

Tri –State Progress Report

STUDENT PERFORMANCE:

WCSD Philosophy and Definition of Comprehensive Literacy

At this time we have created a clear and concise definition of Comprehensive Literacy. This was presented to the BOE on January 14, 2008. We will be presenting to the PTA Council in early March and will continue to update the Tri-State website.

The English Language Arts focus on the integrative, interactive ways of communicating that develop through reading, writing, speaking and listening. They are the ways in which we receive information, think logically and creatively, express ideas, understand and participate meaningfully in spoken, written and non verbal communication, formulate and answer questions, and search for, organize, evaluate and apply information. We believe that it is our responsibility to provide students an opportunity to develop the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills that are essential for learning and interacting in our world. The WCSD reading curriculum is aligned with the NYS Learning Standards and Grade Level Outcomes.

As a community of learners, we in Wappingers believe that literacy is the foundation for all instruction and that every teacher is a teacher of reading.

Literacy is more than a specific, predetermined set of skills in reading. It is the way to acquire knowledge for thinking and communicating. Literacy is also recognizing and understanding one's own purposes for thinking and communicating and being able to use one's own resources to achieve those purposes.

We believe that effective literacy instruction is characterized by a comprehensive and balanced listening, speaking, reading and writing approach that is research based and combines focused skill and strategy instruction through language rich activities in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency.

We define comprehensive literacy as a balanced approach to teaching and learning that is teacher directed and child focused and is delivered through a three-block instructional model to provide students

- exposure to and experience with many literacy genres.
- explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, fluency and vocabulary development.
- explicit teaching of skills that support the mastery of standard English conventions, comprehension strategies and communication skills.
- differentiated instructional strategies to address individual learning styles and diverse student needs.
- instructional skills and strategies including direct instruction and modeling.
- instruction delivered in meaningful contexts.
- acquisition of reading skills in all content areas.
- development of strategies that are practiced across disciplines.
- ongoing assessment.

- active learning.
- activities encouraging problem solving.
- opportunities for readers and writers to draw on text information and prior knowledge to make inferences and to construct meaningful inquiry skills.

We believe that reading and writing are thinking skills and that reading is constructing meaning. This belief drives our practice, resulting in readers who interact with the text and use their strategies to read a variety of texts. Writing offers a means for students to articulate, clarify and expand their ideas. Using the Six Traits Approach to writing our students learn specific strategies, which enhance their ability to respond to literature and produce their own authentic pieces.

We believe that our students need to make connections between what they read and write and what others read and write. Following a three block instructional model consisting of Reading Workshop, Writing Workshop, and Language /Word Study, we build our students capacity to create connections, to use language purposefully as they construct, comprehend and convey meaning.

We value our ability to be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of our students and strive to create an enriching learning environment that offers our students opportunities to grow.

We value collaboration to discuss student progress and refine practice.

We value home-school community partnerships that encourage parents, authors and community members to share their time, experience and professions at school.

We believe that all children have a right to:

- well-prepared teachers who keep their skills up to date.
- classrooms that optimize learning opportunities.
- early reading instruction that meets individual needs.
- instruction that makes meaningful use of first-language skills.
- reading instruction that builds skill and the desire to read increasingly complex materials.
- a variety of books and other reading material in their classrooms, and in school and community libraries.
- supplemental instruction from professionals specifically prepared to teach reading.
- instruction that involves parents and communities in students' academic lives.
- equal access to instructional technology.
- assessment that identifies strengths as well as needs and involves students in making decisions about their own learning. (IRA)

We believe that through challenging and innovative instruction, our students will be actively engaged in reading, writing and communication that build a strong foundation in literacy that continues to develop and contributes to their future success

We believe our primary purpose is to prepare students to become competent, humane critical thinkers who employ sound reasoning to make decisions and solve problems. We believe that competent critical thinkers are effective, innovative, and self-directed learners

- who can see both sides of an issue.
- who are open to new evidence, even when that evidence contradicts personal beliefs or ideas.
- who reason dispassionately.
- who demand that claims be backed by evidence.
- who deduce and infer conclusions from available facts in order to make sound decisions.
- who solve problems.

Literacy Team

The Literacy Team is made up of reading teachers, classroom teachers, librarians and administrators from across the district. There are three sub- committees. These committees are working on

Revising/updating Writing Benchmarks, Their work will include

- creating developmentally appropriate writing benchmarks for each grade level.
- establishing an appropriate timeline for administering Reading/Writing benchmarks.
- updating timelines for DRA/QRI administration.

Revising/Updating Literacy Handbook

- Establishing framework/outlines and connections to help our teachers understand

Summer Reading

Summer Reading

The Literacy Committee has been working on updating our summer reading initiative. Our K-5 summer reading will find students reading books focused on perseverance. Depending on their grade level, students will be asked to choose 2-3 books from an appropriate grade level list.

Approximately two weeks into the school year, students K-8 will spend 30-45 minutes responding in writing about the books they read. This written response will be the first writing sample of the school year, providing teachers with information about where students are in writing.

We believe that this approach to summer reading will foster the spirit of the imagination at work in literature and nurture the habit of reading, creating a community of readers.

INTERNAL SUPPORT:

ELA Committee

The K-12 ELA Committee met throughout the summer of 2007. They created a draft of a K-12 Scope and Sequence of ELA skills which is currently being used in our schools. On February 7, 2008 this group will meet to discuss the any updates needed to this document.

It is our expectation that after some adjustments to content and format change, this document can be put into its final form.

Learning Walks

Our administrators are all trained in using the “Learning Walks” philosophy. Building and district wide administrators are using this model as starting points for discussions about teaching and learning; deepening the capacity of our teachers to evolve and grow in their practice.

Literacy Coaches

This school year we provided four additional literacy coaches bringing the number of Balanced Literacy Specialists in our district to five. Our Balanced Literacy Specialists provide focused support and targeted, ongoing professional development in the areas of reading and writing. Our “coaches” have provided numerous inservice courses, demonstrating model lessons and using their expertise to assist our teachers in the complex act of teaching reading. In addition to our teaching staff, our literacy specialists have provided training opportunities and presentations to our administrative team and parent groups.