Wauwatosa ELA Instructional Program Analysis

Executive Report

Created by CESA #1

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ELA Instructional Program Analysis Process

CESA #1 consultants began the process of conducting an analysis of the ELA Instructional Program at Wauwatosa School District in the fall of 2018. This analysis worked to identify strengths, areas for growth, and gaps in ELA curriculum, instruction, materials, and assessment for students. The analysis also reviewed student performance data.

Teachers', administrators', students', and parents' voices were an extremely important part of the information gathered in this analysis. Surveys, focus groups, and observations were conducted to collect information. Prior to surveys being distributed, the consultants provided specific language to be shared with the stakeholders via email, so that participants would understand that this initiative was to support them and their students. The messaging also assured stakeholders that the surveys would be anonymous. Surveys were sent to all teachers, administrators, students (grades 4 - 12), and parents. The purpose of the surveys was to help the consultants understand ELA practices and perceptions in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Focus group meetings were the next step in this analysis. The consultants used the data captured in the survey responses to craft interview questions that would help to uncover more details about the strengths and areas for growth. The consultants facilitated focus groups with teachers, administrators, and students from elementary, middle and high school.

The consultants also spent time observing in classrooms. The purpose of the classroom visits was for the consultants to observe a sampling of the instructional practices that were occuring in ELA classes to affirm information collected from the surveys and focus groups.

The consultants had the opportunity to review assessment data from the district, as well as curriculum including texts, materials and assessments.

This report summarizes the findings from this analysis, as well as it provides recommendations to continue ELA Instructional Program growth for the Wauwatosa School District.

Instruction

Strengths

- Work has been done to align standards to the existing curriculum through a pacing guide
- Staff is eager and willing to learn and grow to support their classroom instructional practices
- Staff is able to use a large amount of professional resources and research to supplement classroom instructional materials
- Those using the Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Writing are consistently experiencing great success

Areas for Growth

- Focus on student centered instructional practices
- Engage students in more reading and writing
- Allow students more choice
- Infuse disciplinary literacy
- Utilize higher level questioning

Recommendations

Examine who is doing the work; develop student centered instructional practices by reducing teacher lecture and teacher-directed talk and, thus, increasing the amount of time students are engaged in reading, writing, and constructing their own knowledge socially (Almasi, J.; Calkins, L; Burkins, J. & Yaris, K.; Bennett, S.; Alvermann, D.; Fisher, D. & Frey, N; Nichols, M.; International Literacy Association).

Engage students in more reading and writing for authentic purposes and audiences, with the understanding that ungraded student writing practice is essential for student growth in all content areas (Allington, R.; Calkins, L.; Gallagher, K.; Kittle, P.; International Literacy Association).

Promote student self-selected, student agency, and choice in reading - both in and out of class (Calkins, L.; Miller, D.; Gallagher, K.; Kittle, P.).

- Increased motivation
- Accessible texts
- Texts of interest
- Increased time for reading stamina
- Reconsider whole-class novel/book approach to teach

Incorporate literacy skills and discipline-specific strategies within and across all content areas for authentic purposes in reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Buehl, D.; Beers, K; van den Broek, P.; Fang, Z, Duke, N.: Harvey & Goudvis).

Increase higher level questioning in instruction and assessment beyond Bloom's basic knowledge and comprehension (Beers, K.; Bloom, B.; Buehl, D.; Almasi, J.; Snow. C. & Sweet, A.; Webb, N.; van den Broek, P. & Kremer, K.).

ELA Curriculum/Schedule

Strengths

- Teacher awareness of ELA Standards for reading (both literature and informational text), writing, speaking and listening, and language study
    - Teacher recognition of the importance of aligning curriculum and materials to learning standards
    - Efforts to align current curricular materials to standards
- Desire to develop and implement a scope and sequence to ensure the curriculum provides a staircase for student learning
- Evidence of several highly effective teams who collaborate to plan lessons and develop assessments
- Evidence of common assessments across grade levels and courses
- Evidence of efforts to embed literacy instruction and practices across content areas, particularly at the middle school level

Areas for Growth

- Phase out ELA tracking
- Collaborate and plan within and across grade levels
- Collaborate in teams representing all roles
- Hire literacy coaches
- Develop MS & HS ELA scope and sequence
- Create equitable HS ELA course offerings

Recommendations

Strategically phase out ELA tracking system at the middle and high school levels to promote equity, ensure high expectations for all students, and provide universal access to rigorous, culturally responsive curriculum (Burris, C. & Garrity, D.).

- Partner authentically with family and community stakeholders to dissolve the secondary tracking system
- Consult with others who have successfully dissolved ELA tracking systems and created equitable access to rigorous, culturally responsive curriculum for all students

Provide opportunities for cross-school teacher collaboration and planning, both horizontally and vertically, including data inquiry to inform instructional practices for continuous improvement and equity (DuFour, R. & DuFour, R.; Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction).

Create a districtwide model for collaboration among special educators, interventionists, and grade level/content area teachers, including a co-teaching model for inclusive education for students with IEPs (DuFour, R. & DuFour, R.; Wepner, S.).

