# Somerville Public Schools

## Overview

The Somerville Public Schools partnered with HILL for Literacy in the spring of 2024 to conduct a comprehensive, in-depth analysis of current equitable practices in literacy in grades K-5. HILL for Literacy shared a detailed report based on data collected from the district. The report includes areas of strength and recommendations for improving the literacy of all students in grades K-5, through a lens of equity, inclusivity, and cultural responsiveness.

## SPS Mission Statement

Our primary mission is to cultivate inspired learners who are equipped to make a positive impact on the world. We achieve this by fostering rigorous and joyful learning environments where students, families, staff and community partners collaborate with a shared commitment to academic excellence and well-being.

## Method

HILL for Literacy analyzed current literacy levels among SPS students. The analysis used multiple strategies, including self reports from the District and information collected directly by HILL for Literacy.

1. **Information Provided by SPS**:
   o Literacy Assessments currently used in schools
   o Programs, resources, materials, and software used for Literacy instruction in classrooms
   o Professional Learning History (ongoing training that teachers have had)

2. **Information Gathered by HILL**:
   o Interviews with SPS staff
   o Roadmap Survey—a tool to evaluate the current district/school-wide literacy model
   o Classroom walkthroughs conducted by Hill staff

**How the Information Will be Used**

Data gathered from SPS and HILL support District leaders in identifying strengths and literacy goals across five major areas:

- Leadership (L)
- Tiered Instruction (I)
- Professional Learning (P)
- Assessment (A), and
- Family Engagement (F)

In each area, goals are applied with a lens on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Climate.

## Highlights

HILL conducted focus group interviews with **305** SPS teachers and staff. Each focus group included 4-6 participants, and each group interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Once all interviews were complete, **1,704** interview comments were coded, filtered, and analyzed. In the chart below you can see the number of comments that identified our strengths vs. identified areas of need. (For additional details you can see the detailed report.) In this next chart, the number of comments in the Strength vs. Need category is represented:

| Interview Data Analysis - Somerville Public Schools | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Strengths | | Needs | |
| Category | Number of Comments | % | | # | % of Category | # | % of Category |
| Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and School Culture | 365 | 21% | | 275 | 75% | 90 | 25% |
| Leadership | 439 | 26% | | 120 | 27% | 319 | 73% |
| Tiered Instruction | 788 | 46% | | 228 | 29% | 560 | 71% |
| Professional Development | 31 | 2% | | 5 | 16% | 26 | 84% |
| Assessment | 53 | 3% | | 26 | 49% | 27 | 51% |
| Family Engagement | 28 | 2% | | 5 | 18% | 23 | 82% |
| | 1704 | 100% | | 659 | | 1045 | |

In this next chart, the number of comments in the Strength vs. Need category is represented:



Somerville Public Schools
Strength vs. Need Within Category

HILL for Literacy, Inc ©
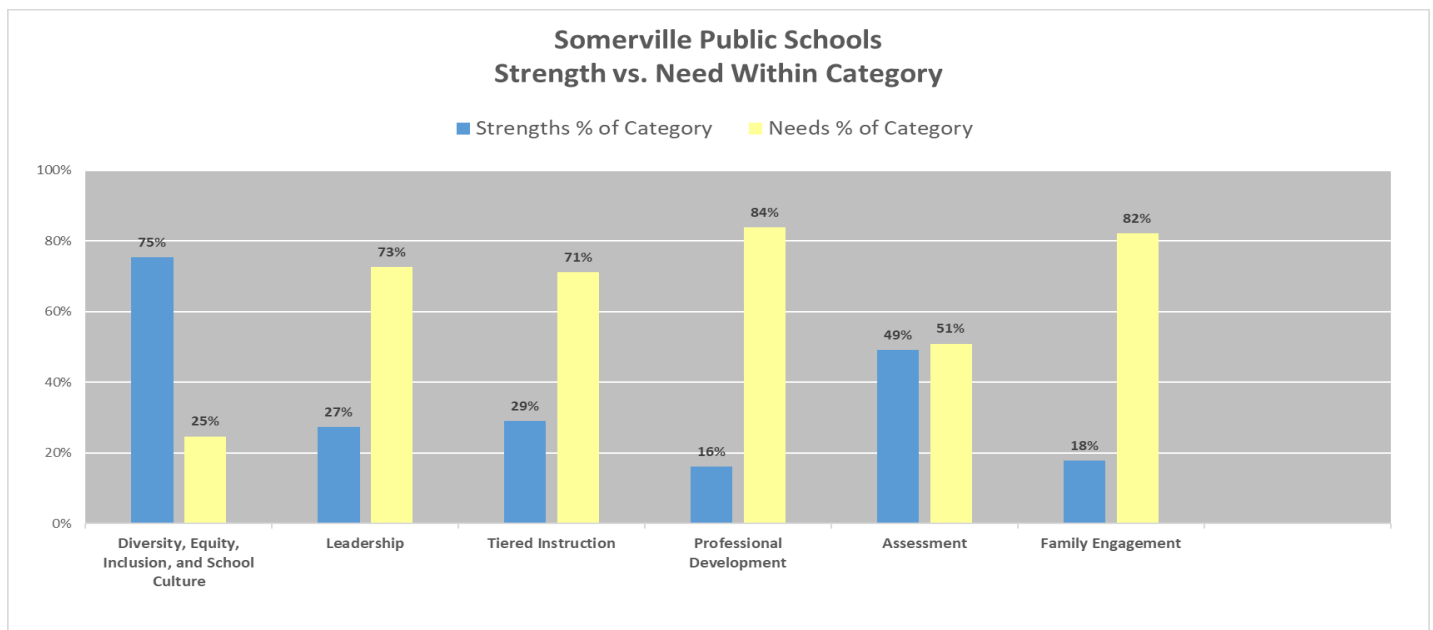
## Interview Highlights

