

English Language Arts

Program Review

Sharon Public Schools

Phase I Report

June 2010

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The English Language Arts Program Review Committee Members¹

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¹ Timothy Farmer, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, was also present at several Program Review Meetings.

1. Introduction

1.1 DISTRICT MISSION²

The Sharon Public Schools, in partnership with the community, has as its mission the responsibility to prepare students to live in a rapidly changing society. Together, we will provide an environment that maximizes a student's academic, artistic, social, emotional, and physical development. This atmosphere will encourage each individual to develop the skills and sensitivity for living effectively and responsibly.

1.1 Philosophy of Beliefs

1. All people can learn and succeed, but in different ways and at different rates.
2. Education is the shared responsibility of parents, educators and community.
3. Individuals are responsible for their own actions.
4. Learning is a life-long growth and change process.
5. Results are directly related to expectations.
6. Diversity of culture and beliefs enriches and strengthens our community.
7. Developing proficient readers and writers require support. This support can best come through carefully designed reading and writing instruction oriented toward acquiring new strategies and skills.
8. Teaching well is a lifetime process, and lifetime professional development is the key to successful practice.

1.2 PROCESS FOR THE SELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee members submitted a written statement to the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent to express interest in serving on the ELA Program Review Committee. Staff was culled from the Children's Center and the five schools in the district in order to provide a diverse membership that was knowledgeable about multiple facets of the ELA program. The committee also included two building administrators and the district's two ELA curriculum coordinators.

² District Mission adopted October 3rd, 1990

1.3 ELA PROGRAM REVIEW MEETINGS

The committee first convened in November of 2009 to strategize how to best initiate the review process for the year. At the request of the Assistant Superintendent, the group began the process by studying an array of articles that highlight ELA best practices.

The committee continued meeting in subgroups to develop questions for teacher, parent, and student surveys ó the aim of the surveys was to produce feedback that the committee could consider in making programmatic recommendations and commendations for the following academic year(s).

The committee met in whole and subgroups on a monthly basis from November through February to discuss survey results. Committee members were charged at this time with several other key tasks:

- Analyzing how the district's ELA Learning Standards align with the Massachusetts State Frameworks.
- Completing an inventory of programs and resources utilized by ELA instructors throughout the district.

The final spring meetings were used to organize the data and materials in a coherent fashion for their presentation in this Phase I Report.

Whole group committee meetings were held on the following dates: 10/19, 11/5, 11/19, 1/7, 2/9, 3/25, 4/6, and 4/29. Subgroup meetings were held informally over the course of the academic year.

1.4 TARGET GOALS OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW

This committee is charged with reviewing the existing Sharon Public Schools' English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum, as well as examining the resources and materials utilized to implement ELA instruction in the district. The committee will produce a report for the School Committee and the Superintendent summarizing the existing program, identifying commendable activities/programs currently in place, and offering recommendations looking toward the future. These goals are specifically itemized in the following manner:

- To review current literature and best practices in the ELA content area.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum.
- To evaluate the relevance and alignment of the curriculum and the Sharon Learning Standards.

- To evaluate the currency and relevance of textbooks and teaching resources.
- To evaluate immediate professional development (PD) needs.
- To evaluate formative and summative assessment data.
- To recommend programmatic next steps relative to supplemental programs, PD, program philosophy, and vertical/horizontal grade level alignment.

2. Background of the ELA Program

2.1 HISTORY OF CURRICULAR PROGRAMS UTILIZED BY THE DISTRICT

Primary Grades

District specific ELA learning standards that identify thematic understandings, essential questions, and salient skills and concepts students need to master have been developed for each grade level. The district, to help realize the goals of these standards, utilizes a range of curricular programs.

Reading/Literacy

At the start of the school year, data from reading assessments (culled from the MCAS and Developmental Reading Assessment, DRA) are reviewed and additional reading assessments are then administered as necessary to provide expansive information about the ability of students to read and comprehend.

Students in grades K-3 are assessed using different tools and techniques: phonemic awareness activities, sight word recognition, dictation, letter/sound recognition and DRA. Members of the Literacy Team (reading specialists) from each building assist in administering assessments and in analyzing the results. In grades 4-5, students are also assessed in a number of specific and informal ways: through the use of Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI), reading conferences, observations, and common reading responses.

In terms of the resources employed to facilitate the learning of young readers, K-2 instructors use the Houghton Mifflin Literacy Program. For the 2010-11 year, FUNdations will be utilized in grades K-2 to support students' work with phonics, spelling and handwriting. In K-3, *Month by Month Phonics* by Patricia Cunningham is tapped as a prime resource for word study and spelling skill development; in grades 4 and

5, *Spelling Sourcebook* by Rebecca Sitton is used along with lessons drawn from the "Nifty, Thrifty, Fifty" sections of *Month-by-Month for Upper Grades*.

In all primary grades, the reading program includes the use of trade books, both fiction and non-fiction, and short article selections (e.g. *National Geographic, Comprehension Toolkit*) for students to survey. The *Making Meaning Program* (for grades K-5) is used to complement the district's focus on strategy instruction for comprehension; the resource includes specific titles for read-alouds for direct teaching. The *Comprehension Toolkit* is also used for modeling and practicing strategies for reading non-fiction in grades 1-5.

The library collection includes professional resources that offer helpful ideas for developing literacy. The district's book collections, with class sets of books as well as mini-sets, allow for a flexible approach to reading instruction, including whole class, book clubs/literature circles, and guided reading groups.

Writing

The Sharon Learning Standards indicate grade level expectations that include different genres designated at grade level (Note: The Sharon Public School English Language Arts Writing Standards K-12 outlines the types of writing that are expected at each grade level.). The six traits of effective writing— idea development, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions— serve in the primary grades as a framework for helping students learn and apply writing skills and provide a common language for discussing and evaluating writing; these attributes are gathered from the *Write Traits Classroom Kits, Grades 1-5*. These writing traits provide a common language while supporting the teaching of writing as a process.

In addition, there are a number of resources available for developing writing, such as Lucy Caulkins's *Units of Study* (K-2, 3-5), *Writers Handbooks* (including class sets of *Writers Express* in grade 5), and other resource materials (e.g. *Craft Lessons, Teaching Qualities of Writing*). Construct English, a system for enhancing writing designed by a former Sharon teacher, is introduced in grade 4 (rules 1, 2, 3) and reinforced and extended at grade 5 (rules 4 & 5). For grades 4 and 5, *A Student's Writing Handbook* has been prepared as a reference for students. The handbooks are no longer used due to new resources in the district, such as the Constructs, Writers Express and Six Traits. The *Student's Writing Handbook* was implemented district wide, but was stopped almost eight years ago.

The former Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Joy Turpie, developed instructional writing posters for students to use as writing resources. These posters were developed in 2002-2003 to provide grade level writing criteria. At one time they were posted in most classrooms. Presently, they are not used as often, specifically because the posters were overloaded with information and were not deemed as "student friendly".

Spelling

In grades 1-3, the integration of *Month by Month Phonics* and *The Spelling Sourcebooks* by Rebecca Sitton provide a source of high frequency words used in everyday writing and reading; grades 4 and 5 also base their spelling program on Sitton's *The Spelling Sourcebooks*.

Handwriting

The handwriting components of FUNdations and *Handwriting for Print*, a multi-sensory handwriting program, are used in grades K, 1 and 2. Instruction in cursive begins in grade 3, using *Hoops and Other Groups*. By mid-year, grade 3, students should cursively write with regularity.

Summer Reading

Grades 1-4 participate in a less formal summer reading program; students read books from a recommended list before the beginning of the upcoming academic year and earn prizes for books read. Students in grade 5 are assigned texts to read from the middle school. These books are meant to foster a love of reading, improve students' cultural literacy, and extend some of the curricular goals of each grade level.

Secondary Grades

The middle and high schools have adopted fewer content specific programs to impact the daily teaching of ELA skills and concepts, and have over the years relied more upon holistic best practices (differentiated instruction, a process approach to the development of writing skills, moves toward and away from interdisciplinary modes of instruction) to enhance student learning.

Reading

In grades 6-8, literacy specialists and ELA instructors employ a range of reading assessments (Qualitative Reading Inventories, or QRIs, and MCAS data) to gauge student-reading skills. This past year, grade 7 instructors used a Let's Go Learn, Inc. tool -- DORA (diagnostic online reading assessment) to add an additional stream of data to measure students' reading fluency.

Some reading specialists and grade six instructors also weave materials from Stephanie Harvey's *The Comprehension Toolkit* into their instructional reading practices. Individual teachers, at all grade levels, have employed resources from the *Making Meaning* reading comprehension program, although it has not been adopted in a formal way.

In grades 6-8, 2-4 core books are used each year to achieve several reading goals:

- To produce a common classroom text for all students to access during journal writing prompts and in-class activities.
- To provide a common resource from which instructors can teach essential literacy skills.
- To instill a love and passion for reading.

These core books are balanced selections of canonical (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Where the Red Fern Grows*) and contemporary (*Seedfolks*, *The Giver*) narratives. In addition to these selections, instructors also use several secondary-reading texts (picture books, folktales, poetry) to reinforce literacy skills. Attention has been given by the department to ensure that diverse voices are woven into the reading curriculum, and books by authors like Mildred Taylor, Gary Soto, and Sherman Alexie are used in classrooms. Continuing to use diverse and dynamic books/texts remains a goal of reading instructors. While core and secondary reading materials are aptly chosen to allow instructors to teach targeted literacy skills, they have not at this point been chosen to reflect a unified curricular theme that reaches across grade levels.

