

Board Development Topic: Shifts in Early Literacy Instruction

Date of Board Meeting:

October 6, 2022

Strategic Priority:

- High Quality Teaching and Learning
- Engagement of All Students, Families, and Communities
- Effective Policy and Procedures
- Healthy, Sustainable Physical & Social Environments

Quality Indicator(s):

QI 6.2 – The Director keeps the Board informed about Division operations.

QI 6.3 – The Director provides the Board with balance, sufficient, concise information, and clear recommendations for actions items in agendas.

QI 6.6 – The Director ensures high quality management services are provided to the Board.

Information for the Board (10 fast facts):

1. There has been a shift in early literacy towards a stronger focus in systematic phonological awareness instruction. This is based on research that suggests that the brain is not “wired” for learning to read as it is for learning oral language. Our team has been moving towards this for the past several years.
2. Kindergarten teachers in GSSD were provided professional development on the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program early last year. This program provides teachers a guide to teach phonemic awareness skills to students in a systematic and engaging way.
3. The Early Years Team has increasingly been collaborating with our Speech and Language Pathologists to gain a better understanding of phonological awareness and to build plans for teacher support. Our SLPs work closely with our Kindergarten classrooms.
4. The SLPs also continue to provide phonological awareness screening to our K students twice a year. At the end of last year our data meetings provided teams with specific plans to intervene with students whose results suggested they would need additional support.
5. Our Early Years Team is working on a more focused and systematic approach to addressing the EYE and phonological awareness data in the fall. More collaboration with SLPs and specific scope and sequences will be used to provide small group and whole group instruction.
6. GSSD Gr. 1 teachers were provided with professional development on the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Program this August. Coaching follow up will occur with the use of a fidelity checklist. This instruction will continue to build foundational skills in reading for our students.
7. Our Early Years Team is exploring the use of decodable books in the early years (particularly Gr. 1) to supplement phonics instruction and support phonological awareness. We will also be exploring additional resources to teach the foundations of reading including “The Phonics Companion”, a resource that has systematic phonics lessons to teach whole class.

8. The Early Years Team is providing teachers the opportunity to participate in a book study called “Shifting the Balance”. This resource explores the ways teachers can infuse a stronger focus on phonological awareness in a balanced literacy classroom.
9. The Early Years Team is investigating ways in which we can address the disparity between Indigenous students’ reading achievement and non-Indigenous student achievement. We have developed Indigenous story bins for our kindergarten classrooms and will be guiding teachers K-3 in using the “Under One Sun” resource. This is a comprehensive resource for teaching English Language Arts with a focus on Indigenous content and perspectives.
10. This year we have several schools piloting SIMBI. This is an online digital reading platform which supports fluency instruction, and independent reading. Teachers have access to reading recordings submitted by the students which enables them to monitor growth and provide oral feedback. SIMBI also includes a bank of decodable books for early readers.

Respectfully submitted,

Quintin M. Robertson, Director/CEO
Good Spirit School Division