



**MINUTES**

Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Chairperson  
John Benbow, Jr.  
Troy Bier  
Christopher Inda  
John Krings, President  
Elizabeth St.Myers  
Julie Timm

June 3, 2024

LOCATION: Board of Education Office, 510 Peach Street, Wisconsin Rapids, WI  
Conference Room A/B

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: John Benbow, Jr., Christopher Inda, Troy Bier, John Krings, Kathi Stebbins-Hintz, Elizabeth St.Myers, Julie Timm

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Craig Broeren, Nicole Calteux, Roxanne Filtz, Steve Hepp, Aaron Nelson, Ronald Rasmussen, Jennifer Wilhorn

- I. Call to Order
- II. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. Public Comment – none.
- IV. Actionable Items
  - A. Grades 6-8 Science Materials Acquisition

Dave Bergerson, Science Department Chairperson, presented a recommendation for the purchase of grades 6-8 Science education curriculum materials which was reviewed by the Council for Instructional Improvement (CII) Committee who has signaled their support. After reviewing and piloting a variety of options from multiple vendors, including free online resources produced by Open Science Ed, Mr. Bergerson explained that resources and materials are being recommended for purchase to complement the Open Science Ed program. He reviewed a request to purchase items from Carolina, which has excellent print materials, at a cost of \$2,638.68; and Activate, which has exceptional starter kits and free online access to teacher resources at a cost of \$19,818.40. Additional general needs for equipment that has either worn out or needs to be replaced, and to supplement the Open Science Ed program are also being requested at a projected cost of \$4,657.33. The entire purchase is anticipated to cost just under \$30,000.00. Mr. Bergerson described how well the materials will follow the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

**ES-1 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of the proposed 6-8 Science acquisition as presented in an amount not to exceed \$30,000.00 to be funded through the WRPS Referendum Curriculum budget. Motion carried unanimously.**

- B. Policy 345.5 – Graduation Requirements for First Reading

Roxanne Filtz, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, explained that passage of Wisconsin Act 60 in December, 2023 caused a need for Policy 345.5 – Graduation Requirements to undergo review.

The requirement from Act 60 for high school students to complete a half credit of personal financial literacy to graduate is already being followed by Lincoln High School. However, portions of policy language are outdated and should be removed. Also, an update to the policy’s discrimination language is proposed to align it with the Board’s nondiscrimination policy.

**ES-2 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by John Krings, to approve of Policy 345.5 – Graduation Requirements as presented for first reading. Motion carried unanimously.**

C. Grades K-5 ELA/Reading/Handwriting Materials Acquisition

Ms. Filtz and Jennifer Wilhorn, Assistant Director of Curriculum, explained the process up to this point to have elementary classroom teachers piloting and selecting instructional materials for recommendation to purchase that adhere to the provisions of Wisconsin Act 20. Ms. Wilhorn expressed deep appreciation to the Language Arts Council for Instructional Improvement (CII) committee members who have been involved to ensure that all grade levels and buildings have been represented throughout the process. Points from the acquisition presentation include:

- Even though the choice of materials was narrowed by Act 20, the CII group was careful to ensure that the WRPS curriculum acquisition process was still followed
- Updates have been provided to the Council for Instructional Improvement Committee and Board of Education throughout the process
- Materials were piloted by elementary teachers; a rubric was utilized by all piloting teachers to ensure they knew what to look for while using the materials
- Feedback was solicited from all piloting teachers
- Language Arts CII met to review pilot results on May 14, 2024, paying close attention to how teachers scored the materials; many of the CII members also spoke with teachers directly and visited with them in their classrooms during the pilot
- A list of pros and cons was generated for the two sets of materials being reviewed (EL by Open Up and Amplify CKLA) which Ms. Wilhorn shared:

<b>- PROS -</b>	
<b>EL by Open Up</b>	<b>Amplify CKLA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Varying assessments (formal and less formal)</li> <li>▪ Conversation – language development in small groups – getting kids to talk about a given topic</li> <li>▪ Character traits &amp; SEL sensitive to race, gender, ethnicity – scored higher</li> <li>▪ Opportunities for differentiation</li> <li>▪ Comprehension was higher, text complexity was higher</li> <li>▪ Progression of phonological awareness clear and laid out</li> <li>▪ High emphasis on vocabulary development and word analysis skills</li> <li>▪ Independent reading built in</li> <li>▪ Ideas for supporting EL students in every lesson</li> <li>▪ Higher scores for writing development and skills</li> <li>▪ Novels built in grades 3-5</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student engagement</li> <li>▪ High language development</li> <li>▪ Seems to be stronger K-12</li> <li>▪ Material organization – better teacher manuals</li> <li>▪ Ease of teacher use</li> <li>▪ Standards alignment</li> <li>▪ Available digitally, differentiation</li> <li>▪ Easier sub plans</li> <li>▪ Phonics in general</li> <li>▪ Strong foundational skills</li> <li>▪ Materials support the instruction</li> <li>▪ Materials are provided for you – you don’t need to look for your own materials</li> <li>▪ Strong assessments</li> </ul>