In grades 9-12, instructors utilize a range of close reading strategies to enhance student learning of these include, but are not limited to, the use of layered reading and tell-backs. Though these techniques are not culled from a formalized program, these practices are informed by the work of literary critics like Terry Eagleton and I.A. Richards. All midterms and final exams currently include passage-analysis sections, a format requiring students to closely analyze an unfamiliar reading selection.

The grade 9 core books have been chosen to reflect the unified theme of that class level: The study of archetypes (patterns of storytelling that transcend different cultures and epochs of history). These texts of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Romeo and Juliet* or *Julius Caesar* all highlight characters or plot events that reveal archetypal patterns.

The grade 10 core books have been chosen to emphasize the study of world literature, and its reading curriculum highlight novels, poetry, and plays from non-American locales (Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America). These core books may include *Macbeth*, *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, *Beowulf*, *The Good Earth*, *The Power of One*, *The Tao of Pooh*, *Candide*, *Tartuffe*, *Women of the Silk*, *The House of the Spirits*, and *Crime and Punishment*.

The grade 11 core books (both in American Studies and English III) highlight the study of American literature and may include *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Of Mice and Men*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Death of a Salesman*, *The Crucible*, *The Things They Carried*, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, *The House on Mango Street*, *Ragtime*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Our Town*, *The Bean Trees*, and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*.

The grade 12 core books place an emphasis on several themes that are investigated in English IV, AP Literature, and Humanities classes. These themes ó the impact of free will on society, the ethical responsibilities individuals have to self and society ó are reflected in these selections: *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *The Lord of the Flies*, *Frankenstein*, *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Paradise Lost*, and *The Adventures of Mark Twain*.

Grades 6-12 also participate in a formal summer reading program, one requiring students to read 1-2 books before the beginning of the upcoming academic year. These books are meant to foster a love of reading, improve students' cultural literacy, and extend some of the curricular goals of each grade level.

Writing/Grammar

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a concerted effort in grades 6-12 to teach formal grammar and usage skills. Instructors relied more expansively on texts like Warriner's *English Grammar and Composition*, *Writer's Inc.*, and *Correct Sentences* to inform students' understanding and use of English mechanics.

To complement this formalized approach to grammar instruction, a veteran ELA instructor ó Michael Murray ó developed the Constructs system, a writing platform that uses a number of punctuation rules (mainly comma usage rules) to inform the development of proper writing style (e.g. varying sentence beginnings, understanding compound and complex sentences). Originally, this system was meant to accentuate the grammar skills already being taught in a regular and expansive manner.

At the current time, however, grammar instruction has become less formalized and reliant upon central grammar texts. As a result, the Constructs system has served less as a satellite method of enhancing writing style, and has been adopted as a more consistent means of directly teaching grammar concepts. By grade 12, students must pass a usage test that measures fluency with many of the key Construct ideas.

In terms of the conveyance of writing skills, grade 6-12 instructors have drawn upon a range of resources. Both the middle and high school have adopted the writing workshop models of Nancy Atwell and Ralph Fletcher, writing practitioners who espouse the belief that students should craft compositions over multiple drafts and rely on peer and teacher feedback (delivered through conferences, peer editing, and workshops) to hone the content and mechanics of such compositions. The study of pre-writing strategies, and the use of journals, are also staples of this process approach to writing.

Some grade 6-12 instructors are versed in the focused-writing approach of Dr. John Collins and draw upon his ideas to infuse their creation of skill specific writing rubrics. During the 2008-09 academic year, grade 6-8 instructors were exposed to, and some now implement in their instruction, the resources of the *Six Traits + 1* writing system.

Please Note: As mentioned earlier in this report, in 2002-2003 Writing Standards for the district were codified, published, and distributed throughout elementary and secondary

schools. These standards ó largely distributed as classroom posters ó delineate key writing skills to be taught at each grade level. This past academic year, secondary ELA instructors completed a vertical alignment review of curriculum to help streamline and clarify curricular and instructional expectations between and across grade levels. One salient realization emerging from this review was that these standards are no longer recognized or adhered to as a guiding beacon for writing instruction. While some of the content of these standards are regularly taught to students (e.g. MLA formatted analytical papers), other fluencies have been abandoned (e.g. letter writing). This discrepancy will need to be addressed in a sustained and meaningful manner as this review process moves on to its secondary phases.

2.2 HISTORY OF PROGRAMS RECENTLY PILOTED

Over the past several years, a limited number of programs have been piloted by the ELA Department. They include the following:

- Write Traits Kit (from the *Six Traits + 1* writing system) ó One primary grade teacher originally volunteered to pilot the use of this kit. Currently, in the primary schools, many other instructors utilize the resource. Although professional development was not provided for the use of these kits, the district did purchase multiple sets approximately 5-6 years ago. It has been explained that teachers either volunteered or were selected based on interest in piloting the program. Middle school instructors were also provided with kits, and some teachers have used the rubrics from these bundles to inform their writing instructional practices. The *Six Traits* system has not, however, been adopted in any expansive way throughout the district.
- Lucy Calkins Units of Study ó One primary school teacher piloted the use of these units a few years ago. Several teachers who have expressed an interest in using this tool in their classroom are currently utilizing the resource on a limited basis.
- The FUNdations -- This program was first piloted in 2008-2009 by a group of teachers from Heights Elementary School. To bolster participation, more K-2 teachers participated in this program for the 2009-10 academic year. Fifteen to eighteen K-2 teachers are currently involved in the program.
- DORA ó Two grade 7 instructors used this online tool to gauge the reading skills of students at the onset of the 2009-10 academic year.
- Diane Hacker Guides ó Two versions of this Bedford St. Martin multi-purpose writing guide have been ordered for grade 8-12 instructors. They are to be used as a classroom resource to address a range of writing topics:
 - MLA formatting for research papers.
 - Grammar instruction ó especially those topics embedded in the Constructs system.
 - Understanding of plagiarism rules.

3. Analysis of the ELA Learning Standards

3.1 FORMAT AND HISTORY OF STANDARDS

The Sharon Public School Elementary Standards were originally created in 2001 and have been updated using the principles of the UbD curriculum model.

UbD (Understanding by Design) is a planning process divided into three separate parts. The first component involves "big picture" thinking and planning, especially as it relates to identifying state or district standards that need to be woven into the content of a program and/or department's curriculum. This stage of the process involves many of the following protocols:

- Identifying state and/or local topical learning standards.
- Identifying the "Enduring Understandings" associated with the standards; this implies the listing and targeting of the overarching content (or the "big ideas") embedded in these standards.
- Composing the "Essential Questions" being investigated within the content.
- Detailing the "Key Knowledge" students will know, do, and understand as a result of learning the content.
- Detailing "Key Skills" students will be able to identify and demonstrate as a result of learning the content.

In Stage 1 of UbD, it is critical that educators evaluate the content from more than the perspective of what they want students to know, understand, and be able to do. Educators also need to consider how the content integrates with other disciplines, how it is relevant to everyday living, and how a deep understanding of the standards will influence students' view of content and evaluate its impact on an educated mind.

During the second stage, curriculum planners design systems in which students demonstrate their understanding of curriculum content through performance tools such as products, projects, assessments, observations, and a facile use of available technologies. These assessment data should include both formative (frequent checks of understanding), as well as more summative assessment tools.³

The Sharon Public School ELA Learning Standards for the secondary grades were originally drafted during the 2001-02 academic year. Under the direction of Dr. Joy

³ Content for the overview of the characteristics of the Ubd model was paraphrased from the district's webpage: http://www.sharon.k12.ma.us/learning_standards/home%20page

Turpie (Director of Curriculum and Instruction) and Linda Kay (ELA Coordinator, grade 6-12), these standards were conceived to help codify the curricular goals of the secondary grades. One intention herein was to align content with many of the standards outlined in the State Frameworks, but to do so in a manner that still delineated the specific and original content found in district conceived lessons, units, and curricular programs. The standards were last revised and updated in 2006-07.

3.2 LINKAGE OF STANDARDS TO THE ELA MASSACHUSETTS STATE FRAMEWORKS

As referenced in the last section of this report, the district's learning standards detail grade specific curricular content. Assessing how relevantly these standards align with and reveal the ELA strands of the Massachusetts State Frameworks is one of the charges of this report. The following section chronologically catalogs by grade where significant gaps in cohesion are evidenced.

