

# Lexington Public Schools

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**To:** Dr. Paul B. Ash  
Members of the Lexington School Committee

**From:** English Language Arts and Literacy Department Heads:  
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The English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Review Committee

**RE:** **Executive Summary**  
English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Review Committee, Year 3

**Date:** May 3, 2012

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*“...Remind everyone that it is a process, not a one time event. You are creating something truly significant - a comprehensive body of work that is going to serve your educators, students, and parents for years to come!” - Larry Ainsworth*

## INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Lexington Public Schools English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Review Committee, it is once again a pleasure to report on the committee’s accomplishments in Year 3 of the curriculum review cycle. The kindergarten through grade twelve teachers, literacy specialists, technology specialists, special educators, administrators, and community members (Appendix A) on the committee collaborated to develop a curriculum that propels the K - 12 Lexington Public Schools English Language Arts program into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The ELA review committee experienced unprecedented changes in curriculum development during the three - year cycle, including the adoption and revision of The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, now called the 2011 Massachusetts Framework, and the acquisition of Atlas Rubicon by the district. The ensuing years will bring a revised curriculum, technology integration, an elementary Standards - based report card, a new state assessment, expectations for literacy instruction in content areas, and consequently, new methods for teaching and learning.

It continues to be a remarkable journey for a diverse group of educators. Committee members spent weekends, vacations, evenings, and school days understanding the new 2011

Massachusetts Framework, synthesizing the existing Lexington English Language Arts curriculum with the Standards and recent research about teaching and learning, writing curriculum in Atlas Rubicon, and engaging in professional development and vigorous discourse with colleagues throughout the district and beyond.

The English Language Arts department heads met monthly to ensure a consistent district - wide approach to the development and alignment of the ELA curriculum. The entire committee convened for full days on August 24, 25, October 19, December 14, 2011, March 7, and May 2, 2012. Committee members planned and facilitated professional development to convey the curriculum development process and information about the Standards to all ELA teachers, K - 12, in the Lexington Public School community, on three Monday afternoons: September 26, November 21, 2011, and May 7, 2012.

Atlas Rubicon, the Lexington Public Schools curriculum - mapping tool, ensures that curriculum will no longer reside in dusty binders on classroom shelves. Instead, teachers will virtually collaborate with grade level colleagues: update curriculum, improve units and assessments, and share best classroom practices. To maintain interest in and momentum of curriculum development is the challenge. The flexibility that ATLAS provides will continue to engage teachers in the evolution of the curriculum as they evolve in their understanding of the new MA Framework.

While the review cycle formally concludes this year, the work will continue into the 2012 fall semester and beyond. The Review Committee is grateful to Dr. Ash and the members of the Lexington School Committee for their financial commitment to additional time for ELA curriculum development. Throughout the next seven months, the Review Committee will continue to plan and facilitate the implementation of a revised Lexington Public Schools English Language Arts curriculum. Summarized and highlighted in this report and in the presentation to School Committee on May 8, 2012, are the Year 3 accomplishments of the English Language Arts Review Committee.

## The New Standards

The Massachusetts Department of Education expects all school districts in Massachusetts to fully align to the new MA Framework in the 2012 - 2013 school year. Therefore, it is important for the reader of this report to understand the high expectations of the *2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, Pre - kindergarten to 12, Incorporating the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects*: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/candi/commoncore/>.

A Standards - based curriculum consists of specific, observable, and measurable skills and standards that reflect what students need to know, understand, and be able to do at the end of each school year.

*The Common Core's effect on schools is still to be determined, the Standards themselves have been written, but the effects they will have on teaching and learning have not been constructed. That's the work we have ahead of us. (Calkins, 2012)*

The true challenge of the “work ahead of us” is for Lexington teachers and learners to **redefine rigor**. The new Standards “include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high - order skills.” Content is no longer the sole - nor the first - measure of success. The goal is to launch independent critical thinkers who can summarize, synthesize, analyze, and design.

The CCSS is a document primarily intended to lift the levels of student achievement. There are ten anchor Standards each for reading and writing, and **redefined rigor** is infused throughout, requiring students to read increasingly more complex texts and demonstrate increasing sophistication in all aspects of language use, throughout their years in the Lexington Public Schools.

