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Position Paper

Comprehensive Literacy Program

Conceptual Framework of Danbury's Comprehensive Literacy Program

Danbury's comprehensive literacy program is based upon the full and effective implementation of all the components of the literacy model listed below. The model was selected by our district as the basis of our reading language arts program for the following reasons:

- The model is aligned with and supported by the Connecticut State Department of Education's position for literacy instruction (Connecticut's Blueprint for Reading Achievement K-3 and Beyond the Blueprint 4-12)
- The model provides multiple opportunities for students to hear, practice, develop and apply efficient literacy skills more effectively than any other program currently available. Independent reading and writing capabilities, which are the strongest indicators linked to student achievement, form the core of this model.
- The model is a research-based model that promotes instruction, which effectively develops a wide range of competencies in students. This approach also provides for an integration of the language arts which develops better critical thinking abilities.

Components of the Model

- **Reading Workshop:** Embeds many of the components listed below and provides a framework for delivery of instruction. *Structure includes a mini-lesson, independent reading and a share. Delivery of mini-lessons entails a movement to a meeting area, and usually focuses on comprehension strategies or author's craft. Other literacy tasks (i.e., fluency, word strategies, etc.) may be addressed. Each mini-lesson includes a Connection, Teach, Active Engagement, & Link. Students read independently (in an area of comfort or choice) while teachers confer (1:1 or partnerships or small group) and meet with planned small groups to provide differentiated instruction (e.g., guided reading, reciprocal circles, strategy/focus groups). A share follows which often connects to the application of the mini lesson. Return to the meeting area may occur for the share.*
- **Read Aloud:** Highly recommended to occur *across content areas*. Teachers model their thinking and encourage student interactions through turn & talk or other accountable-talk structures (big idea/themes);
 - for reading (mini-lessons):
 - a purposefully chosen piece that facilitates language development & comprehension strategies. (Piece should be familiar so that only the portion applicable to the lesson is reread.)
 - and for writing (mini-lessons):
 - a purposefully chosen piece that enhances the awareness of author's craft (reading like a writer); focuses on structures, word usage, techniques, etc.[teacher-led, student interactive]
- **Shared Reading:** Teachers read a carefully chosen text (big books, charts, transparencies, etc.) while students read and follow along. Text is selected to facilitate language development, print conventions, punctuation, letter/sound relationships, syntax,

vocabulary, comprehension, author's craft, and fluency. [teacher-led, student interactive]

- **Writing Workshop:** Embeds many of the components listed below and provides a framework for delivery of instruction. *Structure includes a mini-lesson, independent reading and a share. Delivery of mini-lessons entails a movement to a meeting area, and usually focuses on writing strategies, genre, or author's craft. Other literacy tasks (i.e., writing process, conventions.) may be addressed. Each mini-lesson includes a Connection, Teach, Active Engagement, & Link. Students write independently daily while teachers confer (1:1 or partnerships or small group) and meet with planned small groups to provide differentiated instruction (e.g., guided writing, strategy/focus groups). A share follows which often connects to the application of the mini lesson. Return to the meeting area may occur for the share. Students in grades 2 (end of year)-12 keep writer's notebooks for gathering entries and practicing tasks, while K-2 primarily use writing folders.*
- **Word Study:** Focuses on phonetic skills (letter/sound relationships, root word-affixes) and vocabulary. Grouping practices vary; often work is designed for small group or individual practice. Activities include sorting, building/breaking, and manipulating words/sounds. In addition grades 1-3 use Cast-A-Spell daily. [*DSA-Developmental Spelling Assessment recommended for identifying groupings.*] [Teacher led, student participatory]
- **Shared Writing:** Teacher demonstrates the process of composing. Teacher controls the pen. Ideas are shared and developed orally as the teacher thinks aloud and scripts text. [teacher led, student verbal-interaction]
- **Interactive Writing:** Message is co-authored by the teacher and the students. It is constructed word by word. Teacher supports students in the actual writing of the text. Involvement should be at their ZPD [zone of proximal development] [Whole class & small group participatory; *appropriate for middle school ELLs and K-2 students*]

Balance in Delivering the Model

It is essential that all these components of the model be delivered daily. Each component builds upon and supports the others. There should be a natural ebb and flow between them. When one element is used in isolation or emphasized consistently above other components it destroys the effectiveness of the model and will not promote the desired degree of student achievement. However, at times, the needs of one or more students may dictate additional support and instruction, requiring an increased emphasis of some components within their small groups for a period of time. This is an appropriate decision for a teacher to make. The most important thing to keep in mind is that the model is most effective when there is an overall balance among components.

Differentiation of Instruction

Differentiation of instruction occurs naturally within this structure when the full model is effectively implemented. The model is based upon the concept of "Teacher as decision maker." Therefore, teachers use their instructional skills and artistry to choose the appropriate blend of the various components. This approach provides for a wide variety options for teachers to support and promote increased student achievement for all children. An essential element of the model is the teacher's ability to select from a variety of resources to match each student's independent and instructional strengths and to address areas of student need with great specificity.

Lesson Pacing

Pacing guides with units of study based upon the Grade Level Learning Guides are developed in order to provide greater continuity and consistency across the district. These guides provide guidance to teachers as they address the proper pacing of instruction when using the workshop approach.

Professional Collaboration and Support

A key role of each school's Literacy Team is to provide support and guidance for the implementation of all components of this model. Embedded professional development opportunities, such as consultation, collaboration, co-teaching, coaching, and modeling, are provided and/or facilitated by the Literacy Team based upon district and school enhancement goals and the individual needs of teachers. The advent of common planning time has also provided new opportunities for teachers to share effective instructional practices and to learn from each other.

Research Based References

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