

Building a **STRONG** Foundation of Literacy

North Babylon School District is updating the elementary core English Language Arts curriculum. Over the last two years, teachers and administrators worked together to develop a shared vision of literacy instruction based on current research and key instructional practices. This vision includes a focus on four main components of ELA instruction: foundational literacy, reading workshop, writing workshop and small-group instruction.

These four components make up the daily literacy block in the elementary classrooms. Foundational literacy includes teaching students the skills they need as they are learning how to read. This begins with phonological and phonemic awareness, which includes recognizing the sounds in spoken language. Students are then taught phonics, which

is the connection of sounds of the English language to individual or groups of letters that are used to decode and to spell written language. Students are taught these skills in a structured literacy

approach, explicitly and systematically, to help them become fluent, skilled readers.

During the reading workshop, students are exposed to collections of authentic literature through a daily read-aloud,

which helps develop knowledge, vocabulary and discussion skills. Teachers use this literature to teach a specific comprehension skill, which students will then apply to their independent reading.

Similarly, during writing workshop, teachers use mentor texts to demonstrate what good writers do to create a piece of writing within a particular genre. Students are guided through the writing process by the teacher to create a finished piece of original writing to be shared with an audience. Small group is another critical piece of daily literacy instruction, where teachers work with small groups of students regularly to support their individualized needs. The goal is that the ELA classrooms will reflect a space where students can grow as readers and writers and take ownership of their learning.

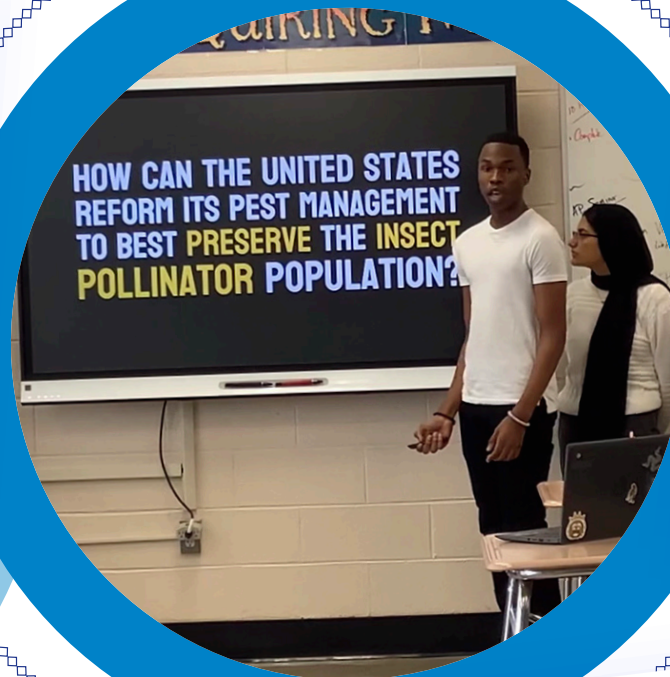


Foundation of LITERACY



A Focus on Writing

To implement an authentic writing workshop in K-5 classrooms, training on the expectations of the NYS Next Generation Writing Standards is essential. This year, North Babylon teachers are participating in a training series that focuses on the structure of a writing workshop classroom, including procedures and how to move students through the stages of the writing process. During this training, teachers discuss the grade-specific writing goals for each of the main text types students are expected to produce, which includes narrative, informational and opinion/argumentative pieces. "Our teachers are using this knowledge to create an interdisciplinary writing curriculum where students create original, published pieces of writing across a variety of genres," said Dana Musso, Director of ELA K-12. Writing workshop uses mentor texts to demonstrate different types of craft moves an author makes within a particular genre. Students self-select their writing topic and develop an original piece of writing using the techniques taught in the writing workshop mini-lesson. Students use teacher and peer feedback to revise their work before becoming a "published author."