- ***Kindergarten and Grade 1:*** It was found that many of the Sharon Standards are comparable to the Mass Frameworks, but there are a few exceptions. These include the following standards:
 - a. **Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development (4.3):** Sorting common words into conceptual categories. This is missing completely from the Sharon Standards.
 - b. **Standard 14: Poetry:** Identify a regular beat and similarities of sounds in words in responding to rhythm and rhyme in poetry. Sharon Standards speak to recognizing and generating rhyme, but not to identification of rhythm and similarities in sound.
 - c. **Standard 16: Myth, Traditional Narrative and Classical Literature (16.1) Identify familiar forms of traditional literature, (16.2) Retell or dramatize traditional literature, (16.3) Identify and predict traditional phrases in traditional literature:** These are not specifically stated in the Sharon Standards.
 - d. **Standard 19: Writing: Recite or write research questions.** While many teachers, particularly in grade 1, teach this process, it is not expressly stated in the Sharon Standards.
- ***Grade 2:*** The following State Standards are not referenced in the Grade 2 Sharon Standards:

- a. **Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.**
 - b. **Standard 5: Structure and Origins of Modern English: Students will analyze Standard English grammar and usage and recognize how its vocabulary has developed and been influenced by other languages.**
 - c. **Standard 8: Understanding a Text: Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation. For imaginative/literary texts (8.6): Make predictions about what will happen next in a story, and explain whether they were confirmed or disconfirmed and why. (8.7): Retell a story's beginning, middle, and end. (8.8) Distinguish cause from effect. For informational/expository texts: (8.9): Make predictions about the content of a text using prior knowledge and text features (headings, table of contents, key words), and explain whether they were confirmed or disconfirmed and why.** While many of these standards may be taught in Sharon classrooms, they are not specifically stated in the district's standards.
 - d. **Standard 13: Nonfiction: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purpose, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.** While this framework is not specifically stated in the standards, teachers do teach this concept.
 - e. **Standard 27: Media Production: Students will design and create coherent media productions (audio, video, television, multimedia, Internet, emerging technologies) with a clear controlling idea, adequate detail, and appropriate consideration of audience, purpose, and medium.** Standard 27 is not listed in the Sharon Standards, but it is taught through technology classes with voice thread projects.
 - f. **Standard 9: Making Connections: Students will deepen their understanding of a literacy or non-literacy work by relating it to its contemporary context or historical background.**
 - g. **Standards 15: Style and Language, 16: Myth, Traditional Narrative, and Classical Literature, 17: Dramatic Literature, 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose, and 26: Analysis of Media** are not represented in the Sharon Standards for grade 2.
- **Grade 3:** While many frameworks are taught in grade 3, there are some state standards that are missing or partially listed. They include:

- a. **Standard 4: Vocabulary & Concept Development: Identifying common antonyms and synonyms. Identifying meaning of common idioms & figurative phrases. Identifying correct mechanics, correct usage and correct sentence structure.**
 - b. **Standard 8: Understanding Text: Make judgments about setting, characters and events and support them with evidence from the text. Locate facts that answer the reader's questions. Summarize main idea & supporting details.**
 - c. **Standard 9: Making Connections: Identify different interpretations of setting, plot and characters in the same work by different illustrators.**
 - d. **Standard 13: Nonfiction: Distinguish cause from effect. Distinguish fact from opinion or fiction. Summarize main ideas and supporting details. Locate facts that answer the reader's questions.**
 - e. **Standard 19: Writing: Write a brief summary of information gathered through research. Write a brief interpretation or explanation of a literary or informational text using evidence from the text as support. These frameworks are not represented in the Sharon Standards.**
 - f. **Standard 21: Revising: Revise writing to improve level of detail after determining what could be added or deleted.**
- ***Grade 4:*** The following State Standards are not referenced in the Grade 4 Sharon Standards:
 - a. **Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing.**
 - b. **Standard 8: Understanding a Text: Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation. 8.17:**
 - ***Grade 5:*** The following State Standards are not referenced in the Grade 5 Sharon Standards:
 - a. **Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development:**
Standard 4.18 is missing. Determine the meaning of unfamiliar words using knowledge of common Greek and Latin roots, suffixes, and prefixes;
Standard 4.19 is missing: Determine pronunciations, meanings, alternative word choices, and parts of speech of words using dictionaries and thesauruses

- b. **Standard 6: Formal & Informal English: Identify differences between oral and written language patterns.** Standard 6.6 is missing.
 - c. **Standard 8: Understanding a Text: Identify and draw conclusions from the author's use of sensory details.** Sensory details are not referenced in the Sharon Standards.
 - d. **Standard 10: Genre 10.3: Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, short story, dramatic literature).** A listing of the different genres to be studied is missing in the Knowledge & Skills section of the Sharon Standards.
 - e. **Standard 13: Nonfiction: Identify and use knowledge of common textual features (title, headings, key words, captions, paragraphs, topic sentences, table of contents, index, glossary).** The identification and application of *Common textual features* or *common graphic features* are not expressed in the Sharon Standards.
 - f. The following frameworks, in their entirety, are missing from the Sharon Standards: **Standard 16: Myth, Traditional Narrative and Classical Literature; Standard 17: Dramatic Literature; Standard 21: Revising; Standard 26: Analysis of Media; Standard 27: Media Production**
- ***Grade 6:*** In grade 6, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's Standards. These include: **Standard 17: Understanding and analysis of dramatic literature; Standard 18: Performance of dramatic readings and recitation that shows consideration of audience and purpose.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 6 classrooms:
 - a. **Standard 26: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions and elements of film, radio, multimedia, and emerging technologies to support their understanding.**
 - b. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**
 - ***Grade 7:*** In grade 7, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's

Standards. These include: **Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development; Standard 9.5: Relating literary works to artifacts and historical sites; Standard 11: Theme; Standard 13: Nonfiction; Standard 15.6: Identify how an author’s use of words creates tone and mood.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 7 classrooms:

- a. **Standard 5.22: Describe origins and meanings of foreign words.**
 - b. **Standards (for informational/expository texts) 8.26: Recognizing organizational structures and uses of arguments for and against an issue; 8.27: Identify evidence used to support an argument; 8.28: Distinguish between the concepts of theme in a literary work and the author’s purpose in a text.**
 - c. **Standard 16: Myth, Traditional Narrative, and Classical Literature.**
 - d. **Standard 23.9: Integrate the use of organizing techniques that break up the order in a story.**
 - e. **Standard 26.4: Analysis of media.**
- ***Grade 8:*** In grade 8, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district’s Standards. These include: **Standard 1: Students will agree upon rules for informal and formal discussions; Standard 14: Students will identify and analyze the themes and structures of poetry to support their understanding; Standard 16: Students will apply knowledge of the themes of myths and classical literature to support their understanding; Standard 23: Students will organize their writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 8 classrooms:
 - a. **Standard 25: Students will use appropriate rhetorical and stylistic criteria for assessing their compositions or research projects.**
 - b. **Standard 26: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions and elements of film, radio, multimedia, and emerging technologies to support their understanding.**
 - c. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**

- **Grade 9:** In grade 9, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's Standards. These include: **Standard 1: Students will agree upon rules for informal and formal discussions; Standard 4: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly; Standard 5: Students will analyze standard English grammar and recognize how its vocabulary has been developed and influenced; and Standard 10: Students will identify and analyze the characteristics of different genres.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 9 classrooms:

 - a. **Standard 13: Students will identify and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of nonfiction.**
 - b. **Standard 14: Students will identify and apply knowledge of the structure and elements of poetry.**
 - c. **Standard 25: Students will develop and use appropriate rhetorical and logical criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects.**
 - d. **Standard 26: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions and elements of film, radio, multimedia, and emerging technologies to support their understanding.**
 - e. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**

- **Grade 10:** In grade 10, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's Standards. These include: **Standard 1: Students will agree upon rules for informal and formal discussions; Standard 4: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly; and Standard 18: Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and tone.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 10 classrooms:

 - a. **Standard 5.29: Describe the origins of and meanings of common words and foreign phrases used frequently in English.**

- b. **Standard 10: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.**
 - c. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**
- ***Grade 11:*** In grade 11, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's Standards. These include: **Standard 1: Students will agree upon rules for informal and formal discussions; Standard 2: Students will pose questions, listen to the idea of others, and contribute their own ideas in group discussions; Standard 4: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly; and Standard 18: Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and tone.** The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 11 classrooms:
 - a. **Standard 7: Students will understand the nature of written English and the relationship of letters and spelling to the sounds of speech.**
 - b. **Standard 10: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the characteristics of different genres.**
 - c. **Standard 13: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction.**
 - d. **Standard 16: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of myths and classical literature to support their understanding.**
 - e. **Standard 26: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions and elements of film, radio, multimedia, and emerging technologies to support their understanding.**
 - f. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**
- ***Grade 12:*** In grade 12, many of the strands of the Massachusetts Standards are commonly taught, although they are not directly codified in the district's Standards. These include: **Standard 1: Students will agree upon rules for informal and formal discussions; Standard 2: Students will pose**

questions, listen to the idea of others, and contribute their own ideas in group discussions; Standard 4: Students will understand and acquire new vocabulary and use it correctly; Standard 16: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes and elements of myths and classical literature to support their understanding; Standard 18: Students will plan and present dramatic readings, recitations, and performances that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and tone; Standard 20: Students will write for different purposes/audiences. The following standards are not referenced in the Sharon Standards or uniformly taught in grade 12 classrooms:

- a. **Standard 3: Students will make oral presentations that demonstrate appropriate consideration of audience and purpose.**
- b. **Standard 25: Students will develop and use appropriate rhetorical and logical criteria for assessing final versions of their compositions or research projects.**
- c. **Standard 26: Students will identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the conventions and techniques of film, radio, multimedia, and emerging technologies to support their understanding.**
- d. **Standard 27: Students will design and create coherent media productions.**

* * *

The graph on page 22 provides a visual overview of where state standards align, or do not align, with the district's standards. A check mark indicates a spot where a gap exists, whereas a non-marked space illustrates a link that *does* exist between the two documents. The top horizontal plane simply references grade levels across the district (1-12); the vertical plane lists the state's ELA content strands.

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Vocabulary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Poetry	✓							✓				
Mythology	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
Writing / Research	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓			
Origins of Modern English		✓			✓							
Understanding of Text (Predictions) (Retell)		✓	✓	✓	✓							
Nonfiction		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓	
Media Production (Analysis of)		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Style and Language		✓										
Dramatic Literature		✓				✓						
Audience / Purpose (Tone / Mood)		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Making Connections			✓									
Writing / Revision			✓	✓								✓
Genre			✓	✓								✓
Traditional Narrative and Classical Literature					✓		✓	✓				
Theme							✓				✓	✓
Foreign Words							✓			✓		
Organizing Techniques that Break Up Order in a Story							✓					
Informal / Formal Discussions								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oral Presentations												✓

3.3 Connection of ELA Standards to 21st Century Skills

21st Century Learning Skills target an array of essential scholastic arenas: learning and innovation skills, information media and technology skills, and life/career skills. The mastery of these areas ó as articulated in the 21st Century Skills Standards⁴ ó enables students to make interdisciplinary connections, emphasize deep understanding rather than shallow knowledge, gain fluency with real world data and tools, and engage with the caliber of experts they will encounter beyond high school.