<b>- CONS -</b>	
<b>EL by Open Up</b>	<b>Amplify CKLA</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Digital is hard</li> <li>▪ Slides are not made by the company</li> <li>▪ They are not truly ready to use</li>   <li>▪ They are hard to find</li> <li>▪ Not as strong of phonics</li> <li>▪ At K-2, nothing is provided – you have to go in and find it in the resources, decide, and copy for small groups</li> <li>▪ It’s all choice now, but 2024 revision is supposed to make this more laid out?</li> <li>▪ May lack consistency, but it also allows for teacher choice</li> <li>▪ Manual is very difficult to read and figure out; it’s very lengthy, and you have to flip a lot to find what you need</li>   <li>▪ Topics are repetitive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Topics and how they are covered</li> <li>▪ Is there enough to differentiate for high readers?</li> <li>▪ There is a lot for struggling readers K-2; it is unclear if there is enough for high readers</li> <li>▪ Not enough time to pull small groups in 3-5</li> <li>▪ Time constraints in general</li> <li>▪ Mostly whole group instruction</li>   <li>▪ Point of view?</li>   <li>▪ No independent reading</li> <li>▪ Lack of reading anything outside of Amplify’s texts, real books/authentic text (you can read them, but it is not built in)</li> </ul>

- EL by Open Up would be labor intensive to implement due to the format of the materials
- If Amplify is adopted, staff will be vigilant in ensuring Wisconsin State Standards are covered and topics are presented in an appropriate way that meets student need
- Differentiation will be a focus if Amplify gets adopted due to the high level of materials involved
- After a two-month pilot, there seems to be a great deal of whole group instruction using Amplify; teachers will need to be mindful of this to determine how the curriculum can be adapted as necessary for small group instructional needs
- Independent reading opportunities are not prevalent with Amplify; the elementary administrator team is brainstorming solutions on how these opportunities could be built into the school day
- The Elementary LA CII vote results: 10 in favor of Amplify CKLA; 3 in favor of EL by Open Up
- Commentary by the Elementary LA CII during the review:
  - High language development and foundational skills (Amplify)
  - The differentiated instruction, small group time daily and built in real book reading, as well as SEL, and effect learner traits is important (EL)
  - We need consistency (Amplify) – *Ms. Wilhorn echoed that the recent Literacy Audit conducted also confirmed this commentary*
- If EL were selected, individuals would likely be searching for supplemental materials which would not lend to the consistency needed; the teacher-friendly format of Amplify would help to address the consistency concern (not teachers teaching the same thing in the same way every day; but more a matter of teaching in accordance with Board approved materials, lending fidelity to the process and consistency for students who are transient and moving between buildings)

Ms. Wilhorn also presented information concerning the handwriting materials also being considered in the ELA acquisition, noting the following:

- Handwriting has consistently been taught throughout time at WRPS
- A committee of long ago put together the handwriting materials for grades KG, 1, 2, 4, and 5 that are used; these materials are copied and bound together each year through the District centralized copy center
- Over time, it has become apparent that some teachers are not fully utilizing the materials, and a number of the binders provided for each classroom 15+ years ago are missing pages and not being fully utilized as intended with numerous classroom staff changes occurring
- Grade 3 has always used Zaner-Bloser handwriting materials
- For the purpose of consistency, the LA CII Committee supports having Zaner-Bloser workbooks purchased for use in grades 1-5

- Kindergarten materials would not be purchased for next year since letter formation is supposed to be covered in the Amplify materials – if it is found that handwriting for this level isn't covered appropriately, then Zaner-Bloser workbooks would also be requested for purchase at the kindergarten level in subsequent years
- Ms. Filtz explained that with the consistency being considered at the elementary level, the Zaner-Bloser handwriting materials are also going to be considered for adoption at the grades 6-7 level; no decisions have been made since that acquisition process begins in the coming year

A few final points made by Ms. Wilhorn include:

- Amplify has a robust and supportive customer service team, which has been very helpful during the piloting process
- A community review of the materials was held on May 22, 2024, with two individuals attending and one congratulatory comment made to the Curriculum Department for "handling the transition to a new ELA curriculum/program"
- The full CII committee was presented with pilot results on May 28, 2024 with unanimous support shown for both the Amplify CKLA and Zaner-Bloser handwriting materials being proposed

A recommendation was made to purchase three years of Amplify CKLA for grades K-5 which includes all materials and the digital platform to support them, as well as professional development at a cost of \$578,910.82. This would include an additional set of materials at each building for other staff needing access such as reading interventionists and special education teachers. Additionally, the administration recommended the purchase of three years of Zaner-Bloser Handwriting for grades 1-5 at a cost of \$68,997.44.

Ms. Wilhorn explained that since the District would be selecting one of the pre-approved sets of curriculum materials prescribed through Act 20 via the Wisconsin Early Literacy Curriculum Council, it is possible that a portion of the cost will be reimbursed through the State; more information will be available as the State determines the level of funding that individual districts will be eligible to receive.