For students to achieve mastery on the College and Career Readiness Reading **Standard #10**: *students will read at the high end of the grade level text complexity band independently and proficiently*, they need to perform Standards one through nine at each grade level. These expectations include close reading with an analytical stance. All readers are expected to attend to meaning in text. Proficient readers must attend to more than decoding words correctly or applying reading strategies such as making connections to the text. When students achieve mastery of their grade level text complexity band, they are reading about, within, and beyond

the text, and teachers will observe student progress through reading selections and written and verbal responses to text.

The **writing standards** require students to gain mastery of a wide range of skills. All students are expected to write for sustained periods of time, to write informational, opinion and narrative pieces, and to use technology to produce and publish writing. In Lexington, the next several years will bring the alignment of these Standards and the technology to produce writing to every student, beginning in kindergarten. For more information about the 2011 MA Framework and the Common Core State Standards, please refer to the Year One and Two Executive Summaries submitted by the ELA Review Committee.

### **State Assessment Transition**

Because of the new MA Framework, there will be a new state assessment. In 2012 - 2013, the MCAS assessment will be based on the 2011 MA Framework. Massachusetts is a member of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), one of two multi - state consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop the next generation of student assessments. PARCC is developing these assessments to be delivered online by the 2014 - 2015 school year. The Long Composition assessment will continue to assess writing in grades 4, 7, and 10. In grades 4 and 7, writing modes will include all types in the 2011 Framework (opinion, information, and personal narrative), with an emphasis on writing in response to text(s). In grade 10, writing will continue to be assessed through literary analysis. Lexington teachers will prepare for these changes by aligning the Lexington curriculum with the MA Framework. While this transition takes place, it will be important to focus on the real work of the Standards, improving teaching and learning.

### **The Complex Process**

The committee researched best practices for teaching the skills and content expected by the new Standards, and grappled with the challenges presented by ATLAS. This committee is the first in Lexington to use ATLAS, so while reviewing curriculum, committee members designed the curriculum map structure, trained teachers, and learned to use the technology. The Standards are new to the whole country, and all educators are working to understand them and develop curriculum. Lexington is fortunate to have the resources that support the depth and breadth of

these efforts, but the committee did not work in isolation. These complex layers were, and will continue to be, addressed concurrently in multiple contexts throughout the Lexington Schools: the ELA Curriculum Review, the Social Studies Curriculum Review, the Report Card, Literacy Leadership (renamed Learning Leadership), and Response to Intervention (RTI) Committees, course offerings, both after school and during the school day, Professional Learning Communities (PLC), and the elementary literacy, middle school and high school English departments.

## **THE VISION**

While the debate about national Standards engages all interested Americans, the vision of the Lexington English Language Arts Review Committee, articulated September 2009, remains consistent, and aligns with the expectations of the MA Framework:

*To prepare for a highly literate society and our global community, the students of Lexington Public Schools, as critical thinkers, will communicate and respond, experience texts, and write in diverse genres for a variety of purposes. It is the vision of Lexington Public Schools that students, recognizing the authenticity and relevance of the literary arts, will harness the power and joy of literacy throughout their time in our schools and beyond.*

*The mission of the Lexington Public Schools English Language Arts curriculum is to provide students with rich and varied experiences that will inform and cultivate their abilities to think, read, write and speak with excellence.*

*Lexington Public Schools' comprehensive English Language Arts curriculum reflects the interests and experiences of the community, adheres to state and national Standards, and provides adequate time for students to develop strategies and skills on a continuum. The foundation for literacy includes instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing across multiple genres through authentic integrated contexts. While encouraging students to take risks and become critical thinkers, teachers use knowledge of English Language Arts standards to instruct, assess, and motivate. Students are given extensive time for purposeful reading, writing, speaking, and listening.*

*Inspired by teachers' high expectations, strong instruction, and differentiated support, every student can know the promise and delight of reading and writing well. The educators of the Lexington Public Schools believe that all students, when challenged by high expectations and provided appropriate instruction, can achieve these goals.*

Year 3 accomplishments of the Committee are discussed in the following narrative and summarized at the end of this summary.

