

BOARD MEMO

Date: November 12, 2020

For ACTION _____

For INFORMATION X

Board Agenda: Yes X

No _____

FROM: Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Gerald R. Mann, Jr., Ed.D., Executive Director of Instructional Support
Kimberly Schell, M.Ed., K-12 Literacy Coordinator and Secondary Literacy Instructional Specialist
Carolyn Wooster, Ed.D., Elementary Literacy Instructional Specialist

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: Areas of Focus Update - Academic Disparities (Pre-K-2 Literacy)

ACPS 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Goal 1: Systemic Alignment

Goal 2: Instructional Excellence

Goal 4: Strategic Resource Allocation

SY 2020-2021 FOCUS AREA

Focus Area 3: Strategic Plan Implementation

Focus Area 5: Academic Disparities

FY 2021 BUDGET PRIORITY

K-2 Literacy Programming

SUMMARY

As a result of the School Board's commitment to early literacy and in alignment with the 2025 *Strategic Plan: Equity for All*, Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) is focused on its Pre-K-2 students' literacy achievement. Knowing the importance of early literacy development on future academic success, ACPS reflects upon and incorporates current research on our instruction's most effective literacy practices.

Throughout the 2019-2020 school year, ACPS convened a K-2 Literacy Task Force to form a strategic plan to address the priority of K-2 literacy instruction in the coming years. The K-2 Literacy Task Force, comprised of teachers, administrators, and literacy coaches representing each elementary school throughout the division,

- Analyzed student data;
- Reviewed current academic research and literature;

BOARD MEMO

- Inventoried current ACPS practices and resources; and
- Developed a plan to address the literacy needs in ACPS with a goal of *Equity for All* students.

The K-2 Literacy Task Force identified the following deliverables for improving Pre-K-2 literacy across ACPS:

- Implementation of explicit and systematic phonemic awareness and phonics resources;
- Focused professional development to support teachers in instructional decision-making, including protocols for analyzing data;
- Focused Tier I instruction to achieve higher pass rates or demonstration of growth on the Reading Standards of Learning (SOL) or Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS); and
- Professional development to establish fidelity in teaching reading and writing workshops.

In working to achieve these deliverables, we plan to enhance our current practices with increased teacher professional development and supportive curriculum resources to ensure every reader's success.

ACPS has been working innovatively in recent months to improve our ability to accelerate student learning in a virtual learning environment:

- Developing curricula of engaging virtual resources in alignment with prioritized standards;
- Adopting and training teachers in the use of digital resources and practices;
- Adapting assessments for remote administration to assess learning loss and plan data-informed instruction;
- Provisioning access to both print and digital texts;
- Facilitating integration of print-digital solutions for foundational skills instruction in handwriting and phonics; and
- Providing virtual small-group intervention for at-risk students, including 45 minutes of daily English Language Development (ELD) instruction for English Learners (ELs) of all proficiency levels.

We look forward to collaborating with all ACPS stakeholders to continuously improve our practice of early literacy instruction in virtual and hybrid learning environments and to implement the recommendations put forth by the K-2 Literacy Task Force in the K-2 Literacy Plan throughout the years ahead.

BACKGROUND

Literacy in the 21st century involves students becoming active and intelligent users of print and non-print text, including using critical, creative, and self-regulated **thinking processes** to understand and **contribute to their world**. The ACPS literacy program aims to develop students' ability to **navigate, critically analyze, synthesize, and communicate** in the ever-changing world around them.

BOARD MEMO

Literacy involves students' **capacity for communicating with themselves and others**. It requires that students engage in discourse domains, including **reading, writing, speaking, and listening**. Additionally, students who demonstrate literacy skills can **investigate, explain, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information presented in various media**.

The ACPS literacy program utilizes a gradual release of responsibility model to move students towards **independent mastery** of new knowledge and skills with **whole-group, small-group, and individual instructional practices**. In all of these contexts, teachers work to foster conditions that provide **culturally sustaining pedagogies** and **maximize learners' engagement**. Through the ACPS Multi-Tiered System of Supports, data is continuously reviewed to ensure students receive **differentiated instruction** targeted to their individual needs.

Daily instructional practices within these structures include the following:

- Minilessons providing explicit modeling and guided practice;
- Interactive read-alouds with accountable talk;
- Shared reading and interactive writing;
- Word study (including phonics and vocabulary instruction);
- Accountable, goal-directed independent reading and writing; and
- Assessment-based differentiated small group instruction.

RECOMMENDATION

The Superintendent recommends that the School Board review the Pre-K-2 Virtual PLUS+ instructional models and resources as well as the recommendations of the K-2 Literacy Task Force.

IMPACT

In implementing our K-2 Literacy Plan, we hope to achieve the following:

- Increased pass rates or demonstration of growth on PALS and reading SOL assessments;
- Increased opportunity for ongoing professional learning for early literacy;
- Increased mid-year and end-of-the-year guided reading levels in grades K-2; and
- Increased fidelity in the teaching of reading and writing workshops.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 201112_Powerpoint_Area_of_Focus_Update_Academic_Disparities_Pre-K-2_Literacy
2. K-2 Literacy Task Force Project Plan

CONTACTS

1. Kimberly Schell, kimberly.schell@acps.k12.va.us
2. Dr. Carolyn Wooster, carolyn.wooster@acps.k12.va.us