

# Board of Education Regular Meeting 2024

Thursday, May 16, 2024 7:00 PM

BOE Meeting Access: BOE (5/16/24 at 7 p.m.) Web:

<https://zoom.us/j/96087656585> Dial In: (929) 205-6099 Meeting ID: 960 8765 6585 , 3 Brush Hill Road, New Fairfield, CT 06812

## I. CALL TO ORDER

## II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

## III. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

### III.A. May 2, 2024 - Regular

## IV. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- V. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - *The Board welcomes public participation. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than thirty (30) minutes total for the entire meeting. Individuals who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related subcommittee meetings where most of the board's groundwork is done. We value your input, but due to these time limitations, we ask you to be concise and to observe the rules of common courtesy. [9320(a) of Board Bylaws]***

## VI. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS

### VI.A. Chairman's Report

### VI.B. Superintendent's Report

### VI.C. Student Representatives' Report

### VI.D. Committee Reports

#### VI.D.1. Business Operations/Resource Management (*Greg Flanagan*)

#### VI.D.2. Curriculum (*Tim Blair*)

#### VI.D.3. Field Fees (*Ed Sbordone*)

### VI.E. Liaison Reports

#### VI.E.1. Parks and Recreation Committee (*K. LaTourette, G. Flanagan*)

## VII. INFORMATION ITEMS

### VII.A. New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update

### VII.B. K-5 Literacy / Reading Resource Report and Findings

VII.C. Board of Education Policy (*First Reading*)

VII.C.1. Policy 5141.5 - Suicide Prevention/Intervention

VII.D. FY25 Budget Update

VIII. **ACTION ITEMS**

VIII.A. Personnel Report

VIII.B. Non-Union Salaries and Benefits (*To be voted on after Executive Session.*)

IX. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** - *The Board welcomes public participation. Pursuant to our Board Policy, public participation is limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker and a total of no more than thirty (30) minutes total for the entire meeting. Individuals who wish to speak longer are encouraged to attend any and all related subcommittee meetings where most of the board's groundwork is done. We value your input, but due to these time limitations, we ask you to be concise and to observe the rules of common courtesy. [9320(a) of Board Bylaws]*

X. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

XI. **BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

XII. **EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCUSSING NON-UNION CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

XIII. **ADJOURNMENT**

**NEW FAIRFIELD BOARD OF EDUCATION  
NEW FAIRFIELD, CT**

The New Fairfield Board of Education held a regular meeting on Thursday, May 2, 2024, at 7:00 p.m. in the New Fairfield Community Room, 33 Route 37, New Fairfield, CT.

**MINUTES – May 2, 2024**

**PRESENT:** Dominic Cipollone (Chairman), Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

**ABSENT:** None

**ALSO PRESENT:** Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kenneth Craw, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck, Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy, Pupil Personnel Director Maria Kennedy, High School Principal James D’Amico, Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner, Elementary School Principal Allyson Story, Director of Technology Paul Gouveia, Selectman Tom Perkins, Board of Finance member Wes Marsh, Board of Finance Alternate member Peggy Katkocin, Permanent Building Committee Chairman Don Kellogg, and Scott Pellman from Colliers Project Leaders

**I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Dominic Cipollone called the meeting to order at 7:01p.m.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- A. April 4, 2024 - Regular meeting - approved by consensus
- B. April 11, 2024 - Special meeting - approved by consensus

**IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to move Information Item VIII. A. “New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update” to immediately after Public Participation. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

**MOTION:** Greg Flanagan made a motion to add agenda Item IX. C. “Electricity Consortium.” Kimberly LaTourette seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

**V. RECOGNITION - CABE STUDENT LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw congratulated students that are receiving the CABE Student Leadership awards.

Middle School Principal Karen Gruetzner presented CABE Leadership awards to Lauren Madureira and Logan Coster.

High School Principal James D’Amico presented CABE Leadership awards to Erik Muhlenberg and Anne Johnston.

## **VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Katie Williams thanked the Board of Education for their hard work and support for the budget. She spoke of an exit poll after the budget on Saturday and noted that 333 out of 387 surveyed voted “No” for the BOE budget because they felt it was too low.

Board of Finance member Wes Marsh reviewed the results of the BOF meeting from April 29<sup>th</sup> in the wake of the budget referendum failure of April 27<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting, the BOF voted to increase the BOE operating budget by \$100,000 to be funded by bond premium. The proposed percentage increase does not change from the April 27<sup>th</sup> referendum. He encouraged voters to answer the advisory question that will be on the ballot.

John McCartney congratulated all the students that were awarded the CABA Leadership awards. He encouraged taxpayers to support the Education budget and to vote too low on the referendum.

## **INFORMATION ITEM**

### New Fairfield High School/Consolidated School Building Project Update

Scott Pellman from Colliers Project Leaders spoke of the issues and plans for remediation with the propane system at the high school. There was a discussion of the timeline for fixing this issue and the errors and omissions policy in the contract.

