




NORTH SLOPE BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robyn Burke, President
Members of the School Board

THROUGH: David Vadiveloo, Superintendent 

THROUGH: Tracy Mulvenon, Assistant Superintendent

FROM: Dr. Caitlin Santos, Director of Curriculum and Instruction 

DATE: April 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Language Arts Material Adoption, Grades K-5

Memo No. SB24-145
(Action Item)

NSBSD Strategic Plan Goal:

1. Academic Success/Whole Child: All students will reach their intellectual potential and achieve academic success through integrating Inupiaq knowledge systems into the core content areas and focusing on the development of the Whole Child.

Issue Summary:

The Language Arts subcommittee recommends *Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)*, Amplify, for grades K-5. Recommendation is based on survey responses, virtual listening tour feedback, and curriculum committee research, pilot, and input.

All sites participated in the *CKLA* pilot this year.

CKLA is a comprehensive English language arts curriculum for grades K-5 based on the science of reading research that values the systematic teaching of foundational skills and building students' core background knowledge across literature of all genres, as well as social studies and science concepts. *CKLA* introduces students to a broad range of topics across cultures while being flexible enough to integrate NSBSD-designed culture based units that integrate the Inupiaq Learning Framework.

In grades K-2, *CKLA* separates the teaching of foundational skills and so that students are able to learn and practice skills such as phonics and constructing sentences in isolation as they learn to read and write. Then, during the core knowledge instructional block, students apply those skills in context as they read and write to learn.

In grades 3-5, *CKLA* brings foundational skills and core knowledge together in cohesive units of study. Students develop higher level foundational skills such as morphological awareness and apply those skills to deepen their understanding of increasingly complex texts and write in response to said texts.

CKLA is a blended learning program that offers copious student and teacher materials in print and on-line formats. The technology *CKLA* uses promotes accessibility for students with disabilities and those who are not yet performing at grade level. Multimodal texts such as videos scaffold students' understanding of complex concepts.

CKLA provides foundational skills intervention resources for students at all instructional and grade levels.

CKLA is aligned with the K-3 state-mandated assessment, mCLASS, used by NSBSD educators.

Background:

In June 2022, the Alaska Reads Act was signed into law. This law requires that districts adopt an evidence-based English language arts curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading. During the 2022-2023 school year, NSBSD teachers piloted several of the state recommended programs and the language arts subcommittee selected *CKLA* for a full scale pilot during the 2023-2024 school year. The materials were purchased with grant funding provided by the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Ongoing costs to maintain the implementation are dependent on enrollment year to year, and are commensurate with other adopted materials costs.

All teachers received digital surveys regarding *CKLA* throughout the 2023-2024 school year and were invited to attend a *CKLA* virtual listening tour via Zoom in late March and early April 2024. The survey was anonymous with twenty-three respondents. Teachers from all eight elementary sites participated in the virtual listening tour. Compiled findings are below:

- K-2 teachers value the skills strand of *CKLA*, noting that their students were making tremendous progress in foundational reading skills. For example, many experienced kindergarten teachers stated that they were pleased that more of their students were able to decode than in previous years.
- K-2 teachers described marked improvement in student mastery of the conventions of writing.
- K-5 teachers expressed appreciation for the way the knowledge strand exposes children to vocabulary and science and social studies concepts that provide the opportunity for deeper conversations that open up a world of possibilities.
- K-5 teachers expressed high student engagement with the knowledge units that cover science topics.
- K-5 teachers expressed concerns that *CKLA* often lacks cultural relevance in our context.
- K-5 teachers expressed concerns that *CKLA* is rigorous and their students' current levels of performance make the curriculum difficult to access without heavy scaffolding. This complaint is more prominent amongst 3-5 teachers than K-2 due to students entering the curriculum without the background knowledge and foundational skills that are taught in K-2.
- K-5 teachers expressed concerns that *CKLA* is text- rather than reader-centered.
- Third through fifth grade teachers expressed concerns that *CKLA* writing is predominantly reader response, rather than authentic writing, at the intermediate level.

The Curriculum and Instruction Department is addressing teacher concerns about *CKLA* for the 2024-2025 school year through the following:

- Partnering with the Iñupiaq Education Department to provide teachers with topics, methods, and materials to integrate local culture into each *CKLA* knowledge unit and teach in culturally responsive ways;
- Replacing *CKLA* knowledge units of study with locally written Mapquk units;
- Providing professional development, including classroom-embedded instructional coaching and Professional Learning Communities, to support teachers with adapting the curriculum to be responsive to students' needs;
- Providing all teachers with a copy of *The Reading Strategies Book 2.0* and professional development to use the book in their instructional practice;
- Providing access to all grade levels of *CKLA* digital materials to all teachers regardless of grade level;
- Providing *CKLA* vocabulary slides for each unit of study.

A synopsis of Language Arts Pilot Materials was submitted to the Curriculum Committee on April 8, 2024 for final review and recommendation to the school board.

Proposed Motion:

“I move that the NSBSD Board of Education adopt *Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA)*, Amplify, as a core resource for grades K-5.”

Motion by _____ Seconded by _____

Advisory Vote _____ Vote _____

Signature: DS Vadiveloo
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