### **Professional Development**

The many professional development opportunities related to the 2011 - 2012 ELA curriculum review are discussed throughout this report. Some 2011 - 2012 professional development and pilots are summarized in Appendix B. These opportunities include:

- Literacy training for new K - 5 elementary teachers
- Guiding Early Literacy Development (K - 3) Estabrook & Harrington teachers
- Guiding Intermediate Literacy Development (4 - 5) Estabrook & Harrington teachers
- Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Primary Classroom (K - 3)  
37 Elementary Teachers
- Quality Mapping in Atlas Rubicon, K - 12
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project: Whole School Writing Reform
- *Empowering Writers*
- Teachers College Reading and Writing Project Reunion, March 24, 2012
- Curriculum development in grade level teams June 2012
- Essential Questions and Big Ideas, Ms. Alison Zmuda, winter 2012

### **2011 - 2012 PROCESS**

#### **August and September:**

- All Lexington ELA and literacy teachers received a copy of the new Massachusetts Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy.
- The committee planned meetings to share the curriculum revisions with all Lexington English teachers, K - 12, at three **district - wide meeting** dates devoted to the curriculum review.
- Committee members participated in a Webinar presented by staff developers from ATLAS, a *train the trainer* session to prepare committee members for the September district - wide meetings.

#### **September 26, District - wide meeting #1:**

Committee members ran concurrent meetings at each of the nine schools to formally introduce teachers to ATLAS, the 2011 MA Framework, and the rationale for curriculum mapping.

English teachers received a password for ATLAS. The focus was on the transition from a resource - based curriculum to a Standards - based curriculum. The essential role of Standards - based unit design in the revised curriculum was discussed. In grade - level groups, teachers explored exemplar curriculum maps, learned to access the database, and interpreted the components of ATLAS unit design. They learned to share their thoughts about the curriculum with developers by sending an e - mail or note in ATLAS.

### **October and December:**

In order to achieve the long - term goal of having all teachers use ATLAS, ELA committee members attended two ATLAS advanced training sessions on the analytic functions of ATLAS and the finer points of the unit map design. Committee members learned to use the tools within ATLAS for quality mapping and to ensure the horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum.

- Horizontal alignment of the curriculum is the degree to which assessment matches the corresponding Standards for a subject area at a particular grade level.
- Vertical alignment is the process in which curriculum expectations progress throughout the grades and are in conjunction with one another to guide student learning towards the Standards at the end of each grade and upon graduation.

This excellent training reiterated the general principles and uses of ATLAS, and provided new information about quality control in ATLAS. Once the curriculum is in ATLAS and teachers are using it regularly, these tools will prove invaluable for evaluating progress towards teaching to the MA Framework.

K - 12 Facilitators representing all nine schools developed common presentations to involve Lexington teachers in the ELA review process. Teachers asked questions and shared feedback about ATLAS and the curriculum work ahead. The evaluations indicated that while many teachers expected to be confused by or had no knowledge of ATLAS, they were pleasantly surprised to learn that all content area curricula will reside in ATLAS going forward. One participant reported, “ A thoughtful and clear presentation about how to use Rubicon, a comprehensive detailed overview for the whole year with useful links, resources, and power points, wonderful information to help me get started.” There were comments and questions about accountability and expectations, the difference between viewing and contributing privileges, concerns for time to learn to use the technology, and genuine excitement for the possibilities that ATLAS affords the Lexington Public Schools.

The committee met and focused on vertical curriculum alignment. Committee members were thrilled to experience a magical moment, K - 12 consensus on a priority standard in the Speaking and Listening Strand of the MA Framework: *Engage effectively in a range of collaborative conversations.*

Kathy McCarthy and Dane Despres attended The Literacy Coaching and Whole School Writing Reform Institute, an intimate and intensive coaching institute to learn powerful methods of staff

development in writing instruction at the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) in New York City, learning methods to support classroom teachers' implementation of the Writer's Workshop.

**November 2, District-wide meeting #2:**

**ELEMENTARY**

K - 5 teachers met by grade level at different schools to connect the curriculum review with the MA Framework, ATLAS, and the Standards - based report card. Curriculum committee members facilitated professional development designed to increase familiarity with ATLAS and grade level discussions focused on these guiding questions:

- What do I believe are the big ideas related to this standard for my students?
- Can we identify assessments related to the units of study?
- Where do the literacy assessments fit into the curriculum?