## **VII. BOARD AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Chairman’s Report - Dominic Cipollone spoke of the budget process and cautioned residents about getting information on social media. He encouraged taxpayers to reach out to the BOE with any questions. He spoke of the need to fund capital projects properly.

B. Superintendent’s Report - Dr. Kenneth Craw spoke of the following:

- June 7<sup>th</sup> is the 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Step-Up Ceremony;
- June 17<sup>th</sup> is the Middle School Moving Up Ceremony;
- June 21<sup>st</sup> - High School Graduation.

Dr. Craw gave a presentation about chronic absenteeism and noted that there has been significant improvements in the district since last year. Dr. Craw congratulated Paul Gouveia and staff for the CABA Award for the District Calendar and Guide.

C. Student Representative Reports

Senior Representative Brennan Hearty noted that:

- May 6<sup>th</sup> to May 17<sup>th</sup> will be AP Tests at the high school.
- The Junior Prom will be held on May 10<sup>th</sup>.
- The Senior Prom will be held on May 18<sup>th</sup>.
- NGEA testing for Junior will be held from May 20<sup>th</sup> to May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

D. Committee Reports

1. Business Operations/Resource Management - Greg Flanagan noted that this subcommittee met on April 30<sup>th</sup> and discussed year-end projections. There is a possible deficit in Central Office, Special Education and oil costs at the old high school. Some savings were realized in out-of-district Special Education Transportation. A projected surplus of approximately \$48,000 is expected after the excess cost grant is received from the State.

2. Policy - Samantha Mannion noted that this subcommittee met on May 1<sup>st</sup> and discussed policies on suicide prevention and an update on the policy for non-resident students. It was noted that over \$374,000 was saved in the district since the implementation of the new policy for non-resident students.

Director of Technology Paul Gouveia explained the team effort with many town officials to validate that students attending New Fairfield School actually live in town.

3. Field Fees - The Field Fees subcommittee for April 18<sup>th</sup> was cancelled. This subcommittee will meet on May 13<sup>th</sup> at 4 p.m.

E. Liaison Reports

1. Board of Finance

Ed Sbordone noted that the BOF Medical subcommittee met on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and it was noted that claims for the month of March have decreased significantly and are the lowest in the last five months. The Medical subcommittee will meet next on May 20<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 p.m.

The full BOF met on April 24<sup>th</sup> and voted to approve an additional appropriation of \$245,000 from the unreserved fund balance into Capital and Nonrecurring for a town truck and voted to approve the transfer of \$33,327.01 to BOE capital and nonrecurring. The \$33,327.01 is a combination of the 2022-2023 expenditure surplus plus the close out of fiscal year 2022. The BOF discussed giving the BOE \$75,000 but needed to get a legal opinion to determine if approval is needed from the BOS.

At the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting, the BOF discussed the Capital and Nonrecurring update and voted to form a committee to review capital projects for the Town and the BOE. Cheryl Reedy and Thora Perkins will serve on this committee and will ask for a representative from the BOE. The final item at the April 24<sup>th</sup> meeting was a review of the unassigned fund balance of the General Fund and it was noted that it is estimated to be 16.67% by the end of the fiscal year.

The BOF met on April 29<sup>th</sup> to discuss the failure of the budget referendum. There was a motion to reduce the cut for the BOE operating budget by \$250,000 and to add money back to Town capital. This motion failed. The BOF ultimately voted in favor of adding back \$100,000 to the BOE Operating budget to be funded by bond premium that will result in no change to the proposed tax increase.

There will be a special Town Meeting on Wednesday, May 8<sup>th</sup> to set the date for the second referendum.

## **VIII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

B. Elementary School Structure

Dr. Craw spoke of the existing structure for the Elementary School (Meeting House Hill School and Consolidated School) and clarified that it operates as two names and two schools on one campus. There was a suggestion of the possibility of changing the name of the schools to have one name.

Elementary School Principal Allyson Story spoke of the Mission and Vision statement for the schools and the design for the building.

Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Dr. Kristine Woleck spoke of the K-5 Community and Coherence and supporting of students, staff and families. She spoke of the roles of the Principal and each Assistant Principal. She noted that this will be discussed more in the future. She thanked Allyson Story and staff for all their hard work.

C. FY25 Budget Update

Dr. Craw noted that since the budget failed at referendum on April 27<sup>th</sup>, the BOF met and voted to add back \$100,000 to the BOE Operating budget that will be funded by bond premium. He spoke of the negative effects if this budget were to pass because only \$97,000 will be left in the bond premium which could result in a significant increase in next year's budget. The capital budget has remained unchanged. It

was noted that it was promised that the track and field will be first on the list for the budget surplus funds but due to the timeline, it is unlikely that it can be completed this summer.

The overall budget increase remained at 4.27% despite significant public comment requesting an increase to the BOE budget. He spoke of the exit poll at the referendum and noted that there is a lot of support for the budget.