Next steps in the process include:

- ✓ purchasing the materials for arrival by August
- ✓ hosting a full day of Amplify CKLA Training on August 27, 2024
- ✓ implementation of the new materials at the beginning of September, 2024
- ✓ providing an additional half-day Amplify CKLA Training on September 27, 2024
- ✓ hosting Roundtable DEU opportunities throughout the 2024-25 school year
- ✓ providing additional coaching support through Amplify CKLA in 2024-25
- ✓ development of elementary ELA curriculum maps/Wisconsin State Standards alignment
- ✓ modify elementary progress reports as needed

Ms. Stebbins-Hintz complimented the efforts and work put forth by the Curriculum Department and staff members involved in the process. She questioned where Amplify and EL by Open Up fit within the original products and programs being considered by the State Curriculum Council. Ms. Wilhorn explained how the pilot process began with a larger set of materials (including Amplify) which were on a DPI-approved list up until the State Joint Committee on Finance voted in March, 2024 to approve of only four curricula selected by the Wisconsin Early Literacy Council. The four approved curricula are: Core Knowledge Language Arts K-3 (Amplify), Our EL Education Language Arts, Wit and Wisdom with PK-3 Reading Curriculum, and Bookworms Reading and Writing K-3. All possibilities were considered by the Elementary LA CII, and certain products were ruled out of consideration to pilot for mediocre reviews and reasons such as a product not covering all areas of need which would be more labor-intensive and stressful for teachers to implement. There were programs included in the District pilot early on that were receiving high reviews from teachers with Amplify in the mix; however, once the list was reduced by the State the focus turned toward those programs/products exclusively.

A question was raised around why only a three-year material purchase is being requested. Ms. Filtz explained that rather than locking into a particular curriculum for ten years, if it is found within three years that the program selected isn't working and producing the desired results in student scores, the District should keep its options open to pivot and change course to a different product if warranted. Three years' worth of data will be needed to allow the program to be fully implemented to fidelity prior to making this determination.

Ms. Stebbins-Hintz expressed concerns about the whole group instruction emphasis of the Amplify program. Ms. Wilhorn acknowledged the concern, stating that Amplify's response would be that exposing and teaching all students to the grade level standards is how progress forward is made. However, this does limit the differentiated instruction, small group approach that has been utilized consistently over time in the District, which is a big shift to become accustomed to; it remains to be seen whether the new approach will improve student success. If the materials are as strong as they appear to be, the focus in professional development will initially be on the materials, but then move past that to focus more on instructional practice.

Committee members expressed deep appreciation for all of the thought, piloting, and planning that has taken place throughout the past school year to prepare for the elementary ELA acquisition.

**ES-3 Motion by Troy Bier, seconded by Julie Timm, to approve of the proposed 3-year K-5 Amplify CKLA acquisition at a total cost of \$578,910.82 and the Zaner-Bloser Handwriting workbooks acquisition for grades 1-5 at a total cost of \$68,997.44 to be paid through the WRPS Referendum Curriculum budget. Motion carried on a vote of 6-1. Kathi Stebbins-Hintz voted no.**

D. 7 Mindsets Renewal

Steven Hepp, Director of Pupil Services, presented a proposal to approve of the renewal of "7 Mindsets" social emotional learning curriculum for grades 6-12 for the 2024-25 school year at a cost not to exceed \$39,000.00 using ESSER III funds. The 7 Mindsets curriculum was implemented by the Wisconsin Rapids Area Middle School (WRAMS) and Lincoln High School (LHS) beginning with the 2023-24 school year. The proposal also includes their "BASE Education" program which assesses students individually and provides personalized learning pathways for students needing Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention support. A question was raised around the types of social emotional learning skills the curriculum covers, which Mr. Hepp provided.

**ES-4 Motion by John Benbow, seconded by Troy Bier, to approve of the proposed renewal of "7 Mindsets" for the 2024-25 school year at a cost not to exceed \$39,000.00 and to be paid through ESSER III funds. Motion carried unanimously.**

V. Updates

A. Reading Screener for Grades 6-12

Ms. Wilhorn provided an update around the decision to purchase MAP Growth as the District reading screener for grades 6-12. MAP Growth will replace the Reading Inventory screener currently being used at the secondary level since it is being sunsetted. MAP Growth and Star Reading were the two programs piloted as a replacement to be used in the coming year, and after feedback was solicited from both staff and students involved in the pilot and reviewing data around the products, MAP Growth was selected at a cost of \$18,060.00 to be paid using ESSER III funds. The administration plans to monitor the use of MAP Growth in the year ahead to determine if it will be continued beyond the 2024-25 school year.

VI. Consent Agenda Items

- ES-1 6-8 Science Acquisition**
- ES-2 Board Policy 345.5 – Graduation Requirements, First Reading**
- ES-3 Elementary Language Arts and Handwriting Acquisition**
- ES-4 Renewal of “7 Mindsets” Social Emotional Learning Curriculum**

VII. Future Agenda Items/Information Requests

The Committee reviewed the following future agenda items:

- GATES Update (July)
- Pupil Academic Standards (July)
- Achievement Gap Reduction Report (August)
- Seclusion and Restraint Report (August)
- ESSA Update (September)

Ms. Stebbins-Hintz adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.