Struggling Readers Report
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose of Report: To report on the progress of interventions to improve the progress of struggling readers.

In addition to numerous interventions already in place for struggling readers, a mid-year review has the District considering a new tool for assessing reading abilities, recommending an increase the number of Literacy in Action (LIA) teachers for elementary readers, and adding more professional development for staff to help students progress further in reading.

At the elementary level, the LIA program has been especially targeting first grade readers to get them ahead of grade level standards in reading, while continuing to provide supports for students through 3rd grade. Other current strategies include pilot programs and professional development for teachers and reading specialists. At middle schools, struggling readers continue to improve their scores with System 44, Read 180 and LitZone as teachers align interventions to meet needs and use professional development to read the needs of all students. At high school, struggling readers are assessed and placed in appropriate intervention models to help them improve the skills they will need to reach graduation.

Recommended additions, continuation of current programs and additional professional development will be submitted for approval in the FY17 budget process.

Administrative Recommendation to School Board: Acknowledge the mid-year report on the K-12 continuum for struggling readers.
Struggling Readers
Report

Purpose of Report: To report on the progress of interventions to improve the progress of struggling readers.

District Priority Area: Student Achievement

Goal/Strategy: All students will improve reading/language arts skills to achieve high standards.
SA 1.1: Evaluate year three of the District’s K-12 continuum for struggling readers.

Explanation:
The District’s goal is to ensure that all students are proficient readers. Of particular concern are the students who struggle to read well enough to keep up with their classmates in academic subjects or to read independently to explore interests and pursue independent learning. Over the past two and a half years, the District has increased and continues to increase the use of common formative assessments. This has helped increase our ability to identify struggling readers and has helped more clearly define the problem to be solved.

Data shows that interventions, professional development and specialized supports are having an impact. At the end of their kindergarten year, 79.4% of the at-risk preschoolers who had six months or more of the District’s early childhood programming were performing at expected Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels (level three or higher). At the elementary level, 300 students so far this year have reached their grade level reading goals and no longer need the support of Literacy in Action (LIA) teachers. At the middle and high school, data is showing a decrease in the number of students reading at or below the second grade level.

Early Childhood
Research has illustrated that 85% of a child’s brain development occurs within the first five years. Additional research in 2012, completed by the University of South Dakota (USD), during a three year, pre-K pilot program in the Sioux Falls School District, demonstrated the impact of quality early childhood programming on a child’s development. For children entering the pre-K pilot program, “the average entry chronological age of children who joined in the third year of the program (2009-2010) was 3 1/3 years (40.5 months). Their delay in developmental skills on their pre-tests relative to their actual age ranged from 6 1/2 to 12 months.”

The Sioux Falls School District Early Childhood program targets at-risk three and four year-old children (students living in poverty, students with disabilities, etc.). Within the early childhood daily routine, early literacy skills are focused on and supported in the following ways: use of researched-based High Scope curriculum and the literacy Report Prepared by: Josh Hall
Curriculum Services and Special Services
Presented by: Josh Hall
components in this curriculum; dialogic reading strategies; continued development and monitoring of daily instructional strategies and student/teacher interactions. Literacy home visits have been incorporated to reinforce the development of the individual family’s skills to support literacy development at home.

At the end of the 2014-2015 school year, approximately 471 students who had participated in six months or more of Early Childhood programming in the District, completed end of the year DRA in their kindergarten year. The expected DRA level for a student in kindergarten at the end of the school year is three or higher. Review of the end of the year DRA scores provided the following information:

- 38% of students had a score of four or higher
- 41% of students had a score of three
- 21% of students had a score of less than three
- There were 116 Early Childhood students who participated in six months or more of Early Childhood programing but did not take an end of the year kindergarten DRA. A large number of these students had moved out of the District.

