



IOWA CITY  
COMMUNITY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT  
Child-Centered : Future-Focused

# Self Study of ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS Instructional Program

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## **ELA PROGRAM MISSION, BELIEFS, GOALS AND STANDARDS**

As a result of the curriculum review process, the self-study team reviewed the district language arts mission statement, belief statements, and goals that had been adopted in the previous program review (2010-2011). They were revised and they will serve as a reference for all programming.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of language arts curriculum and instruction is to ensure that students are critical users and producers of language through listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and digital composition.

### **Belief Statements**

We believe that:

1. The construction of meaning is central to learning. Language is used to compose and comprehend meaning as students interact with texts and with others, connecting the new to the known as they extend their understanding.
2. Language systems are integrated. Interrelationships among the communication modes are emphasized--listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and digital composition. Each mode informs use of others. Integration of oral, visual, and written language focuses on meaningful audiences and purposes.
3. Language users bring prior knowledge and belief systems to their learning which they blend in ways unique to them. Through the active use of language in the learning process, students develop a personal voice and style.
4. Providing opportunities for student voice and choice through authentic production of written and digital texts empowers students as competent, confident communicators.
5. Students have the right to differentiated instruction based on their needs.
6. Effective instruction supports a student's cognitive and linguistic development.
7. Language arts instruction must be culturally representative and responsive to student backgrounds and experiences.
8. Literary study should not be limited to Standard Academic English or traditional canonical works.

### **Academic Achievement Goals for Students**

The district goal for reading is described in both narrative and numeric form. The narrative form is found in Board policy. The numeric goal (applicable to reading only) is the same as the goal for the State of Iowa. It is approved by the Board of Directors and recorded in the district Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

Goal: Students will over time independently read increasingly complex text with understanding

- On average, yearly achievement will be as high or higher than previous years in same grade groups.
- On average, achievement will increase at a rate greater than the national average for cohort groups.
- On average, achievement gaps between subgroups will decrease from previous years.

District Iowa Assessments 2017-2018					
Reading Percent Proficient					
Grade	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017
Third	75%	78%	76%	73%	76%
Fourth	75%	76%	75%	75%	73%
Fifth	75%	77%	74%	73%	73%
Sixth	71%	76%	74%	74%	74%
Seventh	74%	75%	79%	78%	74%
Eighth	76%	73%	72%	79%	74%
Ninth	89%	83%	83%	82%	83%
Tenth	84%	88%	84%	84%	81%
Eleventh	88%	78%	79%	78%	76%

### Program Goals

The goals of the program are summarized by the Iowa Common Core Literacy Standards.

#### College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading

##### Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

##### Craft and Structure

4. Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.
5. Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.
6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

##### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually

and quantitatively, as well as in words.\*

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.
9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

#### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

### **College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing**

#### Text Types and Purposes

1. Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

#### Range of Writing

10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

### **College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening**

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with

diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

2. Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.
3. Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

#### Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
5. Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.
6. Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

### **College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language**

#### Conventions of Standard English

1. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

#### Knowledge of Language

3. Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

#### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.
5. Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.
6. Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.

## ELA PROGRAM DATA

### Data Collection

Numerous survey instruments were developed and administered in the spring of 2018. Target groups included teachers, principals, parents, and students at the secondary level.

The purpose of the surveys was to identify program strengths and limitations in the areas of academic achievement; curriculum and instruction; and supports and management. Respondents were asked to react to a set of statements identifying whether or not they agreed or disagreed. They were also given an opportunity to make comments.

### Academic Achievement

Students are assessed in a variety of ways and with different measurements to determine student learning, achievement and performance. Measurements used include 1) universal screening, 2) diagnostic, 3) formative, and 4) summative assessments are administered to all students unless otherwise noted in an individualized education plan. Many college-bound students elect to take the ACT.

Type/Purpose	System Use	Elementary	Secondary
Screening	Identify level of resources needed to meet all students' need.	Formative Assessment System for Teachers Early Reading CBM-R aReading	iReady Assessment Grades: 7 and 9 Content: reading and vocabulary
Diagnostic	Identify students' individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills.	PASI (95%) PSI (95%) Walpole Screener Kilpatrick PAST Spelling Inventory	iReady Assessment Grades: 7 and 9 Content: reading and vocabulary  Common Formative Assessments: Determined by PLC
Formative Assessment  Assessment for Learning  Progress Monitoring	Designed to monitor the learning process in order to modify teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment.	<b>Assessment for Learning:</b> Common Formative Assessments: Determined by PLC  Assessments for Learning (for example: quick write, exit slips, etc)	Common Formative Assessments: Determined by PLC  Assessments for Learning (for example: quick write, exit slips, etc)  iReady Assessment Grades: 7 and 9 Content:

		<b>Progress Monitoring:</b> FAST measures	reading and vocabulary
Summative Assessment of Learning	Designed to identify the result of ongoing instruction.	Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress	Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress

### **Data Collection: Program Information**

#### Administrative Support

At the district level, there is a 1 FTE K-6 literacy instructional support specialist and a .40 FTE 7-12 language arts coordinator. Their roles are to coordinate the K-6 and 7-12 language arts programs. Those individuals are the chairs of the curriculum review team. In addition, there is a full-time director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Educational consultants from Grant Wood Area Education Agency are available to assist staff in all buildings, alongside instructional design strategists (IDS), innovation specialists, and cultural proficiency team members.

The principal is the instructional leader of the building. Supporting each principal and the teachers in a building are Instructional Design Strategists (IDS). IDS support the individual professional growth and reflective practice of teachers and partner with building leadership teams to ensure building and district systems that best support learning and professional growth. IDS assignments for a building range from .50 to 1.0 FTE based on the size of the building. An Instructional leadership team (ILT), comprised of teachers also support literacy instruction in a building. The leadership team supports professional learning communities (PLCs) to ensure multi tiered system of supports for students.

## ELA PROGRAM STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

### ICCSA Language Arts Program Strengths and Limitations

The following information was generated from review and analysis of data gathered from a) academic achievement reports, b) surveys to elementary and secondary teachers, students, and administrators, and c) feedback from parents and/or guardians.

#### Strengths

##### Academic Achievement

- Academic achievement in reading is high compared to the nation; 73 to 83% of the student population (grades 3 to 11) performs at or above proficiency level. Academic achievement has remained steady over a ten-year period.
- In 7-12 grades,
  - there are initial gains between junior high and high school.
  - ACT data is above the state average.
  - Black or African-American and Hispanic cohorts make some gains in closing the opportunity (achievement) gaps in some grades.

##### Curriculum and Instruction

- Most (84%) of participating parents indicated they are satisfied or very satisfied with the overall English Language Arts program.
- In grades 7-12, common formative assessments (CFAs) are being used to guide instruction.
- Teachers believe technology is incorporated effectively.

##### Supports and Management

- The secondary level has strong access to literature and wifi hotspots.
- Most (86%) of surveyed secondary students are satisfied with the course offerings at their school.

#### Limitations

##### Academic Achievement

- District-wide, the opportunity (achievement) gap between subgroups is evident over time.
- Elementary Iowa Assessments achievement data is stagnant within cohorts, although elementary FAST achievement data shows improvement within cohorts.
- As a cohort, eleventh-grade students consistently score below their tenth-grade achievement levels.

##### Curriculum and Instruction

- Secondary students struggle to produce high-quality writing on a deadline.
- For secondary students, public speaking confidence is low. (7-12) Only 52% of junior high and 59% of high school student participants agreed or strongly agreed they are confident in their public speaking ability. Half of the secondary English teachers selected

speaking and listening as a topic from which they would benefit from additional professional development.

- District-wide, students do not read for depth or persist with complex texts.

#### Supports and Management

- District-wide, there is limited actionable data from standardized assessments in certain domains.
- At the elementary level, current materials lack differentiation for small-group reading and intervention.
- At the elementary level, core materials for writing instruction do not address the Iowa Core standards and common writing assessments are not utilized to guide instruction.
- Elementary teachers request professional development in the area of differentiated reading instruction.
- At the secondary level, buildings lack materials for supporting students who struggle and have few materials for teaching grammar. (7-12)

Those responding to the survey included

- Elementary teachers – 238
- Secondary teachers – 85
- Junior high students – 882
- Secondary students – 946
- Parents – 874

## ELA PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### ICCSA Language Arts Program Improvement Plan

#### Limitation #1

District-wide, the opportunity (achievement) gap between subgroups is evident over time.

#### Recommendation

To close the opportunity (achievement) gap between subgroups, teachers must employ the multi-tiered systems of support process to ensure all students get access to core instruction and additional interventions as necessary. Additionally, students must see themselves represented in the work of the ELA classroom.

#### Action Steps

- Audit access to authentic, representative, and complex grade-level texts, with appropriate scaffolds for reaching the Iowa Core Standards.
- Use the MTSS protocol with fidelity, including core-aligned universal screeners, formative and summative assessments for all students and diagnostic assessments and progress monitoring for students needing intervention.
- Develop common formative assessments (CFAs) in PLCs, with attention paid to subgroup data to ensure the growth of sub-groups
- Recommend the purchase the accompanying online materials for screeners (iReady, etc.) use to fill in individual skill gaps.

#### Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instructional support specialist, 7-12 coordinator, PLCs, cultural proficiency team members, and IDS.

#### Limitation #2

Elementary Iowa Assessments achievement data is stagnant within cohorts, although elementary FAST achievement data shows improvement within cohorts.

#### Recommendation

Reading is a multifaceted process involving phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary and fluency. An understanding of the relationship of these components must be developed.

#### Action Steps

- Ensure all students have ongoing experiences with authentic and complex texts
- Teachers will develop formative assessments and utilize information in order to provide comprehension instruction
- Implement professional development for teachers in each component and how they are related. This should include teacher collaboration time.

#### Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instructional support specialist, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum, IDS, principals, elementary teachers

### **Limitation #3**

As a cohort, eleventh-grade students consistently score below their tenth-grade achievement levels.

#### Recommendation

Increase volume and complexity of reading in the 10th and 11th grades.

#### Action Steps

- Audit and calibrate the reading amount and complexity in English 10 and 11 courses, especially nonfiction.
- Provide professional development in scaffolding for reading complex texts and voluminous reading.
- Develop text sets, instruction, and common formative assessments through PLCs unpacking the Iowa Core reading standards.
- Increase collaboration between departments in reading across the curriculum.

#### Stakeholders

7-12 coordinator, PLCs, science coordinator, social studies coordinator, ESSA teams

### **Limitation #4**

District-wide, there is limited actionable data from standardized assessments in certain domains.

#### Recommendation

Refine and articulate the common formative assessment (CFA) process at all levels across the district.

#### Action Steps

- Clearly define the purpose of CFAs and expectations for their use and development
- Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for creating and responding to CFAs in PLCs
- Provide dedicated and protected time to do this work

#### Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instructional support specialist, 7-12 ILT, principals, IDS, coordinators, director of curriculum and instruction, PLCs

### **Limitation #5**

At the elementary level, core materials for writing instruction do not address the Iowa Core standards and common writing assessments are not utilized to guide instruction.

#### Recommendation

Develop a comprehensive approach to improving writing instruction.

Action Steps

- Develop a clear understanding of grade level writing expectations including grade level specific writing skills, vertically articulated across K-6
- Develop grade-level anchor papers and mentor texts, using the examples available in Appendixes B and C of the Common Core State Standards documents.
- Schedule instructional time dedicated to teaching writing
- Consider writing instructional materials that
  - are aligned to grade-level standards
  - support the reciprocity between reading and writing
  - have a progression of skills and allows for scaffolding
  - include units of study, pacing guide, rubrics, and multiple types of writing
- Implement summative and formative writing assessments that include common prompts and rubrics and are aligned to grade-level standards and skills
- Provide professional development on how to teach and assess writing so that teachers are able to explicitly model proficient writing, differentiate instruction to support a wide variety of writers and motivate and engage students in writing

Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instructional support specialist, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum, IDS, principals, elementary teachers

**Limitation #6**

Secondary students struggle to produce high-quality writing on a deadline.

Recommendation

Improve teacher support of students' independent practice of the writing process.

Action Steps

- Professional development on managing paper load and grading writing
- Through PLCs, develop authentic writing opportunities in a variety of forms and discourses (traditional, web, and practical; narrative, argument, expository)
- Professional development on writerly decision-making, idea generation, self-evaluation, and writing stamina
- Define high-quality writing through PLCs unpacking the Iowa Core writing standards

Stakeholders

7-12 coordinator, PLCs

**Limitation #7**

Secondary students' public speaking confidence is low.

Recommendation

Increase student confidence in public speaking.

Action Steps

- Increase the frequency of positive speaking opportunities for students

- Professional development on supporting public speaking, managing student anxiety, and reflecting on student performance/confidence
- Professional development on how to provide frequent low-stakes speaking opportunities in large classes
- Develop a district statement about which students can modify public speaking tasks, when, and how

#### Stakeholders

7-12 coordinator, PLCs, public speaking teachers, ELL teachers, mental health liaisons, special education teachers, students, principals

#### **Limitation #8**

District-wide, students do not read for depth or persist with grade-level, complex text.

#### Recommendation

Strengthen grade-level reading instruction and provide differentiated instruction to address skill gaps.

#### Action Steps

- Develop common academic vocabulary around strategies for reading, comprehension, and metacognition
- Strengthen vertical articulation about academic vocabulary and how it's taught in order to purposefully help students evolve in their understanding and application of academic tasks and metacognition
- Professional development on teaching and scaffolding to grade-level texts and standards
- Professional development on creating text sets to build domain vocabulary and background knowledge
- Professional development on tier 2 reading interventions and classroom management for differentiated instruction
- Recommend the purchase of rigorous, current, high-interest fiction and nonfiction reading materials, including budget for replacements
- Utilize formative assessments targeting comprehension (K-6)
- Adopt a universal screener (7-12)
- Professional development to unpack the ELA reading standards (7-12)

#### Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instruction support strategist, 7-12 coordinator, PLCs, K-6 IDS, principals, director of curriculum

#### **Limitation #9**

At the elementary level, current materials lack differentiation for small-group reading and intervention. Elementary teachers request professional development in the area of differentiation.

#### Recommendation

Build collective teacher knowledge and understanding about the reading process and MTSS in literacy

#### Action Steps

- Professional development on multi-tiered systems of supports for literacy and understanding of Iowa Core standards
- Professional development on content knowledge of the reading process
- Define ICCSD literacy framework for instruction
- Collect student assessment data in order to differentiate in small group and/or identify focus for instruction in intervention
- Professional development about the purpose and usage of intervention instructional materials
- Recommend purchase of common district intervention materials available to check out through cataloging
- Recommend common diagnostic assessments to be available across all buildings

#### Stakeholders

K-6 literacy instructional support specialist, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum, IDS, principals, elementary teachers

#### **Limitation #10**

At the secondary level, buildings lack materials for supporting students who struggle and have few materials for teaching grammar.

#### Recommendation

Review materials for purchase in the 2019-20 school year.

#### Action Steps

- Explore online subscriptions curriculum adoption. Continue investing in diverse book choices
- Interview teachers who currently use No Red Ink to determine level, scope, and functionality
- Discuss relative value of purchasing materials/course or using professional development to help teachers infuse grammar teaching into the current reading and writing instruction
- Examine grammar course at West for materials and methods that could be used elsewhere

#### Stakeholders

7-12 coordinator, director of curriculum, 7-12 ELA pilot committee