**Areas of Strength:**

- Teachers communicate mutual respect in interactions with all students.
- Teachers communicate high standards for student work, effort, and behavior.
- Teachers report positive collaboration between support staff.
- Teachers communicate that materials and resources are available to them.
- There is trust from the school administration to have flexibility within the classroom to create best practices.
- Foundational skills programs are being implemented in the early grades.

Overall, comments from focus group interviews supported our district's Vision that "We envision a student-centered learning community where every student – honoring their unique strengths and background – is empowered to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally through tailored supports and equitable access to opportunity."

**Recommendations:**

A complete list of recommendations is included in the Needs Assessment Report. Below is a summary of recommendations:

- Utilize the district-based leadership team to develop district-based goals and action steps. (L)
- Facilitate a comprehensive core program review process. Engage staff in the process. Utilize a review tool that creates a common lens for reviewers. (I)
- Develop a clear plan for implementing the new core reading program or newly defined Tier 1 instruction guidelines and plans. The plan should include support, coaching, and monitoring for staff. (I).
- Create a professional learning calendar for the school year with clear goals and outcomes that support a continuous learning cycle. (P)
- Provide professional learning in the science of reading and current evidence-based practices in assessment and instruction to ensure a common, consistent teacher/administrator knowledge base across the district. (P)
- The district leadership team should review the assessment inventory results and determine which are valid and reliable. Identify gaps and redundancies and build a comprehensive assessment framework for the district. (A)
- Review existing home-to-school communication systems to ensure that families have useful and actionable information on their child's literacy achievement. (F)

| PRIORITY GOAL 1 (Leadership): Install systems and processes to support the implementation of a multi-tiered assessment and instructional framework. |
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| | ACTION |
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| 1.1 | Create a district-based K-5 Literacy Leadership Team (LLT) that will oversee the implementation of the K-5 literacy plan drawing on staff expertise, implementation strengths, and challenges. |
| 1.2 | Develop the district literacy vision/mission, and review and finalize the yearly objectives for the K-5 Literacy Plan. Share this with all stakeholders. |
| 1.3a | Analyze student literacy achievement data from 2023-24 - district-level, school-level, and grade-level. |
| 1.3b | Analyze student literacy achievement data from 2023 through Fall 2024 - district-level, school-level, and grade-level |
| 1.4 | Set measurable student learning achievement goals for the district. |
| 1.5 | Apply for a team to participate in the 2024-2025 MA Dyslexia Institute. |
| 1.6 | Analyze and revise implementation of the K-5 Literacy Plan in 24-25 to establish the plan for 25-26 |

