

District 4100, Great Expectations School Local Literacy Plan

Helping students develop proficiency in literacy is an essential part of Great Expectations School's focus on "Growing Hearts and Minds, One Child at a Time". Literacy is essential to most academic development and a priority in the early grades (kindergarten through grade 3) where the foundations for future learning are laid. Structured as a rough guide through the year, the following identifies some of the key goals, methods, tools, and interventions used at GES, as well as the ways we work with parents to ensure effective communication and collaboration regarding student progress.

The school year begins with an "intake conference", during which parents have the opportunity to meet with the classroom teacher and share their knowledge, insights, hopes, and concerns regarding their child's development. This background information helps teachers understand the individual student more completely and begin planning approaches that will be effective in helping them learn. This is also a time for teachers to communicate some of the collaborative opportunities available to or expected of parents, such as reading aloud to or with students for 20 minutes per day, classroom communications such as daily "T.I.L.T. (Thing I Learned Today) sheets or weekly updates, and direct contact information and guidelines.

Teachers of students in grades K – 3 utilize ***SRA Imagine It!*** from McGraw Hill as their primary external resource. This scientifically-based curriculum not only features specific instruction in several literacy skill areas, but incorporates cross-curricular opportunities for teachers to use in developing extensions, applications, and connections for literacy development. Teachers build on these opportunities utilizing several instructional methods designed to reach a variety of learning styles and performance preferences so that individual student needs are addressed.

During the first six weeks of the school year, teachers perform several assessments of student proficiency. Some of these will be formal, using tools imbedded in the ***SRA Imagine It!*** curriculum, Renaissance Learning's STAR Early Literacy or Accelerated Reader, or NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Tests. Many will be informal observations of student work and performance. After these first six weeks, parents and teachers meet to discuss specific learning goals for their student. In the early primary grades, these often revolve around development or application of literacy skills. These goal-setting conferences establish a level of focus beyond those established through state or federal standards in order to tailor efforts to a child's unique situation.

Formative assessments continue throughout the school year, with teachers monitoring student development against both peer and normed standards. Classroom teachers meet as a group with Special Education teachers each 2 – 3 weeks to discuss students whose assessment data indicate they may not be making the expected progress. Teachers use research-based interventions from Hawthorne's Pre-Referral Intervention Manual when it appears students may benefit from general education accommodations or supports. To maintain parent awareness and involvement, teachers also contact parents directly as these interventions are implemented.

Formal progress reports are sent home and parent/teacher conferences scheduled for each student in January. These progress reports identify student proficiency in a broad range of literacy, with the conferences designed to provide additional details and answer any questions parents may have regarding their child's development. This conference is also used to reflect on the learning goals, strategies, interventions, and school-home collaborations established earlier in the year in order to determine their effectiveness. Modifications or refinements of these approaches are developed collaboratively with parents, and may involve follow-up meetings with additional school staff, including Administrative or Special Education staff as necessary.

As the school year continues and the classroom teacher reviews assessment and performance data, students who continue to struggle to make significant progress and who need additional support may be identified. Support at this stage often involves the efforts of trained volunteers using the above-mentioned curricular resources, The Barton Reading and Spelling System, or supplemental practice guides prepared by the classroom teacher. These sessions are offered in both small group and one-on-one settings, as appropriate. Again, teachers contact parents directly as these supports are implemented. Students who do not respond to these additional steps are often considered for entry into the GES's Special Education referral process.

In March, a second progress report is sent home and fourth parent/teacher conference is held. In this instance, the conference is framed by student work, with the teacher providing examples of student work that demonstrates the growth to-date in a variety of areas and highlights the ways individual learning goals from the goal-setting conference have been addressed.

Late spring is when many summative assessments take place, including the standardized Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA's) and MAP tests. GES uses MAP data as a primary measure in determining its success in meeting academic goals and in fulfilling its obligations under the charter contract with its authorizer, Audubon Center of the North Woods.

A final progress report is sent home at the end of the school year and contains not only updates on each of the areas of assessment, but a narrative summary of student progress and performance. Parents also have an opportunity to schedule a final parent/teacher conference if desired (in fact, they may request a conference at any time throughout the year if they wish).

Summer is often filled with staff development opportunities, some for individuals and some for all teachers. These opportunities are required to be approved in advance, meet professional development standards, and address specific areas of performance development. All teachers are required to have formal training in scientifically-based methods of reading instruction, as well as in meeting the needs of diverse students, including cross-cultural and English-Language learners. In addition, student assessment data is reviewed by classroom teachers, Special Education teachers, and district administration and incorporated into efforts to acquire, develop, or refine our curriculum, interventions, and processes to continually improve student achievement as the cycle begins again.