

K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum Review January 2008

~ STRIVING FOR HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION ~
 THE PURPOSE OF THIS REVIEW IS TO BE SELF-REFLECTIVE ABOUT OUR
 PRACTICE AND TO DEVELOP A FIVE YEAR VISION
 THIS DOCUMENT WAS CREATED BY K-12 MEMBERS OF THE MSAD #11 ELA COMMITTEE

PK-2 READING REVIEW

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| <p>Narrative Description <i>(please describe the curriculum, programming, instruction, and interventions available at this level in narrative form)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Phonological Awareness and Phonics: Fountas and Pinnell Systematic Phonics Program - Individual focused lessons broken down by month at grade level. Each lesson includes a detailed lesson plan and application of the skill taught. Allows for flexibility of teaching - whole group, small group, individual. ➤ Vocabulary: There is currently no vocabulary program in place in reading. Vocabulary is addressed in the writing program through teaching the six traits, especially word choice. ➤ Comprehension: The DRA has an embedded comprehension piece. ➤ Fluency: We have a fluency rubric. | |
| <p>List of Strengths <i>(such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Phonological Awareness and Phonics: Fountas and Pinnell Systematic Phonics Program - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessments are embedded ○ Teacher friendly ○ Allows for differentiation ➤ Lexia pilot at LER ➤ Vocabulary: ➤ Comprehension: ➤ Fluency: | <p>List of what Needs Upgrading <i>(such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We need a scope and sequence that covers all areas of literacy ➤ Phonological Awareness and Phonics: Fountas and Pinnell Systematic Phonics Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mandate use k-3 ○ Re-visit Candace Bray's Phonological assessment (piloted at LER 07-08) ○ Look at Fountas and Pinnell Scope & Sequence of when skills are taught ➤ Access to multiple copies of books - well stocked book rooms ➤ Guided reading professional development ➤ Big Books at emergent levels for shared reading ➤ Lexia districtwide ➤ Vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear expectations given to teachers about vocabulary instruction at each grade level. ➤ Comprehension: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear expectations at each grade level that includes more than retellings ➤ Fluency: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clear expectations for how many words per minute would make them a fluent reader. |
| <p>How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Phonological Awareness and Phonics: Fountas and Pinnell Systematic Phonics Program - There are NO assessments required or grade level expectations. ➤ Vocabulary: ➤ Comprehension: ➤ Fluency: | |

3-5 READING REVIEW

Narrative Description (please describe the curriculum, programming, instruction, and interventions available at this level in narrative form)

The majority of 3-5 teachers are using Guided Reading, shared reading, and independent silent reading. Students complete independent reading and independent projects that are focused on students applying the literary elements. Mini lessons are taught on reading strategies. Assessment of comprehension, application strategies, and understanding of literary elements using reading response journals or handouts are done on a regular basis. Students also receive instruction and independent practice using access features of non-fiction as well as reading and comprehending nonfiction. This is also true of multiple genres, including folktales, biographies, realistic fiction, poetry, historical fiction, and fantasy. There is some vocabulary instruction using various strategies. There is also instruction for understanding figurative language which also has a common assessment attached.

List of Strengths (such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)

- Majority using Guided Reading, shared reading, and independent silent reading.
- Mini lessons presented on reading strategies
- Instruction on reading multiple genres.
- Good balance of instruction and assessments dealing with comprehension.

List of what Needs Upgrading (such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)

- More time together as grade levels to decide what we all want to teach for reading to support Maine Learning Results and the district curriculum.
- Guided reading training (preferably longer than a day).
- Observation Time where teachers can see how other teachers conduct guided reading groups and to give feedback to teachers as they start to practice guided reading anew.
- Leveled books of short stories (multiple genres and nonfiction) to have in sets in the library for guided reading or independent practice.
- Leveled reader's theatre materials and professional development to aid in consistency.
- Vocabulary instructional materials and training.
- More common materials to teach nonfiction.
- Poetry resources to aid in teaching fluency.
- Appropriate book lists to use in reading literature circles.

How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.

- MEA data shows that MSAD #11 has been below state average for many years. (see attached data)

PK-2 WRITING REVIEW

Narrative Description (please describe the curriculum, programming, instruction, and interventions available at this level in narrative form)

- At the PK-5 level, Handwriting Without Tears is the handwriting program that is used. The Six Traits framework is used for writing instruction. The Six Traits framework is recommended by the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) as a highly effective framework for teaching students to understand the different criteria of good writing. All K-5 teachers in MSAD #11 teach using the Six Traits.