Committee members answered teachers' questions from the September 26 meeting, and previewed the shift that Lexington educators will be making to the MA Framework. Committee members shared that the curriculum developed in ATLAS will be a Standards - based curriculum and will reflect Priority Standards that are both horizontally and vertically aligned. After sharing this information, committee members led teachers in small groups as they looked through an exemplar curriculum map in ATLAS. Teams focused on looking for big ideas related to the Standards covered in the unit, identifying assessments that would fit into the curriculum, and brainstorming resources that teachers might need to teach to the Standards in their classrooms.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Middle school ELA teachers met as a group to accomplish three objectives:

- Determine each grade level's "Existing Priority Standards" (from the CCSS)
- Evaluate the degree of Common Core - alignment of our "Existing Priority Standards"
- Determine which CCSS we will adopt as Priority Standards

Before the meeting, teachers, created maps of their courses, as currently taught. These *Taught Curriculum Maps* contained information about the length, order, and content of the learning units for each course. Teachers identified the primary skills and conceptual objectives for each unit.



At the meeting, teachers joined their “cross - town” colleagues and reviewed the maps together, identifying the skills and conceptual objectives that currently receive the most focus in that course. After identifying these common skills and concepts, they searched the MA Framework to identify which Standard matches each. This provided a list of *Existing* Priority Standards for each course.

After making the list of Existing Priority Standards, each grade level group discussed the Standards not taught in the existing curriculum. When gaps were identified, teachers noted that they be considered as areas for possible selection of new Priority Standards for the course. These notes were passed on to the members of the ELA committee.

### **HIGH SCHOOL**

Teachers used the afternoon to review ELA committee work on completed units in ATLAS and develop common and formative assessments for these units. Though the Committee had been hard at work, not all staff had seen all units. Staff had the opportunity to browse and make comments on the units. This work proved to be the beginning of a long process of reviewing assessments and looking at the workability of current rubrics. By doing this, teachers were able to look ahead to their time with Ms. Zmuda and consider which unit would require the most help and which issues to focus on during their time with Ms. Zmuda.

#### **December**

Elementary committee members worked with the first drafts of the Standards - based report cards to connect the Standards, curriculum, and the report cards. K - 12 committee members developed and wrote curriculum in ATLAS.

#### **March**

Curriculum development and writing in ATLAS continued in cross - grade level teams. Committee members used the tools for quality curriculum review to review other grade level curriculum maps and begin the vertical alignment process. Thirty - eight middle and elementary educators traveled to New York City for the Teachers College Saturday Reunion, an annual free event presented by the Reading and Writing Project. The invitation to Lexington educators, the flyer describing the events, and Lexington educators’ testimonials about their experiences are located in Appendix C of this report.

### May 7, District - wide meeting # 3

The committee presented this report to all K - 12 English Language Arts teachers. The elementary teachers previewed specific plans for the revised curriculum.

## SUMMARY

### **ELEMENTARY**

“The Common Core is, above all, a call for accelerating students’ literacy development.” (Calkins, 2012) There is an intrinsic emphasis on higher order thinking and analysis skills. The Standards clearly indicate the skills and outcomes that students need *to know and be able to do*, at the end of each grade and upon graduation from Lexington High School, however, the Standards **do not** tell teachers how to teach. The articulation of the curriculum and recommended teaching practices are left to each school district.

The elementary ELA Committee members researched best practices, extensively considered the Standards and the existing curriculum, and considered Lexington educators’ views, gleaned through various district - wide meetings, pilots, and professional development opportunities, to inform the following recommendations for the elementary literacy program.

