

ELA IS UNDERWAY: A LOOK INTO THE CURRICULUM REVISION PROCESS

District 23's English Language Arts (ELA) Curriculum Committee is working to implement new instructional materials that better prepare students as they journey throughout elementary and middle school, as well as high school and beyond. The goal is to refine instructional practices and improve student achievement in areas such as reading, writing and foundational skills like phonics, grammar, handwriting and more, according to Amy Zaher, Ed.D., assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction

The Curriculum Committee has been working its way through an extensive adoption process for the past two years, including researching new [or should this say current] state standards to understand how they have shifted, and finding curriculum options that most effectively meet the standards and student needs. The committee is continuing to look at a variety of options and piloting some lessons to get feedback from students. The goal is to select a new curriculum by this spring, so that professional development and teachers' guides can be delivered before summer break. The curriculum would be rolled out at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

The curriculum adoption process consists of ensuring that all grade and ability levels are represented as new materials are researched and tested, according to Zaher. She says the current ELA Standards include the following requirements:

1. **Complexity:** Practice regularly with complex text and its academic language.
2. **Evidence:** Ground reading, writing and speaking in evidence from the text, both literary and informational.
3. **Knowledge:** Build knowledge through content-rich nonfiction.

Using these requirements as a guide, the Curriculum Committee is evaluating materials using criteria such as the promotion of cultural diversity, the use technology when appropriate and the incorporation of tools for differentiating instruction.

"We still have a lot of work to accomplish this school year, but it is work worth doing," Zaher says. "The data we are collecting will help us make informed decisions and ensure our new ELA materials help students meet expectations and prepare them for the future."