This section assesses where the Sharon Learning Standards currently complement the themes highlighted by 21st Century Learning Skills. The themes are outlined first and then accompanied by aligned segments from the district's standards.

21st Century Interdisciplinary Themes:

- Global Awareness (specific goals listed below)
 - Using 21st century skills to understand and address global issues
 - Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts
 - Understanding other nations and cultures, including the use of non-English languages

The Sharon Standards align with these goals in the following places:

From K-5 Standards:

- Reading expands and enhances understanding of oneself and the world.
 - ❖ Students will recognize cultural similarities and differences through exposure to multicultural texts.
 - ❖ Students will exchange ideas and personal experiences.
- Students will understand speaker & point of view.
 - ❖ Oral discussion enhances their ability as readers, writers, and oral communicators.
 - ❖ Students will participate in informative, focused oral discussions

⁴ Full composition of standards can be found at www.vtsbdc.org/21st_century_skills_standards.

- Students will participate in good oral discussion.
 - ❖ Students will understand and follow the rules (listen attentively and respectfully).
 - ❖ Students will exchange ideas and personal experiences.
 - ❖ Students will display confidence in oral expression.
 - ❖ Students will stretch ideas (brainstorm, collaborate, and question).
- Students will deliver a formal oral presentation.
 - ❖ Students will show evidence of planning/rehearsing, organizing, and integrating information.
 - ❖ Students will establish rapport with the audience through eye contact, posture, projection of voice and expression.

From 6-12 Standards:

- Students [will] participate in various types of discussions showing evidence of the following behaviors: 1) making personal connections 2) making connections to other pieces of literature 3) making connections with the world around them. (Grade 6)
- Literature deepens their [students] understanding of themselves and the world. (Grade 6)
- As readers, oral discussions enhance their [students] awareness of self and the world. (Grade 8)
- Students will understand that the study of six major archetypes is a tool to look at the world and to look at literature. (Grade 9)
- Students will understand that writers and artists use archetypes as a short hand approach to connect to the collective unconscious of humanity. (Grade 9)
- Students will understand that the -loss of innocenceøarchetype is universal. (Grade 9)
- Students will understand that patterns in the natural world are analogous to patterns in human life. (Grade 9)
- Students will understand through the study of certain literary characters the differences between immature and mature forms of interpersonal relationships within a variety of cultures. (Grade 10)
- Students will understand that one of the great themes of world literature is a quest. (Grade 10)

The listed standards come closest to embodying the focus of Global Awareness. There is no content codified in these standards, however, that were specifically drawn to reveal the premises of 21st Century Skills.

The following 21st Century Interdisciplinary Themes are *not* meaningfully present in any

of the K-12 ELA Standards but may be included in other content area standards.

- Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy:
 - Knowing how to make appropriate personal economic choices
 - Understanding the role of the economy in society
 - Using entrepreneurial skills to enhance workplace productivity and career options

- Civic Literacy:
 - Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes
 - Exercising the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national and global levels
 - Understanding the local and global implications of civic decisions

- Health Literacy:
 - Obtaining, interpreting and understanding basic health information and services and using such information and services in ways that are health enhancing
 - Understanding preventive physical and mental health measures, including proper diet, nutrition, exercise, risk avoidance and stress reduction
 - Using available information to make appropriate health-related decisions
 - Establishing and monitoring personal and family health goals
 - Understanding national and international public health and safety issues

- Environmental Literacy
 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the environment and the circumstances and conditions affecting it, particularly as relates to air, climate, land, food, energy, water and ecosystems
 - Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of society's impact on the natural world (e.g., population growth, population development, resource consumption rate, etc.)
 - Investigate and analyze environmental issues, and make accurate conclusions about effective solutions
 - Take individual and collective action towards addressing environmental challenges (e.g., participating in global actions, designing solutions that inspire action on environmental issues)

4. Survey and Research Methodologies

4.1 Analysis of Survey Data from Faculty, Students, and Parents.

The ELA Program Committee employed three surveys as a primary tool to assess the strengths and needs of its curricular program. The surveys targeted select audiences -- faculty, students, and parents. -- and proffered a range of question topics (e.g. the efficacy of ELA teachers' instructional practices; the strengths and weaknesses of the district's ELA texts and books; the alignment of curricular goals across grade levels).

In addition to these surveys, a number of grade 5 students participated in focus groups that allowed them to voice their opinions about their ELA experiences. [Data samples are listed and divided below]

Group and Data Collection Method	Comments
<i>Online Survey</i>	
Teachers (n = 97)	PreK-12
Parents (n = 308)	PreK-12
Middle/High School Students (n = 377)	Grades 6-12
<i>Focus Groups</i>	18 Grade 5 students were selected to participate in the focus groups.
K-12 Principals	1 building administrator

Salient Issues Arising from the Survey Results/Data:

1. Primary grade teachers use a variety of techniques to assess student reading comprehension. Written responses, student observations during guided reading, and conferences with readers are powerful sources of information. While teachers view the district assessments as effective, no single form of assessment seems to emerge as a significant indicator of student progress. Some of the assessments are used more routinely at specific grade levels (e.g. DRA), so it is hard to tease out the strengths and weaknesses of the different assessment tools. Reading at grades 4 and 5 has no consistent assessment tool.

2. There is a strong investment in teaching reading comprehension strategies, and teachers draw from many resources for their understanding of reading instruction. Response to Reading is the most commonly used technique among teachers (89%), and was rated by instructors as being the most effective tool.
3. A majority of primary grade teachers (92%) feel that having students maintain a writing journal is a successful way to monitor student progress with writing. MCAS data on writing was cited as the least helpful tool. Teachers felt more favorable about the strategies used in Sharon to track student progress in writing as compared with the tools utilized in the district to track student progress in reading. Many writing resources are used throughout the district, including Lucy Calkins Units of Study, Ralph Fletcher and Nancy Atwell workshop models, and 6 Traits.
4. Time for classroom teachers and literacy specialists to collaborate is limited. Teachers use the expertise and support of the literacy specialists in helping to address student needs through both pullout and inclusion models.
5. Stephanie Harvey's Comprehension Toolkit is used widely across the district.
6. Teachers expressed a desire for more professional development in writers workshop, guided reading, Foundations and 21st Century Skills.
7. Primary instructors viewed spelling as an area of significant need. Other areas that should be examined include word work, grammar, and mechanics. Clearer articulation of the curriculum and the resources to support these areas are needed. Primary instructors felt that spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and grammar needed the most improvement in the ELA curriculum, but those same teachers felt that their students struggle the most with topic development and organization. Secondary instructors echoed the sentiment that more clarity is needed for the teaching of grammar and usage skills.
8. It appears there is a lack of consistency in literacy instruction across the district. As part of this review process, the forging of a more consistent philosophy of literacy instruction -- one that is clearly and often articulated -- should become a goal. Curriculum maps would be helpful to clarify key knowledge, skills, resources and assessments at each grade level.
9. While in the secondary grades a high volume of analytical essays and writing projects are assigned, more forms of creative and expository writing could be woven into the curriculum (e.g. less than 50% instructors report teaching cause and effect, process or definition essays).
10. While secondary instructors teach a wide range of writing skills, less than half of the survey respondents conveyed that they commonly use writing workshops as a method to impact student writing.

11. A majority of secondary instructors (93%) are clear about the themes and content they need to impart to students about the books/texts that they teach; a smaller majority (62%) of teachers are clear about which grammar and usage skills they need to impart to students.

12. While a majority of secondary teachers (68%) feel that the ELA curriculum essentially aligns from one grade to the next, only 7% feel that it is well-aligned. This signals that continued alignment of curriculum across grades should remain a district goal.

13. A majority of secondary students (58%) feel they receive useful written feedback from teachers and are provided with ample opportunities to revise their compositions. Amplifying this percentage should become a goal for the additional phases of the review process.

14. A majority of secondary students (91%) report that their ELA assignments are relatively or extremely challenging.

Areas for Further Exploration:

1. Assessment

- a) There is a lack of formative/summative reading assessment tools in grades 4 and 5. More attention should be given to finding more favorable and valid reading assessment tools.
- b) More alignment of reading assessments is needed between the upper elementary grades and the middle school.
- c) The lack of consistent and effective monthly writing prompts causes a disjointed use in how prompts are administered, scored and analyzed [for the primary grades]. There needs to be a protocol for administering and analyzing prompts without bias.
- d) During the 2009-10 academic year, middle and high school instructors administered an open writing response formative assessment to gauge student progress with MCAS-style readings and questions. These assessments should be conducted with more frequency and be expanded to address other ELA fluencies (e.g. long compositions).

2. Curriculum

- a) There is a need at each grade level for a cohesive curriculum literacy map or template that will clarify for students and teachers the key areas of knowledge, skills, resources and assessments that comprise the district's ELA curriculum; this content could be embedded in the existing ELA Learning Standards.

