

Weston Public Schools K-8 Literacy Program

Curriculum Committee
February 19, 2020

Curriculum - Instruction - Assessment

Curriculum	Instructional Model	Assessments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● TC Units of Study● Additional, home grown units● Grammar and Mechanics● Word Study and Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explicit mini-lesson● Data-based, differentiated small group and individual conferring● Routine feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Unit-based performance assessments● Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment (K-5)● NWEA● Ongoing formative assessments

Instructional Approach

Reader's and Writer's Workshop is an instructional model within which readers and writers receive daily explicit instruction on the skills and strategies of proficient readers and writers. They are provided daily whole group and differentiated instruction and feedback.

What is the value of workshop?

The workshop model has been around for about 30 years and is predicated on a strong research base on reading and writing growth and development. TC units have been “planned, taught, revised, and retaught [in] literally thousands of classrooms.” Units are built around current research that strongly supports the daily need for students to:

- Develop a “toolkit of strategies for dealing with difficult texts”
- Receive explicit instruction in the strategies and skills of proficient readers and writers
 - Whole class
 - Differentiated small-group instruction
- Spend extended periods of time on sustained reading and writing
- Read and write a balance of fiction and nonfiction texts

Commendation from 2018 Tri-State Visit Grades K-6

“In grades K-6 classrooms, curricular changes engage students in writing across many genres and have increased the volume of writing across time. Teachers across all classrooms are implementing common units of study and the components of writing workshop. Common resources, structures, and tools such as anchor charts, conferences/small groups, and mini-lessons support student learning”.

Commendation from 2018 Tri-State Visit Grades 7-12

“In grades 7-12 classrooms, English language arts and social studies teachers guide students through significant writing tasks in every course, including inquiry-based research. Certain key aspects of the writing workshop model that meet the needs of their students, such as conferring and mini-lessons, are evident”.

Grade 5 Reading and Writing Curriculum

Reading Units:

1. Interpretation Book Clubs (Fiction)
2. Tackling Complexity (NonFiction)
3. Historical Fiction* (Fiction)
4. Argument and Advocacy (NonFiction)
5. Reading in the Content Areas* (NonFiction)
6. Fantasy Book Clubs (Fiction)

Writing Units:

1. Literary Essay (Opinion)
2. Narrative Craft (Narrative)
3. Research-Based Argument Essay (Opinion)
4. Shaping Texts (Narrative)
5. Lens of History (Informational)
6. Journalism* (Informational)

Impact of Reading and Writing in 5th Grade

Two Hours Daily of Literacy Instruction Means:

- Students read about a book a week, or more, throughout 5th grade. This roughly equates to 30-40 books per year, depending on the student.
- Students cycle through the writing process at least twice per writing unit, sometimes three times. This roughly equates to 12-15 writing pieces a year for most students.
- The impact of this is **Growth** as readers and writers, greater **Volume**, and greater **Stamina**.
- Teachers are able to meet with each student in their classes to provide differentiated instruction, individually or in small groups, multiple times per week.

Grade 6 Reading and Writing Curriculum

Reading Units:

1. A Deep Study of Character
(Fiction)
2. Character and Effect on Theme:
Bridge to Terabithia (Fiction)*
3. Tapping the Power of Nonfiction
4. Conflict and Change: *Roll of Thunder* (Fiction)*
5. Social Issues Book Clubs
(Nonfiction)
6. Author Study Book Clubs
(Fiction)*

Writing Units:

1. Writing Territories
2. Realistic Fiction (Narrative)
3. Research-Based Information
Writing
4. The Art of Argument (Nonfiction
focus)*
5. Teen Activism Outreach
(Information)*
6. Literary Essay (Argument)

Impact of Reading and Writing in 6th Grade

- Students have 43 minutes of reading and 43 minutes of writing instruction daily
- Reading units are 4-5 weeks in length
- Writing units average 5 weeks in length
- All students are engaged in independent reading, with a goal of increasing stamina and volume
- Through regular writing activities, students learn to transfer skills from previous units and develop independence while strengthening their own voices
- Workshop allows for opportunities for teachers to observe and assess student learning throughout a unit; she then pulls individual students or small groups to address specific student needs

Grade 7 ELA Curriculum

Critical Literary Analysis: Novella Study and Character Analysis Paragraph

Characterization: Young Adult Fiction Book Clubs and Character Analysis Essay

Analyzing Literary Technique Through Short Stories and Literary Analysis Essay

Analyzing Literary Technique Through Poetry and Argument Essay (nonfiction)

Conflict and Drama: Reading and Analytical Paragraph Writing

Allegory and Symbolism: Book Clubs and Narrative Writing

Impact of Reading and Writing in 7th Grade

- Students have one 43-minute ELA block each day
- Current curriculum includes 6 reading and 5 writing units
- Reading units average 3-4 weeks in length
- Writing units average 3 weeks in length
- Students are still engaged with independent reading and book clubs
- Shorter writing units means that students do not have as much time to cycle through the writing process in a single unit
- More of a focus on argumentative writing

Impact of Eliminating 6th grade ELA Double Block

- 6th grade Standards will be taught with less depth.
- Level of personalization and differentiation is significantly reduced
 - Number of students per ELA teacher approximately doubles
 - Reduced amount of teacher feedback as part of writing process.
 - Impacts teachers' ability to confer individually with students.
- 6th grade bridge to the 7-12 English model impacts transition to WMS
 - Transition from 120 minutes of ELA in 5th grade to current 86 minute double block in 6th grade becomes more dramatic shift in a 43 minute single block. (Single block is $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time that 5th grade has).
 - Double block allows deeper learning into topic and less frenetic pace.
 - Affects teacher ability to teach process writing.

Impact of Eliminating 6th grade ELA Double Block

- Units of study that were recently revised will need to be revamped again.
- Teachers will need to shift direction after first year of implementation of new curriculum.
- Teachers will require professional development on how to integrate reading and writing within a single block.
- Potential negative impact on standardized test scores.

****Contractual concerns have been raised by the WTA regarding disparity between 6th grade versus 7th and 8th grade teacher schedules.

Recommendations

The CILs, Principals, and Assistant Superintendent recommend the following next steps in reviewing the K-8 literacy model:

1. Maintain the current 6th grade structure during the 2020-21 school year.
 - a. Continue to support teachers with the curricular shifts that have been made this year to incorporate increased rigor and volume of reading and writing.
 - b. Continue to strengthen and align curriculum with 6th grade CT Core Standards.

Recommendations

2. Continue to study the current double block structure during the upcoming school year.
3. Provide Curriculum Committee with an update on the K-8 literacy model during the fall semester 2020.

Additional Note - World Language

- Schools with a **single block of ELA** in 6th grade have **World Language daily**.
- Schools with a **double block of ELA** have **World Language every other day**.
- Last year, the Curriculum Committee affirmed the latter approach placing greater value on the double block of English.
- If the double block of ELA is eliminated -- a 1.0 FTE reduction -- consideration should be given to reallocating the FTE to daily World Language.
- There are no schools in DRG A that have a **single block of ELA** and **World Language every other day**.