List of Strengths (such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)

- The ELA writing curriculum is aligned to the 1997 MSLR.
- In 2004, MSAD #11 went from a scattering of handwriting instructional strategies "D'Nealian, Zaner Blouser, etc..." to a consistent curriculum Pre-K-3. Handwriting Without Tears is a multi-sensory, developmental, research-based curriculum. A complete set of materials were ordered for all Pre-K & K teachers the first year, second grade was added the following year, and then third grade. All K-3 teachers are now required to use the Handwriting without Tears Curriculum.
- The introduction of the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) recommendation that the Six Traits of Excellent Writing be used in writing instruction came to MSAD #11 in 2003. The district purchased Write Traits Materials for all classroom and resource room teachers k-2. This included a kit comprised of individual trait lessons and rubrics for scoring. Limited amounts of resource books were purchased for grades K-2 as kits that were more practical at this level.
- Mini-workshops presented by Judi Morin during the 2003-04 school year. 69 participants were trained. This included Title I, Special Ed, and regular classroom teachers.
- Fountas & Pinnell Phonics was introduced district-wide k-3 and has the reading/writing crossover component
- Writing Prompts have evolved so there are now consistent narrative prompts developed by grade level teachers. There is a consistent continuum for scoring k-2 that allows teachers to score the variety of grade level writing that exists in each classroom.
- The district provided one full day with national presenter, Barry Lane, focusing on the area of teaching revision. Due to teacher request, a resource book: The Revisor's Toolbox was purchased for each classroom teacher.

List of what Needs Upgrading (such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)

- Alignment of curriculum with the new MSLR
- Writing Curriculum system wide-Committee is contemplating the Lucy Caulkins Unit of Study for Teaching Writing Grade k-2 & 3-5 (and possible gr 6)
- Resource Materials from Lucy Caulkins such as:
- Resources for Teaching Writing DVD
- Big Lesson from Small Writers DVD
- Seeing Possibilities DVD
- Conferring with Primary Writers DVD
- Regular staff training is needed to involve new staff and maintain consistency
- Small committee of anchor paper developers
- Consistent following of directions for writing prompts
- Development of Scored Writing exemplars for each classroom teacher
- Alignment of assessment tasks with units
- Agreement on when different genres of writing are introduced, reinforced, assessed and at what time/grade level the district assessment will be given.
- Comprehensive Spelling Program needed.

How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.

- Write Traits Survey Nov. 2004, Documents: Write Traits Training Sept-May 2003-04; MiniCourse Trainings Nov-Dec 2003 , Writing Prompt District Scores, Handwriting Without Tears Materials List

3-5 WRITING REVIEW

Narrative Description (please describe the curriculum, programming, instruction, and interventions available at this level in narrative form)

- At the K-5 level, Handwriting Without Tears is the handwriting program that is used. The Six Traits framework is used for writing instruction. The Six Traits Framework is recommended by the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) as a highly effective framework for helping students understand the different criteria of good writing. All K-5 teachers in MSAD #11 teach using the Six Traits Framework.

List of Strengths (such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)

- The ELA Writing curriculum is aligned to the 1997 Maine Learning Results.
- Grade 3 was included as the Handwriting Without Tears Curriculum was rolled out in 2007.
- The introduction of the National Council of English Teachers (NCTE) recommendation that the Six Traits of Excellent Writing be used in writing instruction came to MSAD #11 in 2003. The district purchased Write Traits Materials for all classroom and resource room teachers k-2. This included a kit comprised of individual trait lessons and rubrics for scoring. Limited amounts of resource books were purchased for grades 3-5 as kits were still more practical at this level.
- Mini workshops were presented by Judi Morin, RVCS Principal during the 2003-04 school year. 69 participant received training. This included Title I, Special Ed, and regular classroom teachers.
- Writing Prompts have evolved so that there are now consistent narrative prompts developed by grade level teachers. Narrative prompts were elected to prepare students for the MEA testing prompt. There is a consistent continuum for scoring 3-5 that allows teachers to score the variety of grade level writing that exists in each classroom.