- b) On average, teachers reported students are reading independently less than 20 minutes during school each day. There is a need to examine aspects of the curriculum to investigate possibilities to expand this time.
- c) The Sharon Standards need to be updated and aligned to the new Common Core Standards and the 21st Century Standards.
- d) The Sharon Standards need to more expansively contain specific skill sets for students to acquire, as opposed to solely articulating thematic topics and essential questions.
- e) Sharon has a wide variety of resources to implement the reading and writing curriculum, but the survey indicated teachers desire more streamlining of the curriculum and its resources to align across the district.
- f) Spelling curriculum needs evaluation in the upper elementary grades.
- g) Grade 5 students from the focus group felt that not enough time was spent on creative writing due to time spent on MCAS prep.
- h) The grade 5 students also felt the monthly writing prompts were hard to connect with, often making the writing process difficult.
- i) Writing curriculum, in the secondary grades, needs to reflect a wider range of genre and content (analytical, creative, and expository assignments).
- j) Continuing to diversify the book and textual selections of the ELA program, to reflect the varied number of American and international voices, should remain a goal of the district.

3. Best Practices

- a) Only 10% of teachers use common planning time to collaborate with reading specialists. Our reading specialists are highly talented, reliable resources that seem to be underutilized. The option of inserting Intervention Blocks into the school schedule will allow more time for collaboration between reading specialist and classroom teachers.
- b) Our literacy philosophy needs more clarity before the program begins making curricular changes.
- c) Secondary ELA instructors need to continue using the collaboration time built into their building schedules to foster department collegiality and creativity.

4. Professional Development

- a) More PD training is needed to create a more balanced literacy program.
- b) Additional PD training in Foundations is necessary for teachers in grades K-2.
- c) Writing PD is needed to improve writing scores on monthly writing prompts and help students master the principles of the writing process.
- d) Teachers requested additional training in Readers and Writers Workshop, as well as 21st Century Skills.

- e) There is a strong desire for follow-up PD for district or building-based initiatives (e.g. more modeling in class, or Collaborative Coaching and Learning -- CCLø).
- f) Additional training in technology is needed in select areas: interactive board usage, teacher web sites, and multimedia.

5. Instructional Materials and Resources

- a) The quantity of materials and teaching practices vary from school to school.
- b) There is an abundance of materials throughout the district, but there seems to be inequity among the training and amount of resources for each school. Sharon Public Schools uses a variety of materials and resources, but it is unclear as to why, for such a small district, there is not more uniformity among the schools.

4.2 Review of Supplementary Programs & Documents Used to Support the ELA Curriculum

1. **FUNdations:** This program is a phonemic awareness, spelling, and phonics resource for K-2 classrooms; the program is based on the Wilson Reading System.
2. **Comprehension Toolkit:** This program, designed by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis, offers instructional resources that help improve reading, writing, and speaking skills ó especially in relation to understanding informational and nonfiction texts. The Toolkit is used in the elementary and middle schools.
3. **Units of Study:** Lucy Calkinsø program offers an array of resources for the teaching of writing ó from organizing conferences with students to learning how to storyboard. These Units of Study are used in some of the elementary classrooms.
4. **Write Traits:** The Six +1 Traits Writing Program provides writing resources for both elementary and secondary classrooms. A key component of the program is to teach composition skills that highlight six essential traits ó word choice, voice, ideas, sentence fluency, conventions, and organization. The program is used in some elementary and middle school classrooms.
5. **Developmental Reading Assessment:** The Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) is a reading assessment used to gauge reading performance in Grades K-3 and Grades 4-8.

6. **Qualitative Reading Inventory:** This collection of narrative and expository reading resources is also used to assess reading ability. The Inventory is used in the elementary and middle schools.
7. **Making Meaning:** This reading program employs nine different reading strategies to bolster comprehension skills. Some of these lessons are used in the elementary and middle schools.
8. **Study Island:** This online resource has been sporadically used as an MCAS support tool in a few high school classrooms.
9. **Nancy Atwell & Ralph Fletcher:** While the work of these educational writing practitioners do not comprise a formal program; their ideas about the organization of a writing workshop have been used in the middle and high school.
10. **Construct English:** This district writing and usage system provides nine essential rules for students to follow in order to improve writing style. Construct English is primarily utilized in the middle and high school.
11. **Sadlier-Oxford:** This vocabulary series is used in grades 9-11 to bolster SAT skills.
12. **Write Source:** Writers Inc.: This Houghton-Mifflin educational series offers a range of writing materials and lessons for use in primarily high school grades. The series is used in some ELA classrooms.
13. **SHS Program of Study:** The High School's Programs of Study highlights course offerings and salient information about the curricular and instructional practices of each academic department. While much of the content mirrors the district's learning standards, some of the information outlines specific details that are not found in the standards (e.g. a wider selection of the books assigned by grade level are published in this document).
14. **Writing Benchmarks and Standards:** This document conveys the writing goals for each grade level across the district. While the document has served as a curricular resource for some teachers, the current program review has highlighted that much of the content of this document does not align with the district's learning standards.

1. Lisa Alves, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
2. Andrea Starr M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
3. Christie Gill, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
4. Diana Kelly, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
5. Lisa Fireman, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
6. Amy Gallagher, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
7. Leslie Shapiro, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
8. Heather Cunningham, M.S.ED. in Reading ó Reading Specialist
9. Carol Lewenberg, M.S. ED in Reading ó Reading Specialist
10. John Arno, B.A. in English (with certification in reading)

4.4 Review of Instructional Resources

The following content for this section details the elementary, middle and high school resources (e.g. books) that have been employed as classroom resources along with the Houghton Mifflin series. These selections are not necessarily part of a larger curricular program (like those detailed in section 4.2), but instead are simply the anchor texts and books that comprise the units of the ELA Curriculum.⁵

- *Grade 1:* First grade students read *The Little Red Hen* by Byron Barton and *Fishy Facts* by Ivan Chermayeff.
- *Grade 2:* Second grade students read *Wagon Wheel* by Barbara Brenner and *The One in the Middle is a Green Kangaroo* by Judy Bloom.
- *Grade 3:* Third grade students read *The Chocolate Touch* by Patrick Skene-Catling and *Summer Wheels* by Eve Bunting.
- *Grade 4:* Fourth grade students read *Because of Winn Dixie* by Kate Dicamillo and *Sarah Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan.

⁵ In addition to the core books listed in section 4.4, instructors also draw upon supplementary materials and/or books to develop the ELA curriculum; these materials are detailed in the Sharon Learning Standards and the S.H.S Program of Studies.

- *Grade 5:* Fifth graders read *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson and *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli.
- *Grade 6:* Anchor/Core books include *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor and *The Giver* by Lois Lowry.
- *Grade 7:* Anchor/Core books include *Among the Hidden* by Margaret Haddix, *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls, *Nothing But the Truth* by Avi, *The Shakespeare Stealer* by Gary Blackwood, and selections from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*.
- *Grade 8:* Anchor/Core books include Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *A Soldier's Heart* by Gary Paulsen, and *Seedfolks* by Paul Fleischman.
- *Grade 9:* Anchor/Core books include Shakespeare's *Romeo & Juliet* or *Julius Caesar*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee, *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry. and *Man the Myth Maker*.
- *Grade 10:* Anchor/Core books include Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and/or *Antigone*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, and *Beowulf*.
- *Grade 11:* Anchor/Core books for English III include *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller, *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien, *The Great Gatsby* by F.Scott Fitzgerald, and *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Anchor/Core books for American Studies include *The Great Gatsby*, *The Things They Carried*, *The Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara, *Ragtime* by E.L. Doctorow, and *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut.
- *Grade 12:* Anchor/Core books for English IV, Humanities, and AP Literature include Shakespeare's *Othello* or *Hamlet*, *The Bluest Eye* or *Beloved* by Toni Morrison, *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley.

5. Summary

5.1 Commendations and Recommendations

ELA Teachers

Commendations:

- ❖ Highly- qualified teachers and reading specialists are present in every grade level.

- ❖ Teacher certified Instructional Assistants are present in many classrooms.

Recommendations:

- ❖ Teachers require more exposure and training in new research models (UbD, Differentiated Instruction, Writers Workshop and Foundations)
- ❖ Teachers and administrators need to find ways of articulating and codifying clear ELA instructional philosophies that are pertinent to the different buildings and grade levels across the district.

ELA Curriculum

Commendations:

- ❖ The ELA curriculum emphasizes and promotes critical and creative thinking.
- ❖ The ELA program creates opportunities to integrate other content areas into the curriculum.
- ❖ The ELA curriculum encourages teacher creativity and flexibility.
- ❖ Specific curriculum units afford students the opportunity to apply their learning to the community around them (e.g. -Ordinary Heroes Project), or to mentor younger pupils (e.g. -Children's Book Project).
- ❖ There is a concerted effort to include diverse texts and authors in the ELA curriculum.

Recommendations:

- ❖ The ELA learning standards need revision and updating. The secondary grades require a clearer articulation of the skill sets that are imparted at each grade level.
- ❖ Develop a system wide curriculum for phonics, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and 21st Century Skills.
- ❖ Sharon ELA Learning Standards need more expansive alignment with 21st Century Standards. At the present time we are aligned in one area, Global Awareness.
- ❖ There is inequity among the writing resources available to the three elementary schools and the professional development that is provided to support these resources. These resources need to be available to all three elementary schools.
- ❖ The use of Construct English should be given a second look as a tool for writing instruction. Some teachers have left the practice of using Constructs, and others have not had training due to turnover in staff. For ELA instructors in the secondary grades (where Constructs are used with more regularity), the continued employment of the system should be linked with the following recommendations:

1. More time should be devoted during PD meetings to training new teachers in how to best use the Constructs.
2. A clear philosophical distinction needs to be articulated by the coordinator about the Constructs: It is meant for use as a tool to enhance writing style

and improve punctuation usage ó it is *not* meant to be utilized as an overarching resource for teaching a wide array of grammar or writing concepts. Thus, examining and employing other grammar and writing resources (e.g. The Hacker Guides) that can work independently of, or in concert with, the Constructs should be a goal during the second phase of this program review. This is an essential need, not only because the method by which Constructs have been used over the years has shifted, but also because 38% of instructors indicated on the teacher survey that they are unclear about which grammar/usage skills they are required to teach. By examining new grammar/usage resources to employ in the classroom, it will be easier to identify which skills are appropriate to cover at each grade level.