## **IX. ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Additional Appropriation**

**MOTION:** Ed Sbordone made a motion to recommend to the full board to authorize the Superintendent to request an additional appropriation from the Board of Selectman in the amount of \$41,672.99 for Capital Projects, specifically the Middle School intercom and the Middle School STEAM room. Samantha Mannion seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

### **B. Personnel Report**

**MOTION:** Kathy Baker made a motion to recommend to the full Board approval of the Personnel Report for April 29, 2024, as recommended by the administration. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion.

**IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

### **C. Electricity Consortium**

**MOTION:** Greg Flanagan made a motion to authorize Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy to lock in a rate for electricity. Kathy Baker seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Director of Business and Operations Carrie DePuy spoke of the 3-year lock in and partnership with the town.

## **X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Terra Volpe spoke of her frustration with the budget process and encouraged support of the education budget.

John McCartney congratulated Paul Gouveia and his staff for his hard work that resulted in savings for the district. He further spoke in support of the teachers and administrators and the Fire Marshal. He thanked the BOE for their support of the budget and especially spoke of the need to properly fund capital projects. Mason Cipriani gave his opinion and spoke of concerns regarding the political nature of a song performed by the New Fairfield High School Chorus.

High School Principal James D'Amico addressed the concerns regarding the high school chorus and explained the background of the performance. He noted that the choir was invited to play at Carnegie Hall and explained that parents were informed of the performance ahead of time and were given the option to not have their student participate.

Members of the public spoke in support of the chorus performance and applauded the choir for addressing racial injustice.

## **XI. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

The following will be discussed at future meetings:

- The bus lot;
- Possible change of name for the Elementary School (MHHS/Consolidated);
- Leadership and guidance about cell phone usage and how it affects mental health.

## **XII. BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS**

Members of the BOE encouraged residents to put politics aside when deciding on the budget. They spoke in support of the original BOE budget that was presented to the BOF and spoke against any cuts to the BOE budget.

Amy Johnson spoke of disappointment with issues with the new buildings and hopes that they can be fixed soon.

Sue Huwer clarified that she was not contacted by anyone regarding the chorus performance despite an article that said she was contacted but did not return messages. She spoke in support of the performance.

## **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion. **IN FAVOR:** Kathy Baker, Tim Blair, Dominic Cipollone, Greg Flanagan, Sue Huwer, Amy Johnson, Kimberly LaTourette, Samantha Mannion and Ed Sbordone

Respectfully submitted,  
Suzanne Kloos



## New Fairfield Public Schools Elementary Reading Resources Report and Findings

**Submitted by: Allyson Story, Principal, Consolidated / Meeting House Hill School**  
**Kristine Woleck, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction**

**Course:** ELA - English/ Language Arts (Literacy)

**Grade(s):** K-5

**April, 2024**

### **Introduction**

In the context of “Right to Read” legislation in Sections 394-404 of Public Act No. 21-2, the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) requires all public school districts to implement a CSDE-approved reading program. This mandate, coupled with student performance data and teacher feedback, provided New Fairfield Public Schools with the opportunity to undertake a self-study and self-assessment of its literacy resources.

Like many districts across Connecticut and the nation, attention had already been given over the past several years to phonemic awareness and phonics instruction in New Fairfield through both professional learning and the implementation of programs such as Heggerty (phonemic awareness, K-1) and Foundations (phonics, K-2) to provide explicit, systematic instruction for students in these two strands of literacy. In addition, DIBELS as an assessment tool has provided the district with a vehicle for monitoring and responding to students’ performance in these early literacy skill areas. However, additional core strands of reading - specifically, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension - have continued to be areas of need for students in terms of performance and for staff in terms of resources for coherent, well-articulated instruction in the classroom. This was confirmed by the CSDE in their response to our 2023 district waiver application and their review of our literacy program.

With that in mind, a team of New Fairfield elementary administrators and staff began researching the CSDE-approved resources. Given the solid foundation of early literacy instruction provided by Heggerty and Foundations, accompanied by Geodes decodable texts, we selected two resources from the CSDE list that have been approved as compendium resources; that is, they are intended to be used in conjunction with Heggerty and Foundations to address instruction of the remaining literacy strands of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These two selected resources were (1) *Wit and Wisdom* (Great Minds), and (2) *Bookworms* (Open Up Resources). In early January, 2024, a plan to pilot these two resources was presented by Mrs. Allyson Story, Principal of Consolidated/Meeting House Hill School, to the New Fairfield Board of Education. In addition, the district continued this year to study, implement, and gather feedback regarding the current resources from Teachers’ College (TC Units of Study) in use in our classrooms; this resource is not currently included on the CSDE list of approved resources. The report that follows provides an overview of the study and pilot of these resources and our plan to move forward with *Bookworms* as a core resource in the context of literacy curriculum and instruction in New Fairfield Public Schools.