List of what Needs Upgrading (such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)

- Alignment of curriculum with the new MLR writing
- Piloting and possible implementation of Lucy Caulkins unit of study for teaching writing grades K-2 and 3-5 (and possibly grade 6)
 - Resource materials from Lucy Caulkins:
 - Resources for teaching writing DVD
 - Big Lesson from small writers DVD
 - Seeing possibilities DVD
 - Conferring with Primary Writers DVD
- Regular staff training is needed to involve new staff and maintain consistency
- A plan is needed to offer remediation to older students
- Small committee of anchor paper developers
- Consistent following of directions for writing prompts
- Development of scored writing exemplars for each classroom teacher.
- Agreement on when different genres of writing are introduced, reinforced, assessed and at what time/grade level the district assessment will be given.
- Comprehensive Spelling Program needs to be developed.
- Comprehensive Grammar Program needed

How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.

- Write traits survey November 2004, Documents; Write Traits Training Sept-May 2003-2004; Mini-Course Trainings Nov-Dec 2003; Writing Prompt District Scores, Handwriting Without Tears materials list

6-8 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS REVIEW

Narrative Description

- Sixth grade is a transitional year for students' learning, which is moving from literal thinkers toward more abstract and inferential thinkers. This class combines reading and writing under the umbrella of Language Arts. The focus is on Vocabulary, Elements of Story Plot, Parts of Speech, Research and Common Mystery Unit. These topics are covered through various activities throughout the year.
- Seventh grade focuses on building a foundation of reading strategies and the incorporation of the writing process and technology. We foster an appreciation of community through the veteran interview program at the Cole Land Transportation Museum, a patriotic essay contest, and a field trip to the Gardiner Public Library. Students explore Maine literature through award-winning novels, short stories and an E. A. Robinson poetry unit. Students are encouraged to explore their own interests through the I-Search research unit, the reading of biographies and writing their autobiographies.
- Writing at the eighth grade level continues to offer practice in all modes with a focus on argumentative/persuasive essays and is scaffolded in the Write Traits. Grammar instruction is incorporated for the most part with writing, with some direct instruction. Reading focuses on strategies, elements of literature, and genres including poetry, historical fiction, and non-fiction as a vehicle for research. Vocabulary instruction is achieved through both classroom texts and standardized programs.

List of Strengths *(such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)*

- Common planning time is available at each grade level.
- Monthly ELA department meetings.
- Four middle school ELA staff regularly participate in District Reading and Writing Committees.
- Language Arts Liaison position facilitates communication between the school and district committee.
- Professional development days provide time for grade level collaboration.
- Common anthology series, Literature and Language, provides a guided structure, scope and sequence for grades six through eight.
- Strong support by administration for materials and improvement in instruction.
- Language Arts labs provide small group focused instruction for students with skill deficits.
- After school academic tutorial support is available.
- Each grade level has weekly scheduled self-selected personal reading time.
- Sixth through eighth grade ELA Curriculum Document is aligned to the 1997 MLR.
- Common assessments are "living" documents that change as better ideas arise. Grade levels are associated with project-based learning related to the assessments.
- Mix of required and personal choice reading.
- One in a Million Reading Program promotes a culture of literacy that recognizes and celebrates reading.
- Falcon Favorites is a library program that promotes reading outside of the classroom and earned field trips.
- Field trips enhance literacy instruction.
- Transparent grading with complete information available to parents online, plus multiple mailed communications with parents about their child's progress.

List of what Needs Upgrading *(such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)*

- Time to plan for common standards-based grading by grade level.
- Substantial time needed to align our curriculum and assessments to revised MLR document.
- Continued support for diverse literacy materials in the classroom.
- More opportunities for upper elementary/middle school/high school ELA teachers to collaborate.
- Professional development days needed to focus on enhancing effective classroom practices/instruction instead of being focused on administrative tasks.
- A consultant, similar in expertise to Pam Buffington, to have an ongoing relationship with our department to more seamlessly scaffold instruction from grade to grade. A program review, facilitated by a consultant, to determine future needs for improvement and the flexibility to implement suggested programming.
- A consultant's guidance to enhance the role of literacy in all curriculum areas.
- Explore the possibilities of a summer literacy program.
- Computer instruction at sixth grade level (including keyboarding)
- More laptop banks for sixth grade teams.

How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.