3. As students rise through grade levels, grammar and usage terms require identification and referencing without being solely linked to a Construct number. This is an important recommendation since the Construct rules will not be articulated in the same numerical manner outside of the district.

- ❖ An abundance of resources and materials has led to a fractured use of resources district wide. The district needs to identify the more strategic resources for classroom use, thereby streamlining instruction across the district.
- ❖ Professional development on district initiatives, such as UbD, needs to continue. For secondary grade levels, this recommendation syncs well with the need to employ UbDs in a more expansive manner. Currently, UbDs exist for some courses (American Studies, English III), but not for other classes/grade levels. Transferring lesson and unit content into the UbD format is recommended as Phase II of the review process unfolds.
- ❖ There is a lack of a coherent philosophy for literacy instruction. A more coherent philosophy needs adoption.
- ❖ As detailed earlier in this report, core books for grades 6-8 work effectively in allowing instructors to teach ELA skills. It is necessary to spend time during team and department meetings, however, discussing how fully these books link with course themes that are explored throughout the duration of the year (or from one grade level to the next).
- ❖ The district Writing Benchmarks require reviewing and updating. As detailed in this report, these benchmarks (and the posters upon which they most commonly viewed) are not regularly referenced by instructors, nor are they designed in a manner that students could easily comprehend. As the district's learning standards are revised, so too should these benchmarks. Some content from these benchmarks contain pertinent topics for writing instruction (e.g. MLA formatting, thesis composition) ó other elements of this content require updating.
- ❖ As detailed earlier in this report, 68% of secondary teachers feel the ELA curriculum *essentially* aligns from one grade to the next. To continue improving in this regard, it is recommended that PD time be devoted at least once each quarter, to assessing how and where alignment occurs. This should provide ample

- opportunity to gauge gaps and connections in the curriculum ó areas that ultimately should be detailed during the revision process of the learning standards.
- ❖ The teacher survey indicated that a high volume of analytical essays is assigned at the secondary level. It is recommended that a balance of writing assignments (analytical, expository, and creative) be woven into the curriculum. As the district's learning standards are revised, this range should be highlighted for each grade level.

ELA Instruction

Commendations:

- ❖ Teachers group students flexibly for instruction to meet individual student needs.
- ❖ Teachers provide time for a balanced literacy block, which includes guided reading/writing, independent reading/writing and shared reading/writing.
- ❖ Reading Specialists help support struggling students in the ELA curriculum.
- ❖ At the secondary grade level, time is built into the schedule for teachers to collaborate and hone their instructional practices.

Recommendations:

- ❖ As indicated in the teacher survey, additional professional development is needed in the areas of Readers Workshop (47%), Writers Workshop (49%), Foundations (33%) and 21st Century Skills (35%). Collaborative Coaching and Learning cycles are planned for all three elementary buildings. At the secondary grade level, and as noted earlier in this report, less than half of teacher survey respondents indicated that they employ writing workshop principles as a means of impacting and improving student writing. While a majority of students (58%) indicated they receive useful feedback from teachers on their writing assignments, this is certainly a percentage that can be augmented. Writing workshops will help in this regard; hence, devoting time during PD meetings for this topic is necessary.
- ❖ The teacher survey indicated 30% of teachers are spending more than 15 minutes on mini lessons. We need to familiarize ourselves with the Workshop model adhering to mini lesson, practice, share and conference.
- ❖ Reading Specialists and classroom teachers need time to collaborate and provide instruction in the classroom.
- ❖ It is necessary to address the weaknesses in spelling, vocabulary, mechanics and grammar in the primary grades.
- ❖ Broaden the use of current research based best practices, and district initiatives at the elementary level district wide.

ELA Assessment

Commendations:

- ❖ Monthly writing prompts are administered in grades 1-5 and two samples of writing are collected from Kindergarten students per year.
- ❖ Developmental Reading Assessment, (DRA) is administered twice a year in grades 1-5, and once a year in Kindergarten.
- ❖ At the secondary grade level, the collaboration time built into the schedule allows instructors to design and refine common assessments.
- ❖ Grades 6, 7, 8, and 10 have begun the process of administering unified formative assessments for MCAS-styled open and long writing responses.

Recommendations:

- ❖ New or current research on reading assessments needs to be revisited for K-5.
- ❖ There is a lack of district wide reading assessments for grades 4 and 5.
- ❖ A consistent method of administering and scoring of writing needs to be addressed. The writing rubrics need to be redefined and exemplars utilized by teachers to address standard writing examples also require review.
- ❖ While some common assessments exist in the secondary grades, a greater number could be folded into the curriculum.
- ❖ Kindergarten report cards need to be aligned with curriculum.
- ❖ Develop a Universal Screening and Progress Monitoring tool to test students in an age-appropriate skill and capture a benchmark skill level that will help make an informative decision over time.

ELA Resources

Commendations:

- ❖ A variety of writing and reading resources are available to teachers.
- ❖ Teachers are encouraged to implement best practices using available resources without the provision of a core program.

Recommendations:

- ❖ The ELA program needs to examine how intervention services are deployed.
- ❖ The ELA program's resources need streamlining so there is some continuity within the district K-5.
- ❖ While there are many materials available for writing instruction, a unified writing resource needs to be identified for use district-wide in grades K-5.

ELA Collaboration

Commendations:

- ❖ As mentioned, the building schedules for the secondary grades allow time for consistent and meaningful collaboration.
- ❖ Some grade level teams collaborate during planning and development periods to design lessons and share the workload.

Recommendations:

- ❖ While the aforementioned schedules have afforded teachers important opportunities to collaborate and design/refine curriculum, grade teams need to continue forging collegial relationships that will allow for sustained collaborative work.
- ❖ In addition to aligning curriculum, we need to collaborate more effectively our services, resources and professional development with special education and regular education teachers.
- ❖ Their needs to be more time allocated for communication/planning between reading specialist and classroom teacher.

6. Appendix

6.1 Survey Questions and Data

➤ English Language Arts Program Review Teacher Survey: Grades K-5

Thank you for taking time to complete the ELA Curricular Review Committee's survey. Your input is valuable to the curricular review process, and it will help to guide practice in the district for the next several years. Please respond to each question with an answer that best reflects your current practice. The survey contains XX questions and will require an estimated XX minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, please be sure to click "Submit" for your responses to be tabulated. Again, your feedback is important and the committee values the time you take to complete this survey.

1) Please answer the following question, are you a:

Grade K-2 Teacher
Grade 3-5 Teacher
Special Education Teacher
Specialist
Building Administrator
Assessment

2) Which techniques do you use to check for student understanding in reading? (Check all that apply.)

Response to reading questions
Reading response logs (including reflections)
Retellings
Reading conferences (passage reading/discussion)
Observations during guided reading groups
Other, please specify

3) Which techniques do you use to check for student progress in phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling and word recognition? (Check all that apply.)

One-to-one letter/sound assessment
Phonemic Awareness assessment
Spelling tests
Spelling dictations
Sight word list
Writing assignments
Reading conferences
Running Records
Reading groups

4) Please indicate how helpful the following are for monitoring student progress and for making informed instructional decisions.

1 Least Helpful
2 Somewhat Helpful
3 Helpful
4 Very Helpful

Monthly writing prompts
Writing benchmark prompts
Phonemic Awareness Assessment (K)
DRA's
QRI's
Running records
Writing rubric
Writing journals
Records of books read
MCAS results

The next question is only for 4th and 5th grade teachers - all others please skip to question number six (6).

5) What formative and summative assessment for 4th and 5th grade would you like to use, other than the QRI? Please respond in writing.

6) In your opinion, how effective is the district assessment process (formative and summative tools employed, strategies for making effective instructional use of data collected, impact on student growth) currently in use?

Very ineffective

Ineffective

Effective

Very effective

Interventions

7) Which method do you find most beneficial for your struggling readers and why?

Inclusion with a literacy specialist in the classroom

Pull-out with a literacy specialist

A combination of both approaches

Why, please explain.

8) Rank the following in order of how often you work with Reading Specialist and in what capacity.

1 Never

2 Rarely

3 Sometimes

4 Often

5 Daily

I work collaboratively with the Reading Specialist

I use common planning time to work collaboratively with Reading Specialist

I work collaboratively with Reading Specialist on inclusion in the Classroom Curriculum

9) Which aspects of the curriculum do you feel need improvement?

1 Needs Slight Improvement

2 Needs Moderate Improvement

3 Needs Significant Improvement

Reading

Writing
Spelling
Phonics
Word Work/Vocabulary/Structural Analysis
Grammar/Usage
Mechanics/Conventions
Implementation of 21st Century Skills (i.e. collaboration, critical thinking,
media literacy, cultural competency, global awareness)
Integration with other content areas

10) How often in your class is vocabulary instruction embedded in reading and writing to increase students' word knowledge?

Never
Rarely
Sometimes (once or twice a month)
Often (once or twice a week)
Daily

11) During the literacy block, how much time do you allot for:

1 - 0-10 minutes
2 - 11-15 minutes
3 - 16-20 minutes
4 - 21-30 minutes
5 - 31-40 minutes
6 - 41+ minutes
Phonemic Awareness/Phonics Instruction
Spelling
Reading comprehension
Mechanics/Grammar
Word Work/Vocabulary
Read Alouds

12) Are you clear about what the expectations are for your grade level in order to teach grammar and mechanics?