### **The Lexington Standards - Based Elementary Literacy Curriculum:**

- Students need to **read and write** daily for extended periods of time. The Elementary Curriculum Council agreed that 600 minutes a week, in all K - 5 classrooms, will be dedicated literacy time: 120 minutes a day distributed between reading, writing, and language/word study. This time allocation includes opportunities for cross - curricula experiences with Social Studies and Science: reading, writing, speaking, listening, and researching.
- **Writers Workshop**, 45 - 60 minutes a day. The Writing Standards call for K - 5 students to write routinely, across types and disciplines. Students are expected to write opinion, informational and narrative pieces. The Standards emphasize quality and volume. This requires a process approach to writing. Planned professional development for teachers is described elsewhere in this report. Resources include *The Units of Study for Teaching Writing* (Calkins) and *Writing Workshop* (Fletcher & Portulapi).
- **Readers Workshop**, 45 - 60 minutes a day. The Reading Standards define reading as making meaning from text and call for students to read **increasingly complex texts**

throughout their school years. The high expectations for readers include close reading and analysis of text; students will need to read many books to achieve these expectations. Teachers will need to set goals for and provide concrete instructional feedback to each student. Professional development in the components of the Readers Workshop was provided in 2010 - 2012, more is planned for 2013 - 2014. Resources include *The Units of Study for Teaching Reading* (Calkins), *Guided Reading* (Fountas and Pinnell), professional books listed in this bibliography, shared literacy libraries at each school, and the texts and supplemental books included in the Scott - Foresman Reading Series.

- The **Language Strand K - 5** includes standard English, conventions, spelling, vocabulary, word knowledge, and handwriting. The Standards expect that students will use technology in writing. While the committee will make some of these decisions in the fall of 2012, the recommendations to date include:
  - *Phonics Lessons, Words, and How They Work* (Fountas & Pinnell) **K - 2**, with identified lessons that all teachers will teach.
  - **Grades 3 - 5**, Teachers currently use several programs to teach Language/ Word Study skills. The committee will evaluate various Word Study programs to determine Standards alignment. It is likely the decision will include a combination of *Words Their Way* (Bear et al.) and other research - based practices.

### **The Elementary Standards - Based Report Card**

The Standards - based report card, as reported to the School Committee on April 24, 2012, reflects the MA Framework in ELA. "Assessment (of the standard) is the coherence maker." (Fullan) The Standards - based report card is the vehicle to achieve consistency of *grading* across the district because all students will be evaluated on the same grade - appropriate Standards. Parents, teachers, and students themselves will see how well the students have mastered the grade - level Standards and can pinpoint where a student may need to improve. A Standards - based report card keeps teachers and parents focused on the learning goals from the very beginning of the year. These standards and skills are defined in the revised curriculum.

The work that remains is to familiarize teachers with the ELA Standards so that they begin the 2012 - 2013 school year with the tools to assign indicators to each of the Standards. Teachers need to consider multiple sources of data that will provide information to measure student

progress towards the Standards. In some cases, there are assessments in place. Some assessments need to be developed, including grade level writing rubrics in student friendly language. Other Standards will require checklists and teacher observations. For example, the third grade reading report card standard:

*Reads third grade texts with purpose and understanding*, means that a student can:

- Recount a stories, including fables, folktales and myths
- Determine the meaning of words and phrases in a text
- Determine the main idea of a text
- Read and comprehend literature and informational texts, including Social Studies and Science texts, at the high end of the grades 2 - 3 year complexity band

Teachers will assess these skills by listening to their students read and discuss texts, reading reader's response journals, monitoring student's reading choices, and tracking text levels as students progress towards the Standard grade level text complexity band.

#### **Elementary Professional Development 2009 - 2012**

- One hundred thirty elementary teachers participated in some professional development about comprehensive literacy instruction in reading, writing, and/, or word study. These experiences were planned and provided for by the elementary curriculum office, building principals, the elementary literacy department, literacy coaches, The Professional Development Committee, and The Lexington Education Foundation. Topics included balanced literacy, guided reading, Readers and Writers Workshop, *Empowering Writers*, and phonics instruction.
- Third grade teachers spent a collaborative day assessing student narrative writing through the Common Core lens.
- Literacy coaches worked in school - based teams with staff developer Jennifer Allen to learn about the multi - layers of literacy coaching. The coaching layers include planning and facilitating book groups, acquiring and sharing professional resources, presenting at faculty meetings on literacy topics, modeling lessons in classrooms, attending meetings to plan lessons, reviewing student work, and facilitating discussions about teaching and learning. In Lexington, literacy coaches also provide intervention services to students. Teachers identified the practices currently in place, shared their experiences, and set goals for the 2012 - 2013 school year.