## **About Literacy Instruction in New Fairfield**

The New Fairfield Public Schools strives for vertical alignment across curricula and programs to ensure a coherent experience for students as they journey across their PreK-12 years in the district. To that end, this pilot of elementary literacy resources is situated in the broader context of our district English-Language Arts (ELA) philosophy, aligned to the New Fairfield Public Schools Vision of the Learner:

We believe that through the study of English language arts, students become talented communicators and enlightened, global citizens who are able to thrive in society. A high-quality education in English language arts includes explicit, differentiated instruction in all aspects of literacy, beginning with foundational skills so that students are prepared to think critically, make meaning and communicate.

English language arts classrooms must be safe, literature-rich learning environments that provide students access to a wide array of fiction and nonfiction texts where students have choice in what they read and write, fostering ownership of their learning. Instruction must be differentiated to address students' individual needs through whole-class lessons, small-group work and individualized conferences where students practice their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills and receive actionable feedback.

To meet the needs of every student, teachers must work collaboratively to ignite all students' imagination, confidence and creativity and lead students to their highest potential.

It is important to note that this pilot entails resources to be used in support of the delivery of our district K-5 literacy curriculum. Curriculum is broader than a given resource; curriculum is the design and organization of Standards and performance expectations to define what students should understand, know, and be able to do, aligned to the New Fairfield Public Schools Vision of a Learner. Programs and resources are selected to support the implementation of curriculum by providing materials and tools for learning experiences in the classroom. Instructional practices and routines are also critical in ensuring that curriculum resources are implemented in such a way as to be responsive to student learning needs and deepen understanding. With this in mind, the pilot and study of literacy resources provides an opportunity to also articulate principles of literacy instruction that drive our teaching and learning in the classroom (as well as professional learning) beyond any single program or resource. We seek to ensure that literacy instruction in each classroom provides:

- **Explicit, systematic instruction** across all strands of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension);
- **Opportunities for deliberate practice** with real texts through partner and independent reading and fluency routines;
- The development of oral language and written language through discussion and **critical thinking** about text;
- Opportunities for **small group, differentiated instruction** that is responsive to the needs of each reader.

As resources are implemented, we keep in mind that no single program or resource itself serves as our curriculum. Rather, instructional routines and resources provide the tools for delivering curriculum and we engage in a continuous improvement cycle of monitoring implementation and student performance to adjust and enhance our use of resources for optimal student learning.

## **Guiding Questions**

The pilot and study of literacy resources was grounded in the following two overarching evaluative criteria questions given our district needs and current status of resources:

**Does the resource support explicit, systematic, sequential and cumulative instruction of fluency, vocabulary and comprehension?**

**How does the resource work together with our existing programs to support a comprehensive literacy curriculum?**

In addition, teachers were asked to reflect specifically on the questions below throughout the implementation of the resources in order to focus their analysis of the resources and their effectiveness in the classroom.

- How does the resource allow for high-quality, **daily differentiation of foundational, comprehension and vocabulary** skills to meet the diverse needs of **all students working at, above or below grade level**?
- How does the resource provide for structured discussions that address grade level **Speaking and Listening Standards**?
- How does the resource provide for explicit instruction and practice to address grade level **Language Standards**?
- How does the resource include a range of **authentic writing and explicit instruction** of grade level **Writing Standards**?
- How does the resource provide for **explicit instruction in grade level Comprehension and Word Recognition (vocabulary) Standards / skills**?
- How does the resource represent diverse cultures, identities, backgrounds and perspectives that are representative of the New Fairfield community as well as a broader understanding of communities and citizens beyond New Fairfield?

Along with the principles of literacy instruction noted previously, these questions, used to frame check-in and debrief meetings with staff, were critical in ensuring that we considered both the **student experience** (outcomes, engagement) and the **teacher experience** (usability, professional learning).

## **Implementation / Timeline**

Our pilot and study of literacy resources was undertaken systematically and over time to ensure opportunities to examine student learning in the classroom and stakeholder feedback from teachers, coaches, and administrators. This included an initial virtual training for staff and overview of the materials provided by the publisher of each resource prior to the implementation of resources in the classroom. Throughout the implementation of the resources, teachers piloting *Wit and Wisdom* or

*Bookworms* met weekly with our elementary literacy coaches to plan collaboratively, raise questions, and debrief instruction. Both the coaches and administration maintained contact via Zoom meetings and email communication with the publishers to ask clarifying questions and be responsive to teachers. Below is a summary of the timeline of implementation for the pilot.

