

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS (ELA) MEETING MINUTES

*JANUARY 20, 2005*

**Members Present:** Vincent Nugent, Jodi Dooley, Donna Woodward, Nancy Erlanger, Clare Dwyer, Shannon Denise

Below you will find the minutes from our meeting held on January 20, 2005 . After discussing general issues related to the K-12 English Language Arts Curriculum the group decided to articulate an overview of the K-12 instructional program in ELA. What follows is a synopsis of our discussion.

I have included for your consideration the recommendations of the Middle School English Language Arts committee that has been working on improving middle school language arts achievement.

## **Kindergarten:**

Instruction is aligned with district curriculum. Teachers employ a variety of strategies that teach the alphabet, phonological awareness, and phonemic awareness. Reading comprehension is taught by listening to stories, story sequencing activities, oral processing of story details etc. Students are assessed pre-kindergarten by using a test called the DABRON. Student progress is monitored by quarterly assessments thereafter. After the October screening eligible students receive STIR. ELL students receive both STIR and ELL if they need it.

## **First Grade:**

All teachers use the Houghton –Mifflin reading program. Program is consistently used. Guided flexible reading groups are established based upon student need. Frequent monitoring of student progress is done using the H-M program assessment and the STIR quarterly assessments. Remediation is provided through STIR, ELL and Speech and Language. Quarterly assessments include running records and sight words. Some teachers use the N.Y.S. Early Literacy Profile to assess students. Spelling emphasizes phonetic patterns and students learn a core list of sight words. Students are taught writing through daily journals, topical writing assignments, and writer’s workshop.

## **Second Grade:**

Two of the four second grade teachers use the Houghton-Mifflin program. The teachers who do not use the program use trade books and develop literature based units. STIR and ELL continue. Assessments are done quarterly and information is used to plan for students. Spelling is taught through a phonics based approach developed by this grade level. Writing is taught by using the Writing Process approach.

## **Third Grade:**

All third grade teachers use the Houghton-Mifflin program. But it is not clear exactly what materials are utilized in the program. Teachers use the end-of-unit tests from the Houghton-Mifflin program. The Gates-McGinnitie group reading test is given in the fall and results are used for placement purposes. Spelling is taught using the Houghton-Mifflin program. Writing is taught by using the Language Source book.

## **Fourth Grade:**

Three of the five fourth grades are using the Houghton-Mifflin program. The two who do not use the program use trade books and literature based units. Assessment is unclear. Spelling is taught in two sections using the Houghton-Mifflin program. Not clear what other teachers use. Not clear what program is used to teach writing. New York State ELA assessment is given February.

## **Fifth Grade:**

All teachers use trade books to provide literature based instruction. Spelling is taught through trade books and Orton-Gillingham phonics patterns. Writing instruction occurs in conjunction with literature. Expository writing is

emphasized.

**Note: while discussing the ELA program K-5 several important points were made:**

1. Those teachers who are using the Houghton-Mifflin program are not uniform in implementation of the program. Generally, each teacher selects those materials from their particular grade level they deem appropriate.
2. Teachers who use the trade books do not all use the same books or teach a standardized set of skills. Rather each teacher exercises autonomy in selecting materials and skills to be focused upon.
3. It was suggested that a skill check list be generated for each grade level so that teachers would know what reading writing skills they are to teach to what levels of mastery.
4. Each grade level should have a Reading Report Card that is separate and distinct from the regular report card.
5. The district should consider establishing a Reading Recovery program.
6. Remedial Reading is provided to those students in need in Grades 2-5 through a program entitled Multi-Sensory Reading. It is for those students who lack decoding skills and generally services 4-6 students per grade level. This program is taught in lieu of the regular reading program.
7. Donna Woodward Provides Reading and Writing instruction in grades 3-5 as a pull out program.
8. Special Education students in grades 3-5 receive services in a range of settings varying from full inclusion to pull out. The program is flexible depending upon the needs of the students.

**Sixth Grade:**

Sixth grade students are scheduled to receive five forty minute classes of writing instruction per week and five forty two minute classes of reading instruction. This equals eighty four minutes of English Language Arts Instruction per day. In addition, eligible students receive remedial reading in a pull out or inclusion model depending upon need. Students who scored below the 35% mark on the Terra Nova receive AIS reading/writing. This is generally taught by their primary teacher in addition to their regular class.

**Due to time constraints we were not able to finish outlining the ELA for the MS and HS. It is our intention to complete this analysis at the upcoming Superintendent's Conference Day.**

**Please take a few minutes to carefully read the description of the program outlined here and forward any suggestions for improvement me ASAP.**

**Middle School Language Arts Committee Recommendations:**

1. Training offered to Special Education teachers 6-8 and other teachers to participate/be certified in an extensive reading program.
2. Time to pool best practices in reading and time to develop/implement lessons
3. Additional intensive reading class. One period per day for identified students 6-8 that is not in resource room.
4. Vertical ELA team examine K-11 reading experience focusing upon uniformity/integrity of first teaching in reading. With time on task that is not interrupted.
5. Encourage content area teachers to continue literacy instruction.
6. When hiring new faculty for Social Studies grade six require that literacy instruction be included in the content area.
7. At the elementary level more experience with listening and non-fiction literature.
8. For identified 6<sup>th</sup> graders offer 10 weeks intensive reading recovery instead of foreign language. If necessary in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade instead of foreign language.
9. Hire a teacher's assistant to free up teachers to teach reading.
10. Summer school offered to students for six weeks in reading/writing.