See attached MEA data, Scholastic Reading Inventory Results (non-special Education Students), tutorial lists, Failure Rates, Writing Prompt Scores, Boys and Girls Club After School Tutorial, Reading Lab program (increased enrollment and expansion of program to sixth through eighth grade level Instruction).

9-12 ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS REVIEW

Narrative Description

The GAHS English program is unified in focus and execution with goals set forth by Maine's LR and then fine-tuned by the faculty's creative design. Common syllabi reflect this unity. Four years of English are required, the first three of which are prescribed; in the last year, students may choose from electives. In the freshman and sophomore years, there are two levels from which students may choose: regular (or "Academic") English and Honors English. ("Essential English" is available for students grades 9-12 whose IEP's stipulate a Special Education level of instruction.) In the junior year, students may choose from Academic or Advanced Placement English Language and Composition. (The AP courses are inclusive and have no screening mechanism for entrance.) As seniors they may elect from the following list: Applied Communications, British Literature, Expository Writing, and Advanced Placement English Literature & Composition.)

In addition to the required courses listed above, students may elect to take Journalism, Theatre Arts, SAT Prep, Philosophy, Public Speaking, Film Studies, For Shakespeare Lovers Only, and Creative Writing. These courses do not count toward the 4-year English requirement.

The department is committed to a combination of canonical works of literature supplemented by students' self-selected reading. Titles in common include the following: Romeo & Juliet (Grade 9); Animal Farm, Macbeth, Antigone, and To Kill a Mockingbird (Grade 10); The Crucible and The Great Gatsby (Grade 11). Classroom libraries, the GAHS Media Center, and the Gardiner Public Library offer opportunities for students to find free-choice books.

Pedagogy varies among members of the department, but all teachers support varied instruction including small and large group work, lecture, processed and on-demand writing, research as a tool for learning, Sustained Silent Reading, oral presentations, project-based learning, direct instruction, and peer-to-peer learning.

Interventions for at-risk students include an Educational Technician available as needed in the classroom and also available to students during their study halls and during Advisor time. Assigned Tutorials also provide students with a place and time to complete required work with the opportunity for one-on-one help from a certified English teacher. Extended Day Detentions are a third-level intervention to give a final opportunity to complete assignments. In addition to these formal supports, teachers work with students during study halls, lunch, and before/after school. (Wherever possible, struggling students are assigned a study hall with their English teacher and/or recommended to the English Dept. Ed Tech for individualized help.)

List of Strengths *(such as instruction, curriculum materials, clear expectations, curriculum documents, assessments, collaboration, results, interventions and assistance, specific programming, home/school collaboration)*

- Department unity in curriculum yet diversity in approach and style-- strong collaborative spirit supported by common planning period
- "Revision is our business." Openness to improvements in curriculum which models for students reflection on work of all kinds.
- Requested major textbooks are made available to teachers through the budget process.
- Interventions are effective and used extensively, including Assigned Tutorials. For example, 124 students accessed the AT system for a total of 230 visits in the first semester of 2007-2008. Also, e-mail allows better contact with parents and administrators.
- Common syllabi are complete for 1997 MLR alignment
- Common assessments are "living" documents that change as better ideas arise. Teachers and students both enjoy the projects/assignments.
- Good selection of electives
- Mix of required and free-choice reading
- Honors/AP track is excellent and open to all—no screening mechanisms exclude any students.
- Co-curricular opportunities: Lit Fest, Poetry Night, field trips to plays and literary locations, e.g. Salem.
- Student successes post-high school: graduation from top-tier schools; anecdotal accounts from various former GAHS students speak to strong GAHS preparation that helped them succeed in college coursework. (TW, KH, DG)
- Strong teacher support of students' potential in post-secondary study in the Humanities, e.g. classroom time for seniors' preparation of college application, essay, etc.