<b>September, 2023</b>	Initial review of CSDE literacy resources
<b>November / December, 2023</b>	Selection of pilot materials / Design of pilot
<b>January 30-31, 2024</b>	Initial meeting with pilot teachers
<b>February 20, 2024</b>	Overview of pilot resources (webinar)
<b>Mid-February - Mid-March, 2024</b>	Initial resource classroom implementation (with weekly planning / coach meetings)
<b>March 24, 2024</b>	Implementation check-in (student work share, teacher reflections / feedback grounded in guiding questions)
<b>Mid-March - Mid-April, 2024</b>	Continued resource classroom implementation (focus on small group instruction)
<b>April 23, 2024</b>	Final pilot resource review (student work review, <a href="#">Reading Resource Review Template</a> )

- **Implementation Check-In**

As noted in this timeline, after several weeks of implementation, teachers piloting new program resources came together for an implementation “check-in” on March 24, 2024, at a professional learning session dedicated to examining student work from the pilot classrooms and reflecting on the instruction to date based on the pilot’s guiding questions. This provided an opportunity to monitor and adjust based on student work evidence and teacher feedback.

Teacher reflection and feedback focused on the content of the instructional resources and literacy practices for student learning and engagement as well as the usability and sustainability of implementation from the perspective of the teacher experience. Teachers noted that both resources provide structures and routines that support literacy instruction in fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension. Also, student oral language development is fostered in both resources, with students citing text evidence when responding to comprehension questions to a greater extent than previously. It was noted across both resources that previewing texts and book selection is important to support classroom discussions and to take into account community context. In addition, strengths and practices specific to a given resource in the pilot were noted, including points listed below:

Wit and Wisdom	Bookworms
Fluency routines that scaffold fluency elements through re-reading of passages.	Fluency routines practiced through choral and partner reading and re-reading.
Strong vocabulary routines (Deep Dives)	Vocabulary routines engage students (Super Sentences)
Workbooks include fill-in items for students; questions of rigor raised.	Student levels of thinking and discourse raised through discussions and written responses to texts.
Range of media for response and application of comprehension / critical thinking.	Primarily whole texts used for response and application of comprehension / critical thinking.
Pacing challenges; not yet able to embed small group instruction.	Flexibility with pacing within lesson structure; small group instruction informed by DIBELS data and diagnostic assessment tool from the pilot resource.

- **Continued Resource Implementation**

Implementation in the first weeks of the pilot focused on the core whole-group instructional segments of each resource. However, small group instruction remains a critical component of our literacy model in order to differentiate instruction for students and respond to student learning needs. With this in mind, teachers piloting both resources turned attention during the second half of the implementation period (approximately 3-4 weeks) to integrating small group instruction into their literacy block with the pilot resource to assess feasibility of this instructional practice. Teachers utilizing the current Teachers College Units of Study also continued to integrate small group instruction to address student needs.

- **Final Resource Review**

On April 23, 2024, all K-5 classroom teachers met for a final review of each resource. Teachers reflected on the strengths and challenges of each resource, and they shared reflections specific to the integration of small group instruction into the literacy instructional block. Also, teachers of each pilot resource as well as those continuing to use previous district literacy resources (TC Units of Study) completed the [Reading Resource Review Template](#) to provide comprehensive feedback regarding each resource. The template focused on content related to the guiding questions of the pilot. This final review template focused on the following criteria:

- **Content Standards** - The extent to which the resource aligns with Literacy Content Standards (Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening)
- **Program Components** - The extent to which the resource provides explicit instruction and materials in support of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as critical thinking, discourse, and a balance of literary and informational texts.

- **Instruction** - The extent to which the resource and embedded routines promotes student engagement, small group instruction, differentiation, and entry points for all students (including ML students).
- **Implementation** - The extent to which the resources are feasible for implementation in terms of preparation, pacing, and available materials.

Administrators and the elementary literacy coaches met as well to look at each resource across the full year and K-5, beyond the single pilot unit, specifically to assess full alignment with Standards and the volume and range of texts for students.

**Findings**

Based on the review of literacy resources with teacher feedback and student work samples, each resource presented with strengths as well as challenges. This reaffirms our commitment to the design of a comprehensive curriculum that is broader than any single resource; that is, no program or resource will serve as our full curriculum. That being said, all of the resources that were studied through the lens of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension can integrate with our current use of Heggerty (phonemic awareness) and Foundations (phonics / decoding). Also, with any of these resources, we will look to integrate the use of Geodes and other decodables as texts that support the application of decoding skills and growth in fluency.

Below is a summary of our analysis of resources and New Fairfield teacher feedback based on our pilot review criteria:

	TC Units of Study (Current)	Wit & Wisdom	Bookworms
<b>Content Standards</b>			
<b>Program Components</b>			
<b>Instruction</b>			
<b>Implementation</b>			

Key:  
 Fully met criteria   
 Partially met criteria   
 Did not meet criteria

Critical points of feedback for each of the resources are noted below:

<b>TC Units of Study</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Authentic texts with student choice for independent reading.</li> <li>● Opportunities for independent writing and a variety of student-generated writing.</li> <li>● Greater clarity and explicit instruction needed in the areas of Vocabulary, grammar, and language skills.</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Wit &amp; Wisdom</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong fluency and vocabulary routines.</li> <li>● All readers engage in deep discussions and higher-order thinking about grade-level texts.</li> <li>● Concerns expressed regarding time for writing and expectations; lack of student-generated ideas and lack of choice.</li> <li>● Strong launch but over time student engagement faded given length of module / single-topic study.</li> <li>● Concerns regarding pacing of lessons and materials preparation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Bookworms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong vocabulary and grammar / language routines.</li> <li>● High student engagement and excitement for reading and writing.</li> <li>● All readers engage in deep discussions and higher-order thinking about grade-level texts.</li> <li>● Clear, explicit language to instruct regarding effective text responses.</li> <li>● Supports listening skills.</li> <li>● Pacing and depth of time with a given topic / text appropriate.</li> <li>● Deep discussions in classrooms require extended time and can impact pacing.</li> <li>● Small group instructional block continues to be refined.</li> <li>● Full implementation can ensure that routines are established for the academic instructional blocks.</li> </ul>

Based on these findings and feedback, we plan to move forward with Bookworms as a Standards-based resource component of our elementary literacy curriculum. Bookworms provides explicit instruction and routines that address the components of vocabulary, grammar, language, and comprehension in a manner that has ignited student engagement this spring while being sustainable for teachers over time. Bookworms would be coupled with decodable texts, fluency routines, and small group, targeted strategy instruction that allow students to grow their decoding and fluency skills within an overarching curriculum. We continue to value opportunities for independent reading and student-generated writing and will work to ensure these elements are integrated into literacy instruction in the classroom with our core resources.

**Professional Learning Plan**

The introduction of any new resource in support of curriculum delivery is dependent on the professional learning of staff to ensure fidelity of implementation and informed professional judgment in the use of the resource. What is perhaps most exciting in the selection of a literacy resource is the opportunity to deepen staff understanding of reading instruction and related practices. Moreover, the excitement generated by the study and pilot of new resources has positioned our elementary classroom teachers to be eager to grow in new knowledge and new practices with the materials.

It is essential that professional learning be embedded and ongoing. Therefore, we seek to provide initial training to all staff to ensure consistency in implementation, as well as coaching and additional professional learning sessions throughout the year to allow teachers to raise questions, reflect on their

instruction and student learning, refine practice, and deepen understanding of the range of tools available in the resource. The following is a draft of professional learning experiences that we plan to leverage in support of this first year of implementation of the Bookworms resources:

- **Initial Overview Training (2-hour, on-site): May 24, 2024**
- **First-Year Implementation Training (full day, on-site): August, 2024**
- **Leadership Coaching (monthly): September, 2024 - June, 2025**
- **On-Site School-Based Follow-up (2 days): TBD**

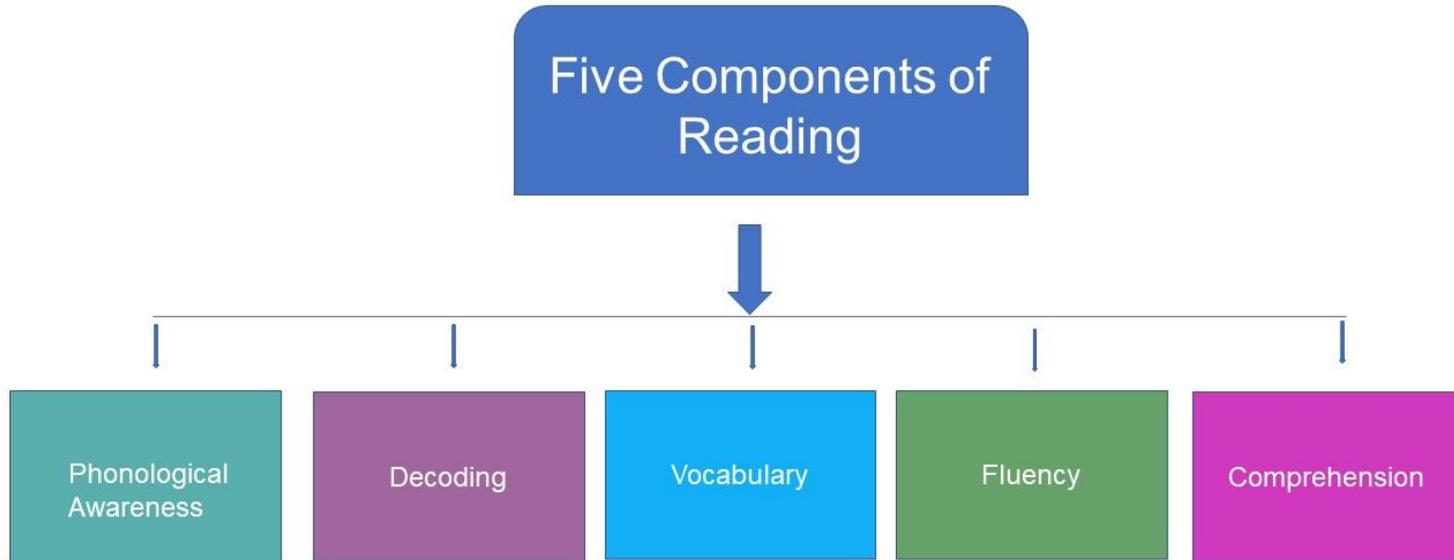
In addition, our K-5 literacy coaches will meet with grade-level representatives and administrators this summer to prepare curriculum materials and professional learning experiences to further support staff in this launch and implementation. Throughout the year, grade-level planning sessions will be facilitated by our literacy coaches, and other curriculum-based coaching experiences, such as demonstration lessons, co-teaching, student work sessions, learning walks, and lesson study, will be provided by the literacy coaches. This will ensure ongoing professional learning that builds the capacity of our staff throughout the implementation of Bookworms in support of student learning and growth. We are eager to begin and look forward to this opportunity for our students and staff!

