. No change needed if you followed the recommendation that we shared.**

Elementary plans: It is recommended that all digital learning plans for elementary grades include additional information to describe in detail the K-2 reading program. The description should describe how the teacher will engage students in direct instruction in the Science of Reading, how teachers will engage students in small group instruction, how interventions will be provided, the number of students per teacher per course and the grade level of the students. Please include all examples for teaching configuration to clearly explain the number of students with whom the teacher will interact at a given time and during the course of the day. Examples: (1) One teacher will be responsible for up to 30 students for self-contained third grade instruction. (2) One teacher will be responsible for literacy instruction only for 150 students each day by teaching six courses (two courses for Grade 4, two courses for Grade 5, and two courses for Grade 6). **Pearson virtual teachers will be self-contained for grades K-5 with a 50:1 student teacher ratio. The class load will not exceed 50 students. 6th grade virtual teachers are also provided through Pearson. This grade is departmentalized. The**

student teacher ratio is 37:1. Teachers have an average of 160-190 students assigned to their subject. All 6th grade virtual students are provided a certified teacher as an advisor.

Reading will be a primary focus for the schools in the Wilbur Mills Consortium. The schools will implement research-based curriculum and strategies for students who are reading at, above, or below grade level. **Students reading or writing below grade level will receive additional support through increased frequency of targeted LiveLesson sessions and Connections multi-tiered instructional support program. Teachers use formative assessment data to determine a student's greatest area of need. A variety of supplemental instructional support programs are available to support student learning in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and writing. Teachers regularly monitor student performance in these programs and make adjustments as needed based on Connections guidelines for implementing multi-tiered instruction.**

The school districts in the Wilbur Mills Consortium (K-8) plan to focus on literacy in the early grades using Connexus' research-based curriculum. Connexus' elementary literacy program spans Kindergarten to Grade 5, and is **carefully scaffolded with a combination of high-quality, engaging instruction and resources. Language arts courses, supported by McGraw Hill Wonders program (grades K–5) and Common Core Literature series (grades 6–8), explicitly support the five main components of literacy instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. Reading and writing instruction is prevalent throughout the language arts program, and is supported by core content area courses. All English language arts courses are fully aligned to the Arkansas Standards.**

Phonemic awareness, the awareness of discrete sounds, or phonemes, is present at the earliest stages of literacy growth. As students master the recognition and production of individual sounds, the need for targeted phonemic awareness instruction declines. Phonics instruction capitalizes on phonemic awareness and focuses on the relationship between written letters, their names, and their sounds. Instruction progresses from letter sounds and small combinations to syllabic awareness. Fluency, the ability to read quickly and accurately, improves as the other components of literacy also improve. In the early years, vocabulary and text comprehension instruction is primarily listening-focused. As students improve in their ability to decode, vocabulary and comprehension instruction shifts to involve more reading. **Direct instruction in fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension continues throughout elementary school. In the earliest years, literacy instruction is largely a collaborative process as students interact regularly with their teachers and Learning Coaches to build the foundations for success in reading and writing.** As students grow in their literacy skills and enter into upper elementary courses, they assume more independence.

Provider/District Connection for Student Success: Districts that are using an outside provider or consortium should review their plan to ensure how a student will stay connected to their LEA. Please describe how the district personnel will ensure connections between the provider, district, student and family to ensure student success. **Review your plan and look for opportunities to talk about your district student liaison/advisor/etc. They are wanting someone from your district to personally check in on these students' welfare and academics. Make sure you note who will check in and how often.**

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Brad Horn

Director, WDMESC