List of what Needs Upgrading *(such as instruction, student expectations, professional development, curriculum materials, interventions and assistance, clearer expectations, more/better local assessments, more accountability, clearer curriculum documents, home/school collaboration etc.)*

1. Time needed for thoughtful use of Standards Based Grading and assessment of Work Habits.
2. Time needed for realignment of MLR with our curriculum
3. Common syllabi needs alignment to 2007 MLR
4. Classroom libraries need expansion
5. More SAT preparation
6. More skilled Ed Techs similar to SK to support the at-risk population
7. More time needed for revision of common assessments to align them with the 2007 MLR.
8. More opportunity for MS/HS ELA teachers to talk
9. Better use of study hall time to support struggling ELA students
10. Better or more effective connection with parents with time allowed for this.
11. A way to deal with misuse of electronic media (Sparknotes, surfing internet instead of writing, etc.)
12. Literacy consultant needed for supporting systemic efforts at the HS.
13. More comprehensive, thoughtful use of technology to mesh our academic program with our students' world of technology. For example: a contemporary Grade 9 English textbook is needed to replace the current text. This text does not deal with multi-modal approaches to reading and other literacy strategies critical to today's technology-savvy students and tomorrow's work force.
14. Culture may be somewhat reluctant to aim high in

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Transparent grading with complete information available to parents online, plus multiple mailed communications with parents about their child's progress ➤ Grades now more accurately reflect students' academic skills, i.e. Work Habits (effort, punctuality, etc.) not factored in to academic averages ➤ Study Wiz training provides technology that further supports literacy. | <p>terms of high school effort and post-secondary aspirations.</p> <p>15. Aspirations, especially related to Honors/Advanced Placement classes appear to be gender-related.</p> |
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How do you know? List specific data from MEAs, local assessments, anecdotal data, survey data, etc. Attach charts if necessary.

- 1-3. SBG and revised MLR standards are pivotal to the work we do. Each demands thoughtful, reflective practice, which translates to extended collegial working time. (This kind of substantial investment of time and teacher experience is best found in summer work time.)
4. Research says that a good classroom library is a collection of 1000 rotated books. At best, there are approximately twenty free read books in a classroom. We are not able to provide students with the new, good titles they want. The ELA Questionnaire exposes that only 18.5% of freshmen and sophomores and 21.5% of juniors and seniors choose a free read by teacher suggestion. We do not have enough good books in the classroom for students to view us as a resource.
5. SAT scores are lower than we would like them to be. From 2003 to 2007, SAT scores were consistently below the state average.
6. We have many kids who have benefited from one-on-one and small group study/work this year under the tutelage of SK.
7. All of our documents use the categories from the previous MLR document.
8. High school English teachers do not know what Middle School English teachers are using for books. In conversations with kids, we often find out that some of them have read books that we use in class (*Of Mice and Men*, for example). If we met once in a while, we could come to agreements over what books to teach when.
9. Study hall work ethic and work completion are low.
10. On the ELA Questionnaire, Freshmen and Sophomores reported that 60.5% of parents did not come to fall conferences this year. 52% of parents do not call or e-mail teachers. 40% of parents do not go online and check grades. On the ELA Questionnaire, Juniors and Seniors reported that 68.9% of parents did not come to fall conferences this year. 57.8% of parents do not call or e-mail teachers. 49.8% of parents do not go online and check grades.
11. Suspected and/or proven plagiarism issues are becoming routine problems. 30% of freshmen and 48% of sophomores said that they used SparkNotes or another online source outside of class as a substitute for reading the full text. 55% of Freshmen and 63% of Sophomores think it should be ok to use SparkNotes or another online source as a substitute for reading the full text. Close to 55% of Juniors and Seniors said that they used SparkNotes or another online source outside of class as a substitute for reading the full text. 49.4% of Junior and Senior students think it should be ok to use SparkNotes or another online source as a substitute for reading the full text.
12. 18% of students scored below 1000 on the Fall SRI reading test. This means they will struggle with reading in all disciplines. Except for one year ('02-'03), MEA reading results were below the state average for the past 10 years. (In '00-'01 and '05-'06, the scores were dramatically low in comparison to the state average.)
13. The current grade 9 text is a 1987 edition and does not include any online/technology-related activities.
14. We have no information on our students' graduation rates from post-secondary institutions aside from random anecdotes about which students went to school, stayed, or left. The numbers of students who do not actually matriculate and/or do not stay in school is of concern. (Please see NYT article on factors affecting students' academic performance.)
15. 27% of our female students and 14.4% of our male students are enrolled in Honors/Advanced Placement English classes. Honor Roll: Grade 9: 74% female and 26% male; Grade 10: 50% female and 50% male; Grade 11 61% female and 49% male; Grade 12 57% female and 43% male. However, SAT scores reveal a gender difference in favor of male performance over all but one of the last five years.