### **Recommended Elementary Professional Development 2012 - 2013**

The Standards call for changes in curriculum, teaching, assessment, and learning. It is important that teachers are given time and support to learn new practices in multiple settings, and that they engage in the many options available to learn about implementation of the workshop model of teaching and learning. The Standards - based report cards reflect the revised curriculum, and the work that teachers will do in the 2012 - 2013 school year to understand the report card and how to measure student progress towards the Standards will be opportunities for teachers to engage with the revised curriculum.

- The focus in 2012 - 2013 will be on writing instruction.
- The implementation of the Writers Workshop mirrors and supports the implementation of Readers Workshop.
- June and July 2012 - Teams of teachers will select common lessons for K - 2 *Phonics Lessons*.
- July 9 - 13, 2012 - TCRWP staff developers will provide professional development to 50 K - 8 Lexington teachers in the Writers Workshop.
- September 27 & October 11, 2012 - Teachers will connect the Standards and the Standards - based report cards.
- 2012 - 2013 - Embedded professional development in the teaching of writing will be provided.
- February 2013 - Fourth grade teachers will evaluate student writing through the lens of the Standards.
- Literacy coaches will receive professional development to enhance coaching skills to support classroom teachers in implementation of the Writers Workshop.
- Professional development in reading and word study will be planned for the 2013 - 2014 school year.

### **Recommendations/ Next Steps**

- Collaborate with grade level colleagues at report card meetings to connect the curriculum, Standards, and assessments
- Provide time for teachers to analyze and understand new Standards
- Provide time for teachers to use Atlas Rubicon
- Develop multi - year plan for professional development
- Schedule literacy coaches to systematically support implementation in classrooms

## MIDDLE SCHOOL

### Common Core Standards to Priority Course Standards

On October 19, at the committee's first meeting of the year, the middle school English representatives on the ELA curriculum review committee met to develop a shared vision for this year's meetings, giving particular attention to aligning the middle school ELA curriculum to the new MA Framework. Teachers developed a road map of the year, which began with mapping current curriculum and coverage of the Standards and ended with a draft of MA Framework aligned unit maps for each grade level. From there, teachers at each school created *taught curriculum maps*, in which they named the essential skills and concepts of each grade level as currently taught.

This laid the groundwork for the identification of Priority Standards. The committee and other teachers selected the MA Framework Standards that best represented the work that they already do in the current curriculum. The resulting list was checked against the list of all MA Framework Standards for that grade level to identify *gaps*.

At the December 14 meeting, the ELA committee vetted the Priority Standards at each grade level, making revisions in response to the comments of the teachers from the November 21 department meeting and with regard to vertical alignment. The committee revised the list down to twelve to fifteen standards per grade level, in accordance with Larry Ainsworth's guidelines in *Rigorous Curriculum Design*.

At the end of the day, the committee reviewed each Standard and considered which Standards would require the most time to instruct, given the content required and the complexity of the skills and concepts included. This was done to mirror and inform the process that would take place during the December 19 English department meeting, where all teachers, with the guidance of ELA review committee members, also assessed the complexity and time required to effectively instruct each of the Priority Standards.

With this information, the ELA committee entered the March 7 ELA review meeting to begin developing Priority Standards curriculum maps, similar to the ATLAS design maps, that would additionally code each unit taught with the Priority Standards covered therein. During this process, the committee members considered the grade level Priority Standards that are not currently taught. Examples of some identified gaps are Greek and Latin roots in vocabulary

instruction, analysis of argumentative nonfiction and rhetoric at the 8th grade level, and greater attention to author's point of view and main idea in nonfiction across all middle school grade levels. Although currently under development, eventually these maps will represent the coverage of all of the Priority Standards.

### **Unit and Assessment Design**

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, the adoption of the new MA Framework has challenged teachers to revise their assessments, projects, and tests to measure their students' achievement of the Standards. Shifting to a Standards - based instructional model requires more than cosmetic adjustment; this transition demands many teachers to revise their pedagogical paradigms. Due to the rampancy of the term in the educational field, Standards - based has taken on a variety of meanings. Because our new ELA curriculum demands Standards - based instruction, the amorphous definition of the concept threatens the fidelity of implementation. The differences in familiarity with Standards - based instruction will vary the rate of implementation from teacher to teacher, and PLC to PLC. Continued focus and professional development in this area will ensure consistent interpretation of Standards - based pedagogy.