Yes
No
Not Sure

13) When writing, my students struggle most with . . . (check all that apply).

Ideas/Topic Development
Organization
Word choice
Sentence fluency
Voice
Conventions

Other, please specify

14) Are you using a specific spelling program?

Yes

No

If yes, please specify

Instructional Practices

15) Throughout a typical week teaching reading in your classroom, please check the components of balanced literacy you regularly integrate into your instruction.

Independent Reading

Guided Reading

Interactive Reading (Students actively listening and responding to an oral reading of a text.)

Shared Reading (Students observe an expert reading the text with fluency and expression.)

Independent Writing

Guided Writing

Interactive Writing (Teacher and students share the writing responsibility to compose a coherent text.)

Shared Writing (Class composes a coherent text together. Teacher writes while scaffolding children's language and ideas.)

16) During typical writing block in your classroom, how much time do you spend:

1- 0-5 min

2- 6-10 min

3- 11-15 min

4- 16-20 min

5- 21 min +

Teaching the mini-lesson with the whole group

Conferring with writers

Assessing writers

Summarizing (including sharing student work)

17) During a typical reading block in your classroom, how much time do you spend:

1- 0-5 min

2- 6-10 min

3- 11-15 min

4- 16-20 min

5- 21+ min

Teaching the mini-lesson with the whole group
Conferring with readers
Assessing readers
Summarizing (including sharing student work)

18) Based on available data, I recreate guided reading groups:

Never
Rarely
Weekly
Monthly
Bi-Monthly
Every 3-4 months

19) What is your definition of Guided Reading?

20) Do you use formative assessments to create guided reading groups within your classroom; and if so, what strategies do you use to form them (check all that apply).

Yes
No

Running Records
Anecdotal notes
Teacher Observation
Classroom Discussion
Analysis of Student Work
Homework
Tests
Reflection
Questioning

21) How often do you employ reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing, determining importance, summarizing, and synthesizing?

Never
Rarely
Sometimes (once or twice a month)
Often (once or twice a week)
Daily

22) I teach writing, in a separate writing block of instruction, at least three times a week.

Never
Rarely
Sometimes (once or twice a month)
Often (once or twice a week)

Weekly

23) My students read independently an average of _____ minutes a day at school.

0-10 min

11-20 min

21-30 min

24) I am able to integrate learning standards in the content areas, science, social studies and math while developing my students' reading and writing skills.

Never

Rarely

Sometimes (once or twice a month)

Often (once or twice a week)

Daily

Material and Resources Questions

25) What instructional materials are you using to develop writers in your classroom? (Check all that apply.)

Lucy Calkins

Ralph Fletcher

6 Traits

John Collins

Carl Anderson

Write Source

Four Blocks

Houghton Mifflin

Project Read-Written Expression

Other, please specify

26) (To question above) Explain in writing which resources you find most beneficial. Why?

The next two questions are for those teachers in grades K-2 (grades 3-5 teachers, please skip to questions XX and XX).

27) What instructional materials are you using for reading comprehension? (Grade levels K-2 - check all that apply.)

Making Meaning

Primary Comprehension Toolkit-Stephanie Harvey

Guided Reading: Good First Teaching for All Children-Fountas & Pinnell

Reading with Meaning-Debbie Miller

Guided Reading the Four Blocks Way-Patricia Cunningham

Houghton Mifflin

Tradebooks
Other, please specify

28) (To question above) Explain in writing which resources you find most beneficial. Why?

The next two questions are for those teachers in grades 3-5 (grades K-2 teachers, please answer questions XX and XX above).

29) What instructional materials are you using for reading comprehension. (Grade levels 3-5 - check all that apply.)

Making Meaning
Comprehension Toolkit-Stephanie Harvey
Strategies That Work-Stephanie Harvey
Guiding Readers and Writers-Fountas & Pinnell
Tradebooks
Other, please specify

30) (To question above) Explain in writing which resources you find most beneficial. Why?

Professional Development

31) Mark if you would like additional training in any of the areas below. (Check all that apply.)

Balanced Literacy
Conferencing for writing
Conferencing for reading
Guided Reading
Independent reading
Technology integration
Content integration
21st Century Skills
Writing Traits
Writers Workshop
Readers Workshop
Comprehension Toolkit
Making Meaning
Foundations K-2
Book Clubs/Literature Circles

32) I feel comfortable implementing the following in my classrooms. (Check all that apply.)

Conferencing for writing
Conferencing for reading
Guided Reading
Independent reading
Technology integration
Content integration

21st Century Skills
Writing Traits
Writers Workshop
Readers Workshop
Comprehension Toolkit
Making Meaning
Foundations
Book Clubs/Literature Circles
Other, please specify

**33) What new literacy strategies have you used in the last two (2) years?
Please respond in writing.**

34) What is your perception of the level of district-wide consistency with regard to a coherent philosophy of literacy instruction?

Once you click "submit" below, you have successfully completed this survey. Thank you for your input. Information from this survey will be included in the ELA Curricular Review Committee's final report. In the meantime, if you have any questions related to the work of the committee, or would like to provide additional input, the committee members are listed here:

Elementary:

Amy Steinberg (Early Childhood), Lisa Fireman (East), Chris Getchell (Cottage), Shirley Houston (Cottage), Jennifer Spence (Heights), Karen Woods (East), Dr. Judith Freedberg, (East, Principal)

Middle School:

Julie Belcher, Kathy Derderian

High School:

Lisa Jolicoeur, Elizabeth Whall

ELA Coordinators:

Barbara Barros (K-5), David Heller (6-12)

➤ [English Language Arts Program Review Teacher Survey: Grades 6-12](#)

Survey Instructions:

Thank you for taking time to complete the ELA Curricular Review Committee's survey. Your input is valuable to the curricular review process, and it will help to guide practice in the district for the next several years. Please respond to each question with an answer that best reflects your current practice. At the end of the survey, please be sure to click "Submit" for your responses to be tabulated. Again, your feedback is important and the committee values the time you take to complete this survey.

I. Instructional Practices

1) Which reading activities or techniques do you employ to support reading comprehension? [Check all options that apply]

- Close reading exercises
- Cloze reading exercises
- Tell-backs/Retelling
- Dramatic or performance based assessments
- Pair & Share
- Shared Reading (Students observe an expert reading the text with fluency and expression and then emulate)
- Interactive Reading (Students actively listen and respond to an oral reading of a text)
- Students write responses to passages read in class (i.e. journaling)
- Small group discussion
- Whole class discussion
- Other (please specify)

2) How often do you employ reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, visualizing, questioning, inferring, determining importance, making connections, summarizing, and synthesizing?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes (once or twice a month)
- Often (once or twice a week)
- Daily

3) Which modes of writing are commonly taught in your classroom? [Check all that apply]

- Analytical essays (on core texts)
- Research papers
- Persuasive essays

- Compare/Contrast essays
- Descriptive essays/writing
- Cause & Effect essay
- Definition essay
- Creative writing (fiction, poetry, plays)
- Process essay
- Journaling
- Other

4) Which specific skills and strategies do you employ to support student fluency with writing assignments? [Check all that apply]

- Instruction for writing introductions:
 - Triangle/Funnel method
 - Hook leads
- Thesis statement instruction
- Body paragraph instruction:
 - TEA/MEAL paragraphing
 - Balanced 3
 - Block method
 - Point-by-point method
- Instruction for writing conclusions
- MLA formatting:
 - Quotation integration
 - Work-cited page
 - Forms of annotation
 - Use of literary present tense
- Guidance for enhancing voice or writing style with lessons focusing on the following topics:

- Sentence variation
- Focus on verbs
- Reduction of unnecessary and vague diction
- Focus on transitions
- Reduction of word packages and clichés.
- Focus on word choice and vocabulary.
- Use of figurative language
- Understandings of fallacies.

Use of writing workshops:

- Peer to Peer conferencing
- Teacher/student conferencing
- Small group writing workshops.
- Whole class writing workshops.
- Other (Please specify)

5) How often is vocabulary instruction embedded in reading and writing activities in your classroom?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes (once or twice a month)
- Often (once or twice a week)
- Daily

6) How often is grammar instruction embedded in reading and writing activities in your classroom?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes (once or twice a month)
- Often (once or twice a week)
- Daily

7) Are grade level expectations for teaching grammar and mechanics clear to you?

- yes no not sure

8) Are grade level expectations for teaching vocabulary clear to you?

- yes no not sure

9) Are grade level expectations for teaching writing skills clear to you?

- yes no not sure

10) Are grade level expectations for teaching literary and poetic devices clear to you?

yes

no

not sure

11) Are grade level expectations for teaching the themes and content of the core texts clear to you?

yes

no

not sure

II. Curriculum

1) To what extent are the textual selections of the ELA curriculum representative of diverse authors?

Lacking in diversity

Somewhat diverse

Very diverse

1b) What voices are absent?

2) To what extent are the textual selections of the ELA curriculum representative of diverse genres?

Not all genres are represented.

All genres are somewhat represented.

All genres are consistently represented.

2b) What genres are underrepresented?

3) To what extent does the ELA curriculum align from one grade level to the next? (For example, from grade eight to grade nine)

Curriculum content is not aligned.

Curriculum content is somewhat aligned.

Curriculum content is well aligned.

4) To what extent are the ELA instructional practices aligned from one grade level to the next?

Instructional practices are not aligned from one grade level to the next.

Instructional practices are somewhat aligned from one grade level to the next.

Instructional practices are well aligned from one grade level to the next.

5) To what extent does the ELA curriculum align *within* each grade level? (For example, from one grade nine class to another grade nine class)

- Curriculum content is not aligned.
- Curriculum content is somewhat aligned.
- Curriculum content is aligned.

6) To what extent are the ELA instructional practices aligned within each grade level?

- Instructional practices are not aligned from one class to another.
- Instructional practices are somewhat aligned from one class to another.
- Instructional practices are well aligned from one class to another.

7) Which aspects of the curriculum do you feel need improvement? For each category marked, please indicate the degree of attention each topic warrants.

- Reading:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement
- Writing:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement
- Vocabulary:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement
- Grammar:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement
- Public Speaking:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement
- Mechanics and Usage:
 - Slight improvement
 - Moderate improvement
 - Significant improvement

- Literary conventions (i.e. poetry terms):
 - ___ Slight improvement
 - ___ Moderate improvement
 - ___ Significant improvement

- Implementation of 21st Century Skills: (i.e., collaboration, critical thinking, media literacy, cultural competency)
 - ___ Slight improvement
 - ___ Moderate improvement
 - ___ Significant improvement

- Integration with other content areas/disciplines:
 - ___ Slight improvement
 - ___ Moderate improvement
 - ___ Significant improvement

- Use of technology:
 - ___ Slight improvement
 - ___ Moderate improvement
 - ___ Significant improvement

8) What aspects of the curriculum do you feel work well?

- Reading
- Writing
- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Public Speaking
- Mechanics and usage
- Literary conventions
- Use of technology

II. Professional Development

1. Please mark the areas where you would like to see the department, your specific school, or the district offer more extensive professional development opportunities:

- Conferencing for writing
- Conferencing for reading
- Guided Reading
- Technology integration
- Collins Writing Program

- Writing Traits (Six Traits)
- Writers Workshop
- Readers Workshop
- Constructs
- Comprehension Toolkit
- Making Meaning
- Book Clubs/Literature Circles
- MLA instruction
- Differentiated Instruction
- Socratic Seminars
- Other

Last Page of Survey:

You have successfully completed this survey. Thank you for your input. Information from this survey will be included in the ELA Curricular Review Committee's final report. In the meantime, if you have any questions related to the work of the committee, or would like to provide additional input, the committee members are listed here:

Elementary: Amy Steinberg (Early Childhood), Lisa Fireman (East), Chris Getchell (Cottage), Shirley Houston (Cottage), Jennifer Spence (Heights), Karen Woods (East).

Middle School: Julie Belcher (SMS), Kathy Derderian (SMS).

High School: Lisa Jolicoeur (SHS), Elizabeth Whall (SHS).

ELA Coordinators: Barbara Barros (K-5), David Heller (6-12).

➤ [Student ELA Survey: Grades 6-12](#)

Survey Instructions:

Thank you for taking time to complete the ELA Curricular Review Committee's survey. Your input is valuable to the curricular review process, and it will help to guide practice in the district for the next several years. At the end of the survey, please be sure to click "Submit" for your responses to be tabulated. Again, your feedback is important and the committee values the time you take to complete this survey.

Please indicate your current grade level:

6 7 8 9 10 11 12

I. Reading

1. Do you enjoy reading?

- Not at all
- Not much
- Some
- A great deal

2. What type of books or materials do you prefer to read?
[Check all that apply]

- Novels
- Graphic Novels
- Nonfiction (biographies, history books, books about sports)
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Poems
- Short stories
- Online/web content
- Other

3. Do you enjoy the books you are assigned in school?

- I never like these books.
- I sometimes like these books.
- I usually enjoy these books.

3A. What reasons explain why you like or dislike these books?
[Check all the reasons that apply]

- The stories and/or characters are not interesting.
 - The books are too hard to understand.
 - The books are too easy.
 - Other
-
- The stories and/or characters are interesting.
 - I like how the books challenge me to think in new ways.
 - I like how the books teach me about different kinds of people and places.

Other

4. Do you feel you are assigned enough to read at school?

- I would like to read even more.
- I would like to read a bit more.
- I think I am reading enough at school.
- I think we are assigned too much to read.

5. Is there anything you feel the school could do to help make reading more enjoyable?

II. Writing

7. What types of writing do you generally do in your ELA class?

[Check all that apply]

- Descriptive writing (describing a person, place, or process)
- Analytical writing (paragraph response or essays proving a thesis about an aspect of an assigned reading)
- Creative writing (such as poetry, plays, short fiction)
- Research papers
- Persuasive writing
- Journal entry
- Letters
- Class notes
- Postings online to class discussions (for example, class chats taking place on Moodle)
- Other

8. Do you feel you receive useful feedback about writing from your ELA teachers?

- No
- Occasionally
- Yes

9. Do you feel you are provided opportunities to improve and/or revise writing assigned in ELA class?

- No
- Occasionally
- Yes

10. Is there anything you feel the school could do to help make writing more enjoyable?

III. Other ELA Skills

11. Do you feel you are provided with enough opportunities to collaborate with peers during reading and writing instruction?

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

12. To what degree do you feel the ELA assignments you are given challenge you?

- They do not challenge me
- They somewhat challenge me.
- They are extremely challenging

13) What do you see as excellent characteristics of Sharon's English Language Arts program that should be preserved?

You have successfully completed this survey. Thank you for your input. Information from this survey will be included in the ELA Curricular Review Committee's final report. In the meantime, if you have any questions related to the work of the committee, or would like to provide additional input; the committee members are listed here:

Elementary: Amy Steinberg (Early Childhood), Lisa Fireman (East), Chris Getchell (Cottage), Shirley Houston (Cottage), Jennifer Spence (Heights), Karen Woods (East).

Middle School: Julie Belcher (SMS), Kathy Derderian (SMS).

High School: Lisa Jolicoeur (SHS), Elizabeth Whall (SHS).

ELA Coordinators: Barbara Barros (K-5), David Heller (6-12).

➤ [English/Language Arts \(ELA\) Program Review: Parent Survey](#)

Survey Instructions:

Thank you for taking time to complete the ELA Curricular Review Committee's survey. Your input is valuable to the curricular review process, and it will help to guide practice in the district for the next several years. At the end of the survey, please be sure to click "Submit" for your responses to be tabulated. Again, your feedback is important and the committee values the time you take to complete this survey.

It is the goal of the English/Language Arts Program Review Committee to post in a timely manner the data from this survey on the Sharon Public Schools web site.

Please indicate the current grade level of your child:

K__ 1__ 2__ 3__ 4__ 5__
6__ 7__ 8__ 9__ 10__ 11__ 12__

I. Reading

1) Does your child express an enthusiasm for reading?

- No.
- Sometimes.
- Yes.

2) Is there anything you feel the school could do to make reading more enjoyable for your child?

3) What type of books or materials do you believe your child/children *prefers* to read?
[Check all that apply]

- Picture Books
- Short Chapter Books
- Short Fiction (picture books)
- Novels
- Graphic Novels
- Nonfiction
- Magazines
- Newspapers
- Poems
- Short stories
- Online/web content
- Other

4) What opinion about school assigned books does your child convey?

- Has not conveyed an opinion.
- Does not like the assigned books.
- Sometimes likes the assigned books.
- Enjoys the assigned books.

II. Writing Instruction

1) Do you feel your child writes enough in school?

- Not sure
- Does not write enough.
- He/she has a moderate amount of writing tasks to complete but could be assigned more work.
- He/she is writing enough.
- He/she is writing too much.

2) Do you feel your child receives useful feedback about writing from his/her elementary or ELA teachers?

- No
- Occasionally
- Yes

3) Do you feel your child is provided opportunities to improve and/or revise writing assigned in ELA class?

- Not sure
- Does not apply
- No
- Occasionally
- Yes

4) Do you feel your child has exposure to different types of writing assignments in ELA class?

- Not sure
- Does not apply
- No
- Occasionally
- Yes

III. Other Content Competencies

1) Do you feel your child is provided with enough vocabulary building instruction?

- Not sure.
- No
- Yes

2) Do you feel your child is provided with enough grammar and usage instruction?

- Not sure.
- No
- Yes

3) Do you feel your child is provided enough spelling instruction?

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

4) Do you feel your child receives enough instruction regarding the use of technology and its integration into his/her ELA work?

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

5) Do you feel your child is provided with enough opportunities to collaborate with peers during reading and writing instruction?

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

6) Do you feel your child has opportunities in his/her ELA classroom to develop critical thinking skills?

- Not sure
- No
- Yes

7) To what degree do you feel the ELA curriculum and the associated instruction challenges your child?

- Does not challenge my child/children
- Moderately challenges my child/children
- Challenges my child/children
- Provides extensive challenge for my child/children

8) What do you see as exemplary characteristics of Sharon's English Language Arts program that should be preserved?

You have successfully completed this survey. Thank you for your input. Information from this survey will be included in the ELA Curricular Review Committee's final report. In the meantime, if you have any questions related to the work of the committee, or would like to provide additional input; the committee members are listed here:

Elementary: Amy Steinberg (Early Childhood), Lisa Fireman (East), Chris Getchell (Cottage), Shirley Houston (Cottage), Jennifer Spence (Heights), Karen Woods (East).

Middle School: Julie Belcher (SMS), Kathy Derderian (SMS).

High School: Lisa Jolicoeur (SHS), Elizabeth Whall (SHS).

ELA Coordinators: Barbara Barros (K-5), David Heller (6-12).

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2009 ñ 2010

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Additional Information:

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A Comprehensive K-3 Reading Assessment Plan: Guidance for School Leaders

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National Center on Response to Intervention, Screening Tools Chart: Reading

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National Center on Response to Intervention, Progress Monitoring Tools Chart: Reading and Math