| | PRIORITY GOAL 2 (Tiered Instruction):  Use core, supplemental, and intervention literacy curricula in a multi-tiered instructional model effectively and strategically at each grade level. |
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| | ACTION |
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| **2.1.a** | Establish a master schedule reflecting at least 90-minute Tier 1 literacy block for each grade level K-5**.** |
| **2.1.b** | Maximize the schedule to allocate human resources (literacy specialists, MLE teachers, Special Ed teachers) throughout the day for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention (e.g., staggered intervention blocks) to ensure all identified students are in intervention and grouped by instructional focus and need. |
| **2.2** | Use the data collected from the program inventory to map evidence-based core, supplemental and intervention programs onto a comprehensive list program framework of what is currently in place. |
| 2.3 | Curriculum review and selection process to choose evidence-based materials in Tier 1 instruction for all students with consideration for how to effectively include specialized programs. |
| 2.4 | Identify training needs and objectives for all staff delivering Tier 1 core curriculum and plan PD. |
| 2.5 | Provide ongoing training annually to all staff delivering Tier 1 instructional programs in how to effectively use instructional materials in collaboration with the publisher. |
| 2.5.b | Ensure that Tier 1 classroom instruction includes differentiated approaches and materials to provide entry points and extensions to meet the needs of diverse learners according to formative assessment<br><br>Develop district wide expectations for instruction (specific to program i.e MLE, SEEK) ; conduct walkthroughs |
| 2.6 | Ensure Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and materials are evidence-based and supplement (not supplant) Tier 1 instruction and a program framework defines how and when each program is used. |
| 2.7 | Provide ongoing training annually to all staff delivering Tier 2 and 3 interventions in how to effectively use instructional materials in conjunction with the publisher. |
| 2.9 | Develop unit overviews for ESL instruction co-taught in the ELA classroom |

| | PRIORITY GOAL 3 (Professional Learning): Collaborate through shared knowledge, skills, language and collaboration among teachers based on the essential components of literacy and evidence-based instructional practices. |
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| | **ACTION** |
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| 3.1 | Ensure professional learning is scheduled appropriately, occurs as intended, accessible to all applicable staff, and offered at least monthly to staff. |
| 3.1 b | Develop protocol for onboarding and supporting new staff with respect to literacy. including curriculum, assessment, instructional practices etc. |
| 3.2 | Ensure professional learning includes evidence-based information in the essential components of literacy (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension), as well as other relevant literacy topics. |
| 3.3 | Assess professional learning outcomes to determine if the professional learning adequately addresses the essential components of literacy and other relevant literacy topics. |
| 3.5 | Create systems for principals and assistant principals to leave about literacy curriculum and best practices to support educator's professional learning. |
| 3.6 | Create "look for" checklists for administrators and educators to evaluate how what has been learned in PD is being implemented in classrooms consistently with integrity. |

| | PRIORITY GOAL 4 (Assessment): Construct an assessment system and process for using measures of student performance to inform decisions at the district, school, grade, classroom and individual student levels. |
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| | **ACTION** |
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| 4.1 | Use the literacy assessment inventory to create an assessment framework. <br><br> • Determine which are evidence-based. <br> • Identify which components of literacy are being measured (PA, decoding, comprehension, fluency, and, sight words, and writing ) and which are unaddressed. <br> • Identify the purpose for each assessment, who administers it and how frequently.(ie. DIBELS, ESI-3, etc) |

| | | **ACTION** |
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| 4.1a | Create and share a detailed assessment calendar with all stakeholders. | |
| 4.2 | Identify and select evidence-based literacy assessments for specific purposes in each grade level where gaps have been identified. | |
| 4.4 | Train all teachers and staff to understand the assessment framework and how to administer assessments. | |
| 4.6 | Develop a protocol for conducting grade level data meetings 5x per year, to analyze, plan, and refine instruction. Ensure that the protocol is included in the Common Planning Time leader handbook and training. | |
| 4.8 | Establish a data management system that encompasses all relevant student performance data. | |
| 4.9 | Provide training and support to teachers in using the new data management system. | |
| 4.10 | Review and revise data management system to include all relevant student performance data. | |
| 4.12 | Roll out a comprehensive assessment data management system to all relevant educators and to facilitate data-driven decision making. | |
| 4.14 | Institute district-level data meetings 3x per year, utilizing the data to review effectiveness of curriculum implementation and intervention. | |
| 4.15 | Develop norms, protocol, and intention for sharing school and/or district data with educators | |
| 4.18 | Review and refine the protocol for conducting grade level data meetings 5-x per year, analyze, plan, and refine instruction. | |

| | **PRIORITY GOAL 5 (Family Engagement):  Employ an asset-based family engagement model to support student academic growth at both school and home.** |
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| | **ACTION** |
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| 5.1 | Communicate the vision, mission, goals, and literacy plan for student achievement in literacy to families. |
| 5.2 | Ensure families have multiple opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback on the vision, mission, goals, and literacy plan. |
| 5.3 | Offer families workshops/information sessions in understanding high-quality literacy curricula, literacy instructional strategies, and ways to support and develop their child's literacy at home and school. |
| 5.4 | Translate and/or design workshop/information sessions in families' preferred languages. |
| 5.5 | Implement a family engagement model that promotes culturally responsive and culturally sustaining collaboration with families. |