Hire full-time literacy coaches to support teachers in the classroom in order to improve tier one instruction in every building at every level (International Literacy Association, National Council of Teachers of English, Allen, J., Aguilar, E.; Sweeney, D.).

- Emphasis on supporting content teachers at high school

- Focus on understanding of text complexity for matching reader level to increase impactful independent reading
- On-going, real time, by highly trained and effective literacy coaches

- ○ Vocabulary instruction
- ○ Grammar and mechanics
- ○ Speaking and listening skills
- ○ Further exploration of handwriting and cursive

Develop and communicate an authentic and integrated ELA scope and sequence that develops complexity over time and defines a trajectory of learning (Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J.).
- Includes:
  - ○ Literary elements and figurative devices

Review and design high school ELA course offerings through an equity lens, focusing on student engagement through enduring understandings and essential questions, as opposed to units based on chronological study of literary movements (Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J.; Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction).

Resources

Strengths
- Evidence of teacher efforts to build and maintain classroom libraries at the elementary school level
- Use of high interest and engaging texts for book clubs at the middle school level
- Teacher awareness of the importance of robust classroom libraries, particularly at the elementary and middle schools
- Teacher recognition of the need for culturally relevant texts

Areas for Growth
- Build robust classroom libraries
- Align instructional materials and academic interventions

Recommendations
Build and maintain robust classroom libraries for choice and independent reading for every elementary, middle, and high

school ELA classroom, as well as for guided reading for elementary schools (Miller, D.; Calkins, L.; Gallagher, K.; Kittle, P.; International Literacy Association).
- Quantity representing approximately 30 distinct titles per student per classroom, and annual purchase of the equivalent of 5 new titles per student per classroom each year
- Multiple copies of popular titles
- A variety of genres (i.e., realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy and science fiction, informational text, biography and autobiography, short stories, classics, myths and legends, picture books, reference, poetry, graphic novels, and digital text/ebooks).
- A range of text complexity (from 2-to-3 years above and below grade level)
- Emphasis on:

- ○ Culturally representative text (20% of texts)
- ○ Authentic text (as opposed to basals)
- ○ Contemporary text (within the past 3-5 years)

Address inconsistency in both access to and use of instructional materials and academic interventions (US Dept. of Education; Leslie & Caldwell; Wisconsin RTI Center)

Professional Learning

Strengths
- Teachers express desire to grow in knowledge of the development of literacy and strategic instruction
- Teachers desire collaboration time within and across grade levels
- Evidence of implementation of previous professional learning in several areas of ELA, such as writers workshop at the middle school level
- Reading specialists are currently in place supporting students at the elementary level

Areas for Growth
- Provide PL on differentiation and withdrawal of scaffolding
- Develop multi-year PL on best literacy pedagogy
- Provide PL on conferring with readers and writers

Recommendations
Develop and provide professional learning on differentiation, as well as on how to strategically withdraw scaffolds to promote student independence (Tomlinson, C.).
- Elementary: Differentiate reading instruction outside of the anthology/basal

- Middle / High School: Differentiate through the use of discipline specific learning strategies

Develop a multi-year professional development plan around best literacy pedagogy at all grade levels (Wepner, S.; National Institute for Literacy; Buehl, D.; Routman, R.).
- Focus on capacity-building and inclusive practices
  - ○ Foundational reading practices, including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension
  - ○ Disciplinary literacy
- Place literacy coaches and reading specialists at the helm of the work

Provide professional learning on how to effectively confer with readers and writers to differentiate instruction and accelerate growth (Calkins, L.; Goldberg, G. & Serravallo, J.; Anderson, C.).
- How to set up conferring
- Benefits of conferring
- The efficiency and effectiveness of discussing student writing during the writing process versus providing written feedback

Assessment

Strengths

- There are a variety of data points and assessments
- Assessments are used for next steps in instruction, and to identify additional supports, skills mastered, and content delivery
- Data is triangulated when making instructional decisions

Areas for Growth

- Provide PL on designing valid and reliable assessments
- Develop inter-rater reliability protocols
- Infuse effective reading assessment at secondary level
- Empower students as responsive learners

Recommendations

Provide professional learning on ensuring validity and reliability when designing and using assessments (Frontier, T.; Chappuis, J.; Stiggins. R.; Chappuis, S.; & Arter, J.).

- How to write a prompt that will elicit evidence of the standard(s) it is intended to measure
- How to write items on an assessment that are representative of the ways the standards are utilized in authentic contexts
- How to write assessments that can be used to guide instruction, give effective feedback, and communicate achievement effectively

Develop and use protocols to promote inter-rater reliability (Calkins, L.; Stiggins, R.).

- Ongoing, strategic collaboration to examine and align expectations for student learning and interpretation of student responses as evidence of learning

Provide professional learning and coaching to infuse effective reading assessment at the secondary level (Afflerbach, P.). Provide professional learning to develop assessment practices that empower students as responsive learners (Fisher.D.; Frey, N. & Hattie, J.; Stiggins, R.).

**The detailed report provides a three-year implementation plan to implement the recommendations with customizable services and support from CESA #1.