# K-5 Literacy Resource Review

New Fairfield Public Schools  
Spring, 2024



# Critical Components of Literacy



# Literacy Resources in NFPS

<b>Key Literacy Skills</b>	<b>Instructional Program or Resource</b>
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	K-2 Foundations(2019), K-1 Heggerty (2022)
<b>Phonics / Decoding</b>	K-2 Foundations (2019), 3-5 Spelling Connections (2019)
<b>Vocabulary</b>	K-5 Teacher College Units of Study (2011)
<b>Fluency</b>	K-2 Foundations(2019)
<b>Comprehension</b>	K-5 Teacher College Units of Study (2011)

# Guiding Principles of Literacy Instruction

**Beyond any single program or resource, we commit to literacy instruction that ensures:**

- **explicit, systematic instruction** across all strands of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension);
- **opportunities for deliberate practice** with real texts through fluency routines and partner and independent reading;
- the development of oral language and written language through **discussion** and **critical thinking** about text in support of deep comprehension;
- opportunities for **targeted small group, differentiated instruction** that is responsive to the needs of each reader.



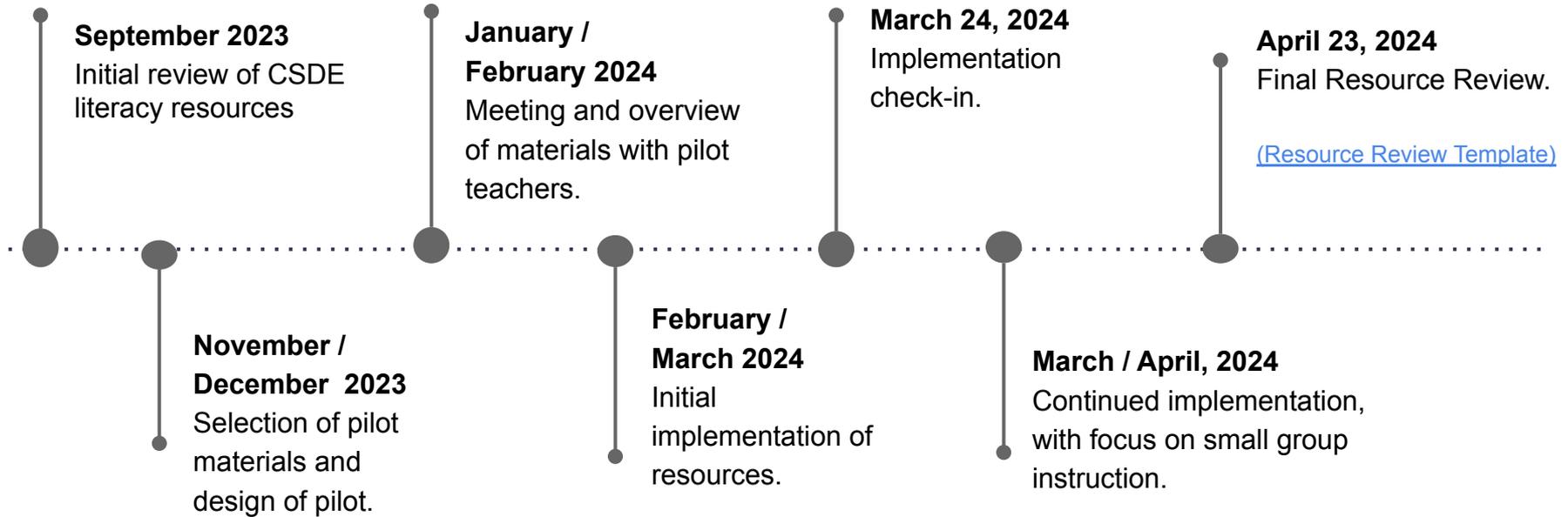
# Literacy Study & Pilot: Winter/Spring 2024

Program / Resource	Overarching Evaluative Considerations	Literacy Component
<i>Great Minds:</i> <b>Wit and Wisdom</b>	Does the resource support explicit, systematic, sequential and cumulative instruction of fluency, vocabulary and comprehension?	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Comprehension</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Vocabulary</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fluency</b>
<i>Open-Up Resources:</i> <b>Bookworms</b>		
<i>Teachers College:</i> <b>Units of Study</b> (current resource)	How does the resource work together with our existing programs to support a comprehensive literacy curriculum?	

