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## MEMORANDUM

January 18, 2021  
Regular Board Meeting

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**TO** Board of Trustees

**FROM** Shauna Boyce, Superintendent

**ORIGINATOR** Scott Johnston, Associate Superintendent

**RESOURCE** Sheryl Bridgeman, Division Principal, Curriculum and Achievement

**GOVERNANCE POLICY** Board Policy 1: Division Foundational Statements  
Board Policy 2: Role of the Board  
Board Policy 12: Role of the Superintendent

**ADDITIONAL REFERENCE** BP 1: Vision, Foundational Statements  
BP 2: Education Planning and Programming  
*Education Act: 19-23, 33, 196-197*

**SUBJECT** **LITERACY REPORT**

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### PURPOSE

For information. No recommendation required.

### BACKGROUND

The Board is charged with the responsibility of providing, for its students and their parents, an education system organized and operated in the students' best interests. It exercises this responsibility through setting of local educational policy and the wise use of resources. An ongoing focus on literacy education and intervention aligns to the Provincial Government's grant for unfinished learning (learning loss) and supports our students' success and well-being.

### REPORT SUMMARY

This Literacy Report provides an overview of the literacy intervention processes currently in place across the Division. The report includes current literacy results reporting to support an understanding of the requirement for intervention.

Administration would be pleased to respond to any questions.

SJ:kz



*Our Students Possess the confidence, resilience, insight and skills required to thrive in, and positively impact, the world.*

**Background**

Parkland School Division’s Mission and Foundational Statement:

*We assure supportive learning environments, meaningful experiences and healthy relationships that create opportunities to develop resilience, to gain diversity in perspectives and to achieve enduring success.*

For 2021-2022, the Instructional Services department continued to focus on the enduring academic success of our students. Parkland School Division values literacy and for the 2021-2022 school year has allocated resources to have a division principal and facilitator to lead the literacy work in all schools. This priority area focuses on the following Assurance Elements within the domain of Learning Supports:

Element 4: Teachers and Leaders Promote Literacy and Numeracy

Element 5: Teachers and Leaders Collaborate

**INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES – OUR CURRENT STATE**

**USING DATA TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING-LITERACY ASSESSMENTS- K-9**

The 2021-2022 school year began with three professional development days prior to the first day of school with students. Division principals and literacy leads in the K-9 schools supported teachers and educational assistants with professional learning opportunities focused around comprehensive literacy and understanding the importance of using universal screens or assessments on their students to get a better understanding of their learners. Two of the assessments were a spelling inventory test and a reading comprehension assessment.

Spelling Assessment:

For the spelling assessment, Grade 1-9 teachers used the [Words Their Way Spelling Inventory](#). This test is administered similar to a spelling test. Students are asked to spell several words and give their best attempt at each word, even if the word is unfamiliar to them. This is not a test where students are given the words ahead of time and asked to memorize them. It is instead a test that is designed to help teachers [analyze and classify student spelling errors](#), confirm the

**Stages of Spelling Development**

When implementing word study in the classroom, it is important to understand the progression of the stages of spelling development. It will help teachers determine which word study activities are most appropriate for students. The methodology of the professional development book *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction* is based on the progression of these developmental stages.

The stages of spelling development are Emergent, Letter Name-Alphabetic Spelling, Within Word Pattern, Syllables and Affixes, and Derivational Relations. These stages describe students’ spelling behavior as they move from one level of word knowledge to the next. In *Words Their Way: Word Study in Action*, these stages have been adapted to correspond to specific levels (A through E), as well as to grade levels within the program. Each developmental spelling stage is examined in greater depth below.

**Alphabet → Pattern → Meaning**

*Emergent Reading Stage*  
*Emergent Spelling Stage*  
**Pre-K to mid 1st grade**

*Beginning Reading Stage*  
*Letter Name - Alphabetic*  
**K to mid 2nd grade**

*Transitional Reading Stage*  
*Within Word Pattern*  
**1st grade to mid 4th grade**

*Intermediate Reading Stage*  
*Syllables & Affixes*  
**3rd to 8th grade**

*Advanced Reading Stage*  
*Derivational Relations*  
**9th to 12th grade**

developmental stages, and pinpoint specific areas for instruction. For students to grow as readers and writers they need direct, specific spelling and word study instruction at their level to develop and advance from one spelling stage to the next.

Reading Comprehension Assessment:

For the reading comprehension assessment, Grade 1-9 teachers used Fountas & Pinnell Benchmarks. Different than most traditional tests, the Fountas & Pinnell Benchmarks are done one on one, or in small groups with the teacher. The teacher asks the student to read the “Benchmark” book out loud and then asks students questions orally about the book. During this 10-30 minute time period (depending on grade level) teachers are able to observe how the student:

- Sounds out unfamiliar words,
- Recognizes high frequency words,
- Observes punctuation,
- Rereads when they make a mistake or if meaning is lost, and
- Comprehends what they have read

The Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark reading assessments are time consuming, however, they provide invaluable information about the literacy skills of their students. Within our PSD classrooms we see large ranges of reading levels and it is very important for students to be taught at a reading level where they can experience success.

Instructional services continue to support schools with how to administer the Fountas and Pinnell reading benchmark assessments, interpret the results and most importantly set up their classrooms so they are able to teach the wide range of reading and writing abilities they have in their classrooms. Tables below reflect the reading results of P.S.D. students in Grades 1-9 as measured by Fountas and Pinnell benchmark assessments.

<b>Grades 1-9 Reading Comprehension Benchmarking</b>		
	<b>September (2020-2021)</b>	<b>(September 2021-2022 )</b>
Above the grade level expectation for literacy:	19.88%	19.54%
At the grade level expectation for literacy:	37.67%	36.03%
Below the grade level expectation for literacy:	42.45%	44.43%

<b>Grades 1-9 FLA Reading Comprehension Benchmarking</b>		
	<b>September (2020-2021)</b>	<b>September (2021-2022)</b>
Supérieur (Superior performance):	15.86%	12.20%
À Niveau (At the standard level):	15.69%	15.48%
Inférieur (Inferior performance):	68.45%	72.32%

For students in Grades 1-9, we recognize that for two years in a row 40+% of our ELA students and ~70% of our FLA students are achieving below grade level in the reading comprehension area. It is clear from these measures that we have significant work to do in the literacy area. The pandemic definitely has had impacts on student achievement however we have been looking towards literacy interventions in all schools and supporting teachers with pedagogy on how to differentiate instruction to improve student learning.

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#### USING DATA TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING-LITERACY ASSESSMENTS- GRADES 10-12

Due to the pandemic, we have limited data to look closely at the literacy levels of our high school students. We have included school awarded marks for English Language Arts 10, 20 and 30 for the 2020-2021 school year to provide a general idea of literacy achievement.

Grades 10-12 English Language Arts School Awarded Mark 2020-2021		
	Number of Students	Percent of Students
Above the grade level expectation (80+%)	630	31%
At the grade level expectation (50-79%)	1386	67%
Below the grade level expectation (-50%)	40	2%

School awarded marks in grades 10-12 are very respectable. They are significantly higher than reading comprehension scores in Grades 1-9. Factors to consider for this discrepancy are the high school's ability to stream or track, which is the practice of grouping students by their perceived abilities or academic performance history (eg. ELA 10-1, 10-2 or Knowledge & Employability.) Another factor to consider is that English Language Arts school awarded marks at all grade levels are a comprehensive mark reflecting student skills and achievement in all six strands of the English Language Arts Program of Studies including: listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing.

With this gap in data, Instructional Services are working with schools to trial reading comprehension assessments available at the high school level to support staff in assessing and programming for their students.

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#### USING DATA TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING- DIAGNOSTICS & INTERVENTIONS

For the 2021-2022 School Year, instructional Services coordinated with schools to complete additional literacy assessments for Grades 1-3 students achieving below grade level expectations on the reading or spelling assessments. Teachers used the collected data to inform homeroom instruction and to apply for the Literacy Learning Loss Grant.

##### Diagnostics:

- [QPAS](#) (Quick Phonological Awareness Screen) and [PAST](#)-(Phonological Awareness Screening Test) were administered for students in Grade 1-3 who were not at grade level for reading achievement. The 1:1 assessments provide information on students phonological awareness skills.

873 (48%) of our Grade 2 and Grade 3 students were approved to receive the Learning Loss Grant Literacy portion from the Alberta Government.

Parkland School Division received \$427 770 (\$490 per student) to support our learners.

Based on the funding we received we are able to offer a 16-week literacy intervention program offered 20 minutes per day, 4 days a week. The Learning Loss interventions are set up outside of the classrooms away from distractions and are delivered by a certificated teacher or an educational assistant under the direction of the teacher. The small group 1 (adult) to 3-5 (students) ratio allows for opportunities for flexible and differentiated learning and more chances for students to participate. Teachers are able to monitor the students better, thus providing better and more individualized feedback and support. Students receiving the Learning Loss intervention are also receiving Language Arts instruction from their homeroom teacher. Learning Loss intervention students are essentially receiving a second dose of literacy in a school day.

Learning services are monitoring student progress in the literacy intervention programs. We will have an update on individual student progress at the midway point of the intervention in February, 2022. We have early indications showing student growth as a result of the intervention as programming is based on individual gaps in foundational literacy skills. Staff have been trained and are using diagnostic tools such as the QPAS, PAST, and Words Their Way Spelling Inventory to analyze gaps, group students and program accordingly. Learning Services based the intervention programs on the research behind "The Science of Reading." Grade Ones that are below grade level in literacy are expected to join the Learning Loss intervention in the near future when the government announces the updated submission date.

## INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES – CURRENT AND CONTINUED INITIATIVES

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### STRENGTHENING LITERACY

- Increasing the instructional-leadership skills of our school administration and staff;
- Providing professional development programs (K-9) focused on phonological awareness, word study and comprehensive literacy, with a special focus on small group instruction in English and FLA;
- Using diagnostic tools that support professionals to identify gaps in skills and key understandings and using small group instruction to differentiate programming;
- Coordinating the Learning Loss Grant and supporting schools with identification of students for the intervention and supporting staff with professional development to implement the interventions in a responsive, targeted manner;
- Improving the provision of strategies for families to support literacy growth for their children at home.

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### IMPROVING ASSESSMENT

- Continuing to increase transparency and timeliness of reporting K-9 academic achievement through the online gradebook;
- Continuing to work on strengthening the understanding and application of effective assessment practices to develop uniform assessment practices using researched based diagnostic tools to allow us to program for students based on gaps;
- Determining a screening tool for Grades 7-12 reading comprehension that will guide instruction.

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### GOALS FOR 2022-2023

- Continuing to support K-9 Literacy Leads in each school to coordinate and support ongoing attention to literacy intervention and improvement with a specific focus on writing;
- Continuing to implement universal screeners to detect and identify specific areas requiring intervention for individual students, specifically in the reading area for Grades 7-12;
- Reviewing and implementing effective structures for ongoing Division-level mentoring for New Teachers;
- Further exploring Gifted Education programming.