This year, five of the six middle school English PLCs developed Standards - based assessments, designed to provide summative feedback on each student's attainment of essential skills and concepts derived from *unpacking* the MA Framework Priority Standard(s) of that unit. During the design process, teachers edited units by removing content and activities unrelated to the acquisition of the prioritized skill/conceptual objectives. In their place, teachers added Standards - based materials and plans. Teachers applied for after - school and summer workshop funds to develop the aforementioned gap units. To fully capitalize on the success of this year, teachers will need professional development geared towards the goal of common understanding of Standards - based pedagogy.

### **PLC and PD Relationship to Our Work**

The continued development of the curriculum is embedded within PLCs' and professional development missions. Professional development time and PLC meetings have been useful and critical, respectively, to this year's accomplishments.

### **Professional Learning Communities**

PLCs continue to develop common assessments that will serve as local accountability measures, a way to check success against the standard of the new ELA curriculum. An example of a common assessment developed by a PLC during the 2011 - 2012 school year is the “Theme Development Assessment” created by the 8th grade PLC at Clarke, designed to measure their students’ ability to identify and track the development of a theme in a short story. Students explored the concept of theme and the skill of thematic analysis in a novel - based reading unit (texts used: *The Outsiders*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Animal Farm*). During the unit, teachers assessed their students’ understanding of and proficiency with the concepts and skills essential to thematic development. At the end of the unit, teachers required students to identify and track the development of a theme in a grade - appropriate short story (*The Moustache* by Robert Cormier) without any additional instruction.

### **Professional Development**

Clarke: Mike Wasta, a consultant from the Leadership and Learning Center, presented to the Clarke administration and then Clarke faculty during the half - day professional development workshop session on January 12. Dr. Wasta called for PLCs to work on developing solutions to a complex issue or problem facing our students. The problem should be one that could be addressed over the course of a long - term period (fourteen weeks was his specific suggestion) instead of a specific learning objective covered in a discrete four - week instructional unit. Dr. Wasta’s message dovetailed with the identification of Priority Standards for our courses, as many Priority Standards, each year, will require more than one unit to fully instruct. He also urged PLCs to develop an assessment practice to provide themselves with useful, timely data about the success of their actions. This aspect of the workshop also relates to our ELA curriculum review as it stresses the importance of formative assessment in our units – not just the summative, final assessment.

Diamond: Diamond teachers spent their professional development time in study groups working on a self - selected topic. All English teachers selected the issue of assessing student writing. During their study group meetings, teachers discussed the challenges of the writing process, including grading for learning and providing useful feedback. They shared their own practices and reviewed a few effective practices from outside resources. Their work has revolved around the question: “How does my feedback help students achieve the goals of the writing assignment?” This focus clearly relates to Standards - based pedagogy, as teachers



considered the effectiveness of their practice. Teachers will need more time to explore this connection and to apply their study to their instruction. They need time to investigate further - not just how their feedback helps students, but also what approaches to feedback work *best* for students.

While the two middle schools tackled professional development to meet their own unique needs, noteworthy is how both schools' professional development offerings encouraged teachers to depart from the antiquated "student deficit" model of instruction and to adopt a "value - added" developmental approach to instruction and assessment.