Recommendations:

1. Continue to provide professional development for early childhood teachers regarding quality literacy instruction and researched strategies.
2. Continue to support parents through continued literacy-home visits which will provide them with strategies to support the development of early literacy skills in the home environment.
3. Explore community partnerships to increase the number of at-risk preschoolers who receive an early childhood learning experience.
Elementary School

Elementary students are eligible for inclusion in the Literacy in Action (LIA) reading intervention program when they are reading more than one-half year below grade level. Kindergarteners are identified based on a lack of individual letter recognition and general reading readiness skills. The LIA program is available at each of the 23 elementary schools, although the number of LIA teachers at each site is determined by the number of students predicted to be eligible from the spring DRA scores. Given the variation in number of struggling readers by school, the number of teachers assigned ranges from one-half to three FTE per school. These teachers work with identified students in grades K-3 in small groups to fill in the gaps in their reading ability and to provide them with the skills they need to be successful on grade level standards. Every LIA teacher is expected to work with around 38 students each year, although many see more than that as students reach their goals and are transitioning out of the program.

Using the spring DRA scores provides a prediction of the number of LIA teachers that will be needed at a particular building, but factors such as summer reading loss, individual teacher interpretation of student progress using the assessment, and student mobility sometimes cause the numbers of students needing an intervention to increase from spring to fall. During the fall of the 2015-2016 school year, every school reported more students in need of the intervention than had been indicated in the spring. The result is that some students are in need of intervention, but are not getting it due to the fact the LIA program is not adequately staffed to meet the need.

In kindergarten, we identified 250 students as needing an LIA reading intervention. All of those students were served with that intervention. In first grade, we served 371 students out of the 260 who qualified. This is because students in grade one are expected to be at a DRA level three at the start of the year, but LIA and classroom teachers have found that if they can get these students to a level four or six as soon as possible, they are more apt to retain grade level status. In looking at second and third grade students, we were able to serve 480 out of the 821 (58.4%) students who qualify for LIA intervention. So far this year, approximately 300 students have been included in the program and dismissed when they were within 0.5 years of reading on grade level. With the assistance of their classroom teachers, they should be able to achieve and maintain grade level reading status by the end of the year.

Literacy in Action is not the only intervention provided for our students who struggle to learn to read in kindergarten through third grade. The next table shows the number of students at each grade level who are receiving special education services in the area of reading and/or writing. These students are occasionally also included in LIA instruction, but their primary reading intervention is with the team who delivers instruction tailored to meet the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP). In addition, between 11 and 13 percent of our students in kindergarten through third grade are identified as English Language Learners (ELLs). Whether or not these students also receive instruction from an LIA teacher is dependent upon his/her level of English acquisition.
The numbers presented here tell us that our reading and writing program at the elementary level has room for improvement. The DRA, which is currently the only common method of comparing reading progress across the early elementary grades, is a tool designed to “enable primary teachers to systematically observe, record, and evaluate changes in students reading performance” (Developmental Reading Assessment, 2006). Due to the fact that it is administered to students individually and scored by a classroom teacher using a rubric, the data gathered by this assessment is subject to individual interpretation by the classroom teacher.

- A South Dakota Department of Education reading grant was awarded to the District with a reading specialist to deliver training to all K-3 teachers of reading.
- A Red Apple workshop called *Interventions and Strategies for Struggling Readers* has so far been provided for 67 teachers in grades 3-5 and will continue to be offered into the spring and summer.
- Two elementary schools are piloting the *Units of Study in Reading* by Lucy Calkins. The administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers involved in the pilot meet regularly to share results they’re seeing in their classrooms. The information gathered from this pilot will inform the work of the Elementary English Language Arts Curriculum Committee.
- Access Code has been put in place in five elementary schools. The purpose of this intervention is to provide students with the phonemic awareness and phonics skills to be successful in grade level literacy standards. Results of this intervention will be available at the end of this school year.
- One elementary school is currently piloting the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP) in grades one and four. At this point, teachers are reporting that the assessment information they receive is valuable in informing their instruction.

The following recommendations would further support our students as they learn to read and write.

**Recommendations:**

1. Identify a common assessment that will reliably identify students’ strengths and weaknesses in literacy.
2. Continue to develop and deliver professional opportunities regarding literacy instruction.
3. Expand the LIA program budget to include the addition of nine reading specialists to the program to meet the needs of students in grades K-3.
4. Further expand elementary reading intervention to include 10 literary leaders who will serve fourth and fifth grade struggling readers through the LIA model and provide building level literacy professional development at the buildings demonstrating the greatest need. These leaders would provide intervention for students and embedded professional development for teachers of students who struggle to learn to read.

5. Professional development in the teaching of reading and writing through the English Language Arts Curriculum Study Committee.

