

Literacy Supports in the Worcester Public Schools

WEC Lunch and Learn, April 3, 2024

Amanda Taylor, Elementary ELA Liaison

Office of Teaching and Learning

From Here, Anywhere....

Together



WORCESTER
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- 15 years in the Worcester Public Schools
- Currently serving as the district Elementary ELA Liaison in the Office of Teaching and Learning
- Former Elementary ELA Instructional Coach and Primary Classroom Teacher



Amanda Taylor

The Literacy Crisis in Massachusetts & Worcester

- Less than half of Massachusetts third-graders were meeting or exceeding grade level expectations in English Language Arts (ELA) on the 2023 MCAS assessment.
- Outcomes for Black and Latino students, students from low-income families, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities were significantly worse.
- Worcester's data mirrored statewide trends with just 24% of third-grade students meeting or exceeding grade-level ELA expectations on the 2023 MCAS.
- Worcester's teachers did not have access to elementary ELA curricular materials that were considered high-quality as of the 2022-2023 school year.

Supports for Shifts in Literacy Practices 2023-2024

- Extensive training for all instructional coaches and teacher leaders from each elementary school through “Keys to Beginning Reading” coursework
- Book studies and monthly workshops for instructional coaches and teachers
- Extensive curriculum program selection process
- 2 month pilot of top two program choices in six schools each
- Selection and School Committee approval of Amplify Core Language Arts (CKLA) and Amplify ELA curriculum
- Full day of May/June training in new curriculum for every educator and principal
- District pacing guides developed by teacher teams

Why Amplify?

- green-rated by both EdReports and CURATE and highly rated by our piloting teachers
- aligns to standards and research-based practices
- explicit and systematic foundational skills instruction in K-2
- texts are rich and rigorous, offering a balance of informational and literary reading
- units organized to support building knowledge on a wide range of topics over time
- learning tasks provide opportunities for students to think strategically and extend thinking
- writing instruction is explicit, integrated, and meaningful
- strategies for meeting the needs of a range of learners
- tools to collect ongoing data about student progress and personalize support

“There is extremely explicit phonics instruction every day and the skills learned are repeatedly reviewed throughout the week.”

- *WPS Kindergarten CKLA Pilot Teacher*

“All of my students are so engaged during all components of the curriculum. Students who don't usually participate are raising their hands to answer questions. Students feel empowered and I am seeing evidence that they are learning.”

- *WPS Grade 4 CKLA Pilot Teacher*

Supports for Shifts in Literacy Practices 2024-2025

- Systemwide implementation of the Amplify CKLA and ELA core curriculum programs, Language Studio Supplement, mCLASS/DIBELS assessment and intervention platform, and Boost Reading personalized learning platform
- Continued half and full-day curriculum trainings for educators and leaders
- Monthly implementation support meetings for instructional coaches
- Biweekly meeting with Amplify to support district-level data analysis and answer implementation questions
- Learning walks and school-based supports

Supporting our Shift

- Read caregiver letters sent home at the start of each unit
- Read aloud at home and talk about books
- When students are sent home passages to read in K-2, know that they are decodable passages, prompt children to “sound out” the words
- Follow up on early literacy screening results
- Support summer reading participation

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Thank You