Launching AP Capstone Seminar

Another new initiative this school year is the launch of AP Capstone Seminar; the first cohort of students are 10th grade English Language Arts students. AP Capstone is a diploma program based on two yearlong AP courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. Instead of teaching specific subject knowledge, AP Seminar and AP Research use an interdisciplinary approach to develop the critical thinking, research, collaboration, time management and presentation skills students need for college-level work. In this course, students investigate a variety of topics in multiple disciplines. The teacher guides students through completing a research project, writing an academic paper and making a presentation on their project. Students analyze topics through multiple lenses to construct meaning or gain understanding. They also plan and conduct a study or investigation and propose solutions to real-world problems.

Classroom Libraries Promote Literacy

Over the last year, the district has updated each teacher's classroom library to reflect a variety of new and engaging titles for students to select for independent reading. Each teacher received more than 100 new titles that include a range of genres and diverse characters and authors.

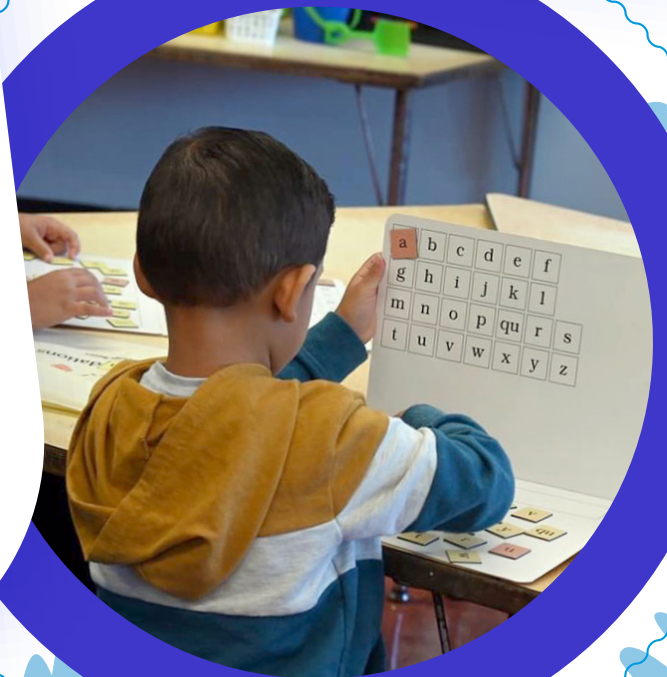
"Teachers collaborated on these lists to include books that students would be interested in and connect with," Dana Musso, Director of ELA K-12, said. "Research shows that volume of reading is important, and we want all of our students to see reading as an enjoyable part of their lives. Our goal is that all students can see themselves in books and understand that they can learn about the lives of others through literature."



Implementing Wilson Foundations

This school year, the North Babylon School District implemented the Wilson Foundations program for foundational literacy. This research-based multisensory program focuses on developing strong phonics, fluency, handwriting and spelling skills. Students participate in daily teacher- and student-led drills, build words using magnetic tiles, gel boards and dry erase boards, and apply these patterns to text to enhance fluency and comprehension.

In addition, the district purchased a library of content-based decodable books for students to practice applying their newly learned skills in small groups with the teacher. Teachers are using this program daily in prekindergarten through third grade classrooms as part of the literacy block. Classroom teachers and interventionists participate in ongoing training that specifically focuses on evidence-based literacy practices.



North Babylon Public Schools

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BOOK LOVE Initiative

FOR SECONDARY READERS

At the secondary level, the district has committed to instilling a passion for reading in all students through the Book Love initiative. As part of a book study, all 6-12 teachers of English Language Arts were provided with a copy of Penny Kittle's professional text "Book Love," which emphasizes the development of depth, stamina, and passion in adolescent readers.

Secondary classrooms have used our updated libraries to promote student-selected independent reading. Teachers have dedicated time for students to read their books during class and participate in text-based discussions around common themes. Students also demonstrate their understanding and analysis of texts through creative independent reading projects such as one-pagers, movie

trailers, character analysis and literary critiques.

The district understands that reading is a skill that must be practiced regularly. Increased volume of reading leads to fluency, increased vocabulary, stronger writing skills and a greater understanding of the people and happenings of our world. The goal is to have students build stamina as readers so they can comprehend increasingly more complex texts that they will approach in their classes as well as through college and their adult lives. The district has made efforts as a school community to celebrate reading and make the Book Love visible in classrooms and hallways, and help students see the value of reading in their everyday lives.