# Literacy Study Questions

- How does the resource allow for high-quality, **daily differentiation of foundational, comprehension and vocabulary** skills to meet the diverse needs **of all students working at, above or below grade level**?
- How does the resource provide for structured discussions that address grade level **Speaking and Listening Standards**?
- How does the resource provide for explicit instruction and practice to address grade level **Language Standards**?
- How does the resource include a range of **authentic writing and explicit instruction** of grade level **Writing Standards**?
- How does the resource provide for **explicit instruction in grade level Comprehension and Word Recognition (vocabulary) Standards / skills**?
- How does the resource represent diverse cultures, identities, backgrounds and perspectives that are representative of the New Fairfield community as well as a broader understanding of communities and citizens beyond New Fairfield?

# Timeline



# Literacy Resource Review

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Content Standards</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which the resource aligns with Literacy Content Standards (Reading, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening)</li></ul>
<b>Program Components</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which the resource provides explicit instruction and materials in support of fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as well as critical thinking, discourse, and a balance of literary and informational texts.</li></ul>
<b>Instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which the resource and embedded routines promotes student engagement, small group instruction, differentiation, and entry points for all students (including ML students).</li></ul>
<b>Implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The extent to which the resources are feasible for implementation in terms of preparation, pacing, and available materials.</li></ul>

# Findings

	TC Units of Study (Current)	Wit & Wisdom	Bookworms
<b>Content Standards</b>			
<b>Program Components</b>			
<b>Instruction</b>			
<b>Implementation</b>			

Key:



Fully met criteria



Partially met criteria



Did not meet criteria

# Teacher Feedback

“The students were very engaged during each lesson. This program provided an entry point for students of all levels. The students expanded their vocabulary, writing skills and reading stamina.”



“The students are so engaged in book discussions, the book topics and the partner work . . . All students are able to share their thoughts about the books. It allows for verbal discussions and verbal responses for comprehension questions. Students also learn to provide written responses to questions about the chapters.”



“...Students carried their discussions and interests beyond just reading and writing times. The discussions that the students had with each other and with me encouraged higher level thinking ... I saw a huge improvement in my students' fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and overall excitement and joy for reading and writing.”



# Next Steps

## Professional Learning

- Bookworms Launch Training, May 24th (PM, 2 hours)
- Initial Implementation Training (August, 2024, full day)
- On-site school-based follow-up (2 days): TBD
- Ongoing monthly leadership training

## Implementation

- Bookworms, K-5, 2024-2025
- Professional learning, monitor, review, refine

## Curriculum Design & Development

- K-5 ELA curriculum design ... and K-12 ELA curriculum mapping
- Assessment development (aligned to NFPS *Vision of the Learner*)

## Students

### Suicide Prevention/Intervention

The New Fairfield Board of Education recognizes that suicide has become a leading cause of death among young people and consequently, is a concern to the school system and the community it serves. The Board recognizes that suicide is a complex issue and that while the school may recognize potentially suicidal youth, it cannot make a clinical assessment of risk and provide in depth counseling but must refer the youth to an appropriate place for such an assessment and counseling.

It is the policy of the Board of Education to actively respond in any situation where a student verbally or behaviorally indicates an intent to attempt suicide or to physically harm himself/herself.

~~A student who is at risk to be harmful to himself, is a student that the school district is concerned about.~~

Risk factors for youth suicide will be based on the statewide strategic suicide prevention plan developed by the Connecticut Suicide Advisory Board, which includes, but is not limited to youth who are:

1. bereaved by suicide,
2. disabled or have chronic health conditions, such as mental health or substance use disorders,
3. involved in the juvenile justice system,
4. experiencing homelessness or placed in an out-of-home setting, such as foster care, or
5. lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning.

It is the policy of the New Fairfield school district to monitor such actions carefully and to provide a climate that is safe and healthy within which the focus is to help students deal with difficulties and concerns, while at the same time giving due consideration for the student's legal rights and responsibilities.

The intent of this policy is to protect the safety and welfare of the students attending the New Fairfield Public Schools. This intent demands that the school district through its general philosophy and the curriculum focuses on the identification of significant behaviors that may indicate a student at risk. This in no way limits the district personnel from taking a reactive mode, but makes every effort to focus on a prevention mode through a healthy, positive, productive school climate. The Board of Education recognizes the need for youth suicide prevention procedures and will ~~direct the superintendent~~ Superintendent to establish program(s) to identify risk factors for youth suicide, procedures to intervene with such youth, referral services and training for teachers, other school professionals and students to provide assistance in the programs.

This policy represents one part of a district-wide effort to respond effectively to suicide.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes  
10-221(e) Boards of education to prescribe rules

Policy adopted: June 16, 2005

NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
New Fairfield, Connecticut