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To: Somerville Public Schools School Committee

From: Dr. Jessica Boston Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Academics

Cc: Dr. Ruben Carmona, Superintendent
Kathleen Seward, Coordinator of K-8 Humanities Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Date: November 4, 2024

Subject: Quarter One Academic Update: Curriculum K-5 Literacy

Purpose:

For School Year 2024 - 2025, the Academics Department set five priorities aligned with the Strategic Plan. Academic Priority Area Three relates to communication of our academic and curriculum related work. As part of this goal, the District will provide a quarterly update on academic programming. The first quarter update for this school year focuses on our literacy curriculum, with emphasis on grades kindergarten through five.

Background:

Since the 2023 - 2024 school year, SPS has engaged in a curriculum review for grades prekindergarten through 12. Additionally, in partnership with educators, the curriculum administrative team developed a robust curricula roll-out plan for subject areas in grades prekindergarten through eight. *See Appendix A.* This plan was presented to all prekindergarten - eighth grade educators in February 2024 and October 2024 at "All District Professional Development." The curriculum roll-out plan was also presented to the Education Programs SubCommittee last school year, and again on October 10th of this school year.

Implementation of the plan will be intentionally staggered. This is necessary to ensure that all educators and administrators have the knowledge, tools, and resources to successfully implement the plan.

The Curriculum Roll-Out Phase for literacy across the district is described below:

- Grades K - 5: *See Timeline Below for Full Description*
- Grades 6 - 8: Implement Fishtank ELA (as of School Year 2024 - 2025)
- Grade 9 - 12: Beginning the Study Phase of the Curriculum Development Cycle

Kindergarten through Fifth Grade Literacy Curriculum Overview

Roll-Out Timeline

The timeline below provides an overview of the actions taken to date to support the development of robust, researched-based, and most current curricular programming in grades K - 5. Curricular programming includes actual curriculum (the content that educators use to teach), assessment (the tools the educators use to gather information on the needs of students to inform teaching), and instruction



(the actual strategies and practices that educators use in the classroom). Because it is critical that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are linked, the timeline below includes all three of these areas.

School Year 2022 - 2023

- Created an assessment team which **selected the i-Ready diagnostic system to be used as a formative assessment in grades 3 - 8**. Prior to adopting i-Ready, there was no standard formative assessment in place in grades 4 - 8 across the district. A formative assessment is not used to grade students. Rather, it provides teachers with data on student mastery of concepts and skills. It only is used to inform instruction. Until 2020, SPS used the Star Assessment.

School Year 2023 - 2024

- **Partnered with the Hill for Literacy to complete a full needs assessment** in our K - 5 literacy programming.
 - This [needs assessment](#) included a comprehensive analysis of literacy including: staff surveys, focus group interviews that included over 305 staff members, classroom walkthroughs
 - Highlights from Hill included our efforts around equity and our Foundations program.
 - Recommendations from Hill included SPS developing a plan for supporting, coaching, and monitoring staff implementation for a new core reading program.
 - We formed a Literacy Leadership Team to develop a 3-5 year Literacy Plan using the results of the needs assessment.
 - This information was discussed at the Ed Programs Sub-Committee Meeting on October 10.
- **Partnered with the Hill for Literacy on Summer School Literacy and Professional Learning (SSLPL) program**. This twofold program supported both students and teachers. Students in need of additional support with literacy and math in grades K through 3 (rising first through fourth) received targeted and evidence-based instruction from participating teachers; at the same time, those participating teachers received professional learning and coaching in evidence-based early literacy practices.
- **Adopted the full DIBELS 8 assessment system** and the DIBELS Amplify computer database system. The system provides detailed and user-friendly reports and resources.
- We offered **Small Group Instruction & Structured Literacy Routines Professional Development** to all first and second grade educators. We piloted this PD in the 22-23 school year, and offered it as choice PD in the 23 - 24 school year. All K-2 educators who did not take it as choice PD are receiving the PD in the 24 - 25 school year (educators who took it in the past are taking a level two PD now).

This happened concurrently with a ELA curriculum selection process for grade 6 - 8 led by Kathleen Seward.