### **Recommendations from 2011 - 2012 and Accomplishments**

- *Continue to develop and discuss curriculum by Unwrapping Standards.*  
This process continued at varying degrees during PLC meetings. The English department needs more professional development with the Backward Design model to fulfill this recommendation. In response to this recommendation, Ms. Zmuda will return to Lexington on August 15 to work with members of the ELA committee.
- *Work with grade level and district - wide colleagues to check vertical alignment of the MA Framework, defining timelines for Standards taught at each grade level.*  
As described above, this work is well underway. Priority Standards have been selected for each grade level, and Priority Standards maps are in development. These maps will be finalized by the end of the 2012 calendar year.
- *Determine the vertical alignment of grammar instruction.*  
This alignment is prescribed by the MA Framework. Teachers need more time to revise current units and develop new units to meet the Language Standards in the MA Framework.
- *Continue to plan, coordinate, and add curriculum to Atlas Rubicon.*  
Planning and coordination of the curriculum was the priority for our work this year. Currently, teachers are mapping the instructional units in their grade level Priority Standards map. Additional ATLAS training was provided this year. Little curriculum was added to ATLAS.
- *Continue cross - district collaboration among English teachers to achieve uniformity and consistency in grading for topic development and Standard English conventions.*  
This was a focus at Diamond Middle School, where a study group of English teachers tackled this topic and other issues of assessment of student writing. The cross - district collaboration recommendation has not yet been fulfilled.
- *Professional development in the area of nonfiction reading and writing across the curriculum.*  
This recommendation has been given attention in our identification of **gap** units. Teachers will continue to address this recommendation in their development of said gap units.
- *The Middle School English Department Head will work with both middle schools to continue cross - district collaboration and curriculum alignment.*  
Our Priority Standards lists for the grade levels are aligned, both cross - district and vertically 6 - 8. The development of gap units and timing of the coverage of Priority Standards will be aligned by the end of the 2012 calendar year.

### **Recommendations/ Next Steps**

- Foster a shared understanding of Standards - based design by providing professional development
- Provide time for teachers to complete the Priority Standards curriculum maps
- Provide time for teachers to develop gap units
- Provide time for teachers to upload units to ATLAS
- Develop an implementation plan with time - sensitive checkpoints
- Plan collaboration opportunities for middle school teachers

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

### **Common Core State Standards to Priority Standards**

In June 2011, the high school ELA committee reviewed the Common Core State Standards, anecdotal feedback from their colleagues at the high school, and the outline of drafted curriculum units. High school committee members went back to the Standards to recalibrate, given the feedback they had received from PLCs and changes in their own thinking. The Committee came up with four Priority Standards for each grade from which the initial units would be drawn. This was the beginning of the process of vertical alignment - *how would a student's skills in writing and reading progress from freshmen to senior year?* By the end of June, the group had what came to be known as “the chart,” a script of important Standards for all students and at what grade level teachers would introduce, teach to, revisit, and assess those Standards.

### **Unit Design and Assessment**

In order to move from “the chart” to unit design, the twenty - five member English department reorganized into three, grade - level PLCs. Their first step was to familiarize themselves with the Standards selected by the Committee. The ELA committee drafted some first units and steered teachers towards common assessments. Because the freshmen team had been working together for several years and did additional work in the summer of 2011 to develop a freshman skill guide, the team had a good sense of what their initial work needed to be: reading skills and annotation. As a result, the teachers created a skill packet to provide students with ample models and opportunities to practice. The freshman PLC successfully implemented common assessments and reviewed student work. The assessment and review shaped how the freshmen teachers taught writing in the second semester. For instance, they developed explicit directions on introductions and theses for their *Oedipus* paper. This determination was made as a result of the data gathered from a review of student introductions that indicated a need for more instruction.

The sophomore PLC began the year by selecting a text, *Fahrenheit 451*, to meet MA Standard # 5 Grades 9 - 10 - *Students will understand figurative language*. When they reviewed the results of their common assessment, they questioned teaching this skill through the text because the abstract and complex nature of the assignment did not serve all students. As a result, when they planned their essay on the literary devices of foils with the book, *Things Fall Apart*, they provided more scaffolding for students to meet the Standard. However, the results of student *performance - based assessments* did not yield the anticipated outcome, that students would meet the Standard. Teachers determined which instructional practices needed to be changed. Teachers concluded that students need multi - modal, multi - genre examples of this complex literary device in order to understand. Teachers recognized that the way they were *teaching to the text* interfered with *teaching to the Standards* and revised the unit design.

As a result, the group was concerned about meeting the MA Framework requirements for non - fiction as well as meeting the long - term goal of using sophomore year to teach writer's voice. With admirable openness, they critiqued their own work and decided to reconfigure the year around genre. By assessing student work, they discovered some lack of understanding of basic, literary concepts and identified "genre" as a compass point that most students can be directed by as they steer towards their own writers' voices and understand the fundamental principles of literary devices.

The junior PