PURPOSE OF THE LITERACY STUDY GROUP

We recognize the importance of literacy as a gateway skill which provides access to **lifelong learning** across all content areas.

In the spirit of **continuous improvement**, the Byram Hills School District will engage in a yearlong study of literacy to *deepen our knowledge and understanding of how young children learn to read and write*.

The takeaways from this study -- in collaboration with all K-5 faculty -- will help our **continuous improvement process** in literacy to best *meet the needs of all our students*. 
OVERVIEW

- Facilitated by two expert literacy researchers
- Five evening meetings
- Teachers, administrators, and parents
- Four additional public meetings
- Created resource page on the District website

Examples of some actions to date:
- Trained all K-5 special education teachers in Orton-Gillingham
- Trained teachers in Fundations
- Offering various literacy PD this summer and next year
- Developing a 3-5 year literacy plan with specific goals
- Engaging all faculty in discussion and planning of our goals
Organized into six themes:

1. The teaching of reading is complex!

2. Common curriculum and instruction benefit students, but differentiation is necessary.

3. Curriculum and assessments must align to standards.

4. Students need access to a variety of texts & resources.

5. Communication within and across stakeholders establishes common expectations that benefit students.

6. Many questions still exist!
● The **science of reading** pulls from many disciplines, including: speech language pathology; neuroscience; psychology; pediatrics; and reading/educational research.

● The science of reading is **not** a curriculum, program of instruction, or a single component of instruction.

● The brain is **not hard-wired** to read; we must **change the brain’s structure** to read, which involves several areas of the brain:

● Most students benefit from a multi-sensory approach to reading.

● **Orthographic mapping** is the process used to permanently store words into long term memory.
Scarborough’s reading rope identifies two main elements of reading and their corresponding strands; each is essential to develop skillful reading:

- Teaching phonics patterns include: hearing, reading, writing, automaticity, and transfer. **Explicit and systematic phonics instruction is needed**, however, utilize small group differentiated instruction for the range of learners, including advanced learners.
Skilled writing consists of the following strands:

- Critical Thinking
  - Generating ideas, gathering information
  - Writing process: organizing, drafting, writing, revising
- Syntax
  - Grammar and syntactic awareness
  - Sentence elaboration
  - Punctuation
- Text Structure
  - Narrative, informational, opinion structures
  - Paragraph structure
  - Patterns of organization (description, sequence, cause/effect, compare/contrast, problem/solution)
  - Linking and transition words/phrases
- Writing Craft
  - Word choice
  - Awareness of task, audience purpose
  - Literary devices
- Transcription
  - Spelling
  - Handwriting, keyboarding

Students benefit when writing is integrated into the disciplinary content areas as well as the literacy block, including:
- General comprehension
- Awareness of epistemological differences
- Builds academic language

TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!
There are misconceptions about dyslexia.

- It is not: reversing or inverting letters; more common in boys than girls; linked to intelligence or to vision; and outgrown.
- It is characterized by: difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition; poor spelling; and poor decoding abilities. As a result, students may have difficulties with reading comprehension, and growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.
- These difficulties are usually related to deficiency in the phonological component.

Dyslexia comprises about 80% of all learning disabilities.

Dyslexia is strongly heritable.

Individuals with dyslexia are likely to suffer from generalized anxiety and higher rates of depression; children often show stronger emotional responses.

There is not a single test for diagnosing dyslexia.

TAKEAWAYS - THE TEACHING OF READING IS COMPLEX!

Red flags of dyslexia include:
● Disciplinary (content) knowledge correlates with reading comprehension. A content-rich curriculum builds strong background knowledge and vocabulary.
  ○ On comprehension tests, students with strong background knowledge on a topic outperform students without the background knowledge regardless of reading ability. (Recht & Leslie, 1988.)
  ○ Consider content-driven units in grades 3 and above.

● Writing can be integrated into disciplinary content areas and during the literacy block.

● Read alouds can build student vocabulary and comprehension, and they provide opportunities to support students’ social-emotional skills.

● Students need multiple opportunities to learn new vocabulary. (See Marzano's 6-step process.)

● Additional strategies include: partner reading, choral reading, repeated reading, echo reading (younger students), paired reading (older students)
● Continuity of curriculum and reading instruction is needed.
● Explicit and systematic (i.e., sequential) reading instruction benefits most students.
● Each student needs appropriate texts:
  ○ Reading levels should be used with caution; texts should match students’ learning goals.
  ○ Students benefit from both common and differentiated texts.
  ○ Students benefit from texts in a variety of content areas.
  ○ Estimated reading levels can be used:
    ■ Reading levels can cover a wide range for students (i.e, reading bands)
    ■ When students have the prior knowledge, the vocabulary, and interest, they can read texts that are more difficult than when they read an isolated cold text
● Provide time for teacher sharing and learning together to evaluate what is currently working and areas for growth.
TAKEAWAYS - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS MUST ALIGN TO STANDARDS.

- An assessment audit can help evaluate assessments and consider how they are meeting needs of students and fitting into the MTSS plan. Build on what works and revise what needs improvement. (Include a review of i-Ready, curriculum-based assessments, skill-based, norm-referenced, etc.)

- Universal screening tools with thresholds guide decision-making and may be followed by brief, efficient, and repeatable testing of age-appropriate skills or behaviors.

- Review and refine the MTTS plan to include some use of norm-based cut scores on assessments with entry and exit criteria for appropriate interventions. Develop interventions to match skill-level needs and determine if students are responding to tier 2 and 3 interventions. Annually review data to determine if interventions are working.
A single test for dyslexia does not exist, but there are red flag indicators that may show signs of dyslexia.

Diagnostic assessments should be used for word study (post transitional readers) in spelling, phonics, and sight words (for example, Dolch or Fry.)

Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Assessments for fluency can include cut scores for fluency rate. Fluency assessments include three areas:

- **Rate**: words correct per minutes; accuracy; automaticity
- **Prosody**: inflection; intonation
- **Expression**: prosody; phrasing

**TAKEAWAYS - CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS MUST ALIGN TO STANDARDS.**
**TAKEAWAYS - STUDENTS NEED ACCESS TO A VARIETY OF TEXTS & RESOURCES.**

- **High quality texts** and curriculum materials are a necessary resource for teachers.

- Evaluate existing resources and **determine needs for additional resources**, including:
  - Decodable texts
  - High quality, high interest texts
  - Texts in the disciplinary content areas
  - High quality texts for read alouds across K - 8.

- **Assessments aligned to MTSS plan.**
Support parent knowledge of reading in order to support student learning and growth at home.

○ Possible examples include: handbook; webpage; principal’s coffees; back-to-school nights; newsletters; etc.

○ Provide specific ways parents can support fluency, vocabulary, spelling, etc., at home.

Share curriculum, programs, and classroom practices with parents, including the “why.” This builds common knowledge that will support teachers’ practices.

Discuss, share, and build common practices across classrooms. (This might include instruction as well as homework, grading, and assessment practices.)
● How do we continue to support our students who exhibit reading difficulties and learning disabilities in reading?

● How do we continue to differentiate reading instruction in the classroom to meet student needs in efficient ways?

● What tier 1 strategies can be utilized to support reading? What tier 2 and 3 practices align with tier 1 for more intensive support?

● How does the 6-12 program continue to support student comprehension in literacy?

● How do we maintain continuity and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices within grade levels and across grade levels?

● How can preschools support the Byram Hills reading program?

● How can we build and support parent knowledge of reading? How can we communicate the “why” of literary curriculum and instruction to parents?

● How do we (as teachers and administrators) make sense of current and new research when researchers themselves disagree?

TAKEAWAYS - MANY QUESTIONS STILL EXIST!
Byram Hills
Central School District

Next Steps
Literacy Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

We will review our literacy curricular, instructional, and assessment practices, building upon previous work conducted over the past several years and using the knowledge and experience of our K-5 faculty. We will engage in a continuous improvement process over the next three to five years to reflect upon current practices, consider research and best practices in reading and writing, and revise/refine current practices and curriculum as necessary.

Specifically, we will:

a. Share our takeaways with the Board of Education, parents, and K-5 faculty.

b. Develop a three to five year plan in collaboration with K-5 administrators and faculty to identify specific literacy goals and intended student outcomes.

c. Continue discussions with parents as we implement the plan.
Next areas of focus may include:

- Review **alignment** within and across grades of our curriculum scope and sequence.
- Evaluate the use of **research-based** instructional strategies.
- Conduct an **assessment audit** and review screening and diagnostic tools.
- Assess the need for additional **high quality and/or decodable texts**.
- Expand the integration of **content knowledge** in the literacy curriculum.
- Review the curriculum **alignment** between general education and the special education programs.
- Review the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (**MTSS**) plan and revise as appropriate.
- Consider the **continuity** of the literacy curriculum **beyond K-5**.
**Over the next three to five years:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where are opportunities to do this work?</th>
<th>Who?</th>
<th>When?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release days</td>
<td>Grade level teams</td>
<td>Throughout the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>All teachers</td>
<td>Monthly (when possible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PGPs</td>
<td>Tenured teachers’ choice</td>
<td>Throughout the year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning communities</td>
<td>All teachers’ choice</td>
<td>October - May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Superintendent conference day</td>
<td>All teachers</td>
<td>March 15, 2024</td>
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<td>New teacher in-service course</td>
<td>Year 2 teachers &amp; open to all</td>
<td>Throughout the year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Various in-service courses</td>
<td>Various teachers</td>
<td>Summer and during year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum advisory reps</td>
<td>ELA reps</td>
<td>Monthly &amp; summer</td>
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Thanks to all the teachers, administrators, and parents for participating and collaborating in our continuous improvement process.