School Year 2024 - 2025

- This school year, we are in the process of **forming the Literacy Leadership Team**. This team is tasked with overseeing the Literacy Plan. The first task will be **selecting a curriculum for grades k - 5**
- We allocated **the reading specialist position** districtwide so that they can be assigned to a school based on data. With the use of the full DIBELS 8, we have been able to ensure that all 1st

through 3rd grade students with a composite score at the intensive level are receiving reading support from an educator with specialized training.

Current Curricular Program

For grades K - 5 SPS uses the following curricular materials for all students (Tier One):

- **Fundations:** Fundations is grounded in the science of reading and guides educators to provide effective instructional practices in print concepts, phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, automaticity/fluency, and. Fundations is used in grades k - 2.
(<https://www.wilsonlanguage.com/programs/fundations/>)
- **Heggarty:** Heggarty is a phonemic awareness curriculum. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, manipulate, and identify phonemes (or the smallest sounds of words). Heggarty is research based and user-friendly. Heggarty is used in grades k - 2.
- **In-District developed units:** While the Literacy leadership team works to select a new curriculum, SPS uses the current reading and writing units that were developed in-district. They are based on the science of reading principles and the recommendations of the national reading panel. Appendix B [SPS Elements of Successful Literacy Instruction](#)

Challenges

- **There are currently multiple curricular roll-outs** across subject areas. SPS curriculum leaders are mindful about not rolling out too much at one time.
- **Time for professional development** and coaching to ensure a smooth curriculum roll-out always presents a challenge. We currently address this challenge with school day professional development, and are exploring other ways in which we can ensure all educators and administrators have sufficient professional development and training.

Additional Considerations

- **Massachusetts Dyslexia Institute:** SPS was accepted into the DESE sponsored Massachusetts Dyslexia Institute and has begun the training. The team from SPS will learn from experts to support the development of a Dyslexia Action Plan. This will complement our K-5 Literacy Plan that we developed in collaboration with Hill for Literacy.
- **Communications Updates:** The SPS Academic team and Communications team continue to work collaboratively to update our website with the most current curriculum information. All Education Program subcommittee slides are available on our website. Additionally, the Connections Newsletter now features a section dedicated specifically to Academics Updates.

Curricula Roll-out Plan Gr K-2

Grades K-2 Curricula Roll-out			
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
ELA	Needs assessment & Strategic literacy plan development	Strategic Plan Implementation	Begin Implementation of New Curriculum - Details TBD by Literacy Leadership Team
Math		Early Adopters Prepare for full implementation	Implement & Monitor
Social Studies	G1 & G2 initial SPS educator-created units launched	Implement & Monitor All G1 and G2 units launched	Implement & Monitor
Science	Implement & Monitor	Implement & Monitor Study/evaluate curriculum	TBD
SEL	New Second Step-Early adopters Restorative circles rollout	Implement & Monitor All K-8 launching new Second Step	Implement & Monitor



Curricula Roll-out Plan Gr 3-5

Grades 3-5 Curricula Roll-out			
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
ELA	Needs assessment & Strategic literacy plan development	Strategic Plan Implementation	Begin Implementation of New Curriculum - Details TBD by Literacy Leadership Team
Math	Early Adopters Prepare for full implementation	Year 1 Implementation Districtwide	Implement & Monitor
Social Studies	G5 Implement Investigating History	G5 Implement Investigating History G3 & G4 Early Adopters, Investigating History	Implement & Monitor
Science	Implement & Monitor	Implement & Monitor Study/evaluate curriculum	TBD
SEL	New Second Step-Early adopters Restorative circles rollout	Implement & Monitor All K-8 launching new Second Step	Implement & Monitor



Curricula Roll-out Plan Gr 6-8

Grades 6-8 Curricula Roll-out			
	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
ELA	Curriculum selection committee	Initial implementation	Implement & Monitor
Math	Implement & Monitor	Implement & Monitor	Implement & Monitor
Social Studies		G6 Early adopters of Investigating History G7 Implement Investigating History G8 SPS Educator created units	Implement & Monitor (G6 implements Investigating History)
Science	Implement & Monitor Study/evaluate curriculum	Curriculum selection committee will review options and make recommendation	TBD
SEL	New Second Step-Early adopters Restorative circles rollout	Implement & Monitor All K-8 launching new Second Step	Implement & Monitor
ESL <i>Newcomer Academy</i>	Curriculum selection committee	Initial implementation	Implement & Monitor