6. Develop and implement a Summer School program pilot for non-proficient readers.

Middle School
Middle school students who struggle to read are identified by Lexile (L) scores using the Reading Inventory (RI). In the table below, the RI Lexile for proficient and struggling readers is described at each grade level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>6th</th>
<th>7th</th>
<th>8th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient Reader</td>
<td>925L-1074L</td>
<td>970L-1124L</td>
<td>1010L-1189L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexile (L)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling Reader</td>
<td>below 800L</td>
<td>below 925L</td>
<td>below 970L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexile (L)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The middle school reading intervention classes developed to serve struggling readers include System 44 (Reading Development), Read 180 (Basic Reading), and Lit Zone. A student’s RI Lexile score is used to help determine which intervention class is appropriate for each student. Lit Zone is available at all five middle schools. System 44 and Read 180 are available for students receiving special education services at Memorial and Patrick Henry. System 44 and Reading 180 are available to general education and special education students at Edison, Whittier, and George McGovern.

Students take the RI three times each school year. The table below shows each reading intervention and the number of students who qualify for this intervention based on the spring of 2015, RI Lexile scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Intervention (6, 7, 8)</th>
<th>*Reading Inventory Lexile (L)</th>
<th>Instructional Focus</th>
<th># of students with RI scores*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>System 44 (Reading Development)</td>
<td>Below 600L</td>
<td>Letter identification, phonics, phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, comprehension</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read 180 (Basic Reading)</td>
<td>600L-850L</td>
<td>Fluency, comprehension for students who are more than 2 years below grade level</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lit Zone</td>
<td>851L-970L</td>
<td>Fluency, comprehension for students who are 1-2 years below grade level</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The RI is given three times a year to all students at George McGovern and Whittier. The RI is given to students identified as struggling readers three times a year at Edison, Memorial, and Patrick Henry.

Report Prepared by: Curriculum Services and Special Services
Presented by: Josh Hall
Middle school RI data collected over the past nine years shows that 71% of the students, enrolled in a reading intervention, met or exceeded their expected growth goal as measured by the RI.

Recommendations:
1. Continue to monitor student needs as compared to types of intervention and align FTE needs accordingly.
2. Purchase additional reading resources for System 44 and Read 180 to ensure access at all five middle schools.
3. Provide continued professional development to all middle school teachers to support the literacy needs of all middle school students.
4. Identify a common assessment to measure student reading progress throughout the school year in grades K-8.

High School
Struggling readers needing intervention are identified using the Reading Inventory (RI) score. Students scoring below 400 on the RI are placed in Basics of Reading. Building administration is reporting that the number of students who need to be placed in the Basics of Reading course is decreasing. This course addresses basic literacy and phonemic skills. Students scoring 970 to 400 on the RI are placed into a reading intervention course. The program used at the high school is FAME. FAME is composed of four .5 credit courses—Foundations, Adventures, Mastery, and Explorations. Reading is FAME is designed as an intervention program for students who lack the decoding ability and/or word knowledge needed to comprehend reading materials at grade level. The number of students requiring the Foundations level of FAME is decreasing. Students scoring 970 to 1070 are monitored and the end of the year RI score is reviewed to determine if a reading intervention is needed. Students scoring over 1070 and above are not placed in a reading intervention course.

Recommendations:
1. Continue to fully fund reading interventions at the high school for students who score 970 and below on the RI.
2. Continue to fully fund reading interventions at the high school for students who score below 400 on the RI.

Committee Participation: N/A

Costs: Proposed budget FY17 will include expansion options relating recommendations made throughout this report.
Summary: The District’s goal is to ensure that all students are proficient readers. Data from common formative assessments show that interventions, professional development and specialized supports are having an impact for the students who struggle to read well enough to keep up with their classmates in academic subjects or to read independently to explore interests and pursue independent learning.

At the end of their kindergarten year, 79.4% of the at-risk preschoolers who had six months or more of the District’s early childhood programming were performing at expected DRA levels (level three or higher). At the elementary level, 300 students so far this year have reached their grade level reading goals and no longer need the support of Literacy-in-Action (LIA) teachers. At the middle and high school level, data has shown a decrease in the number of students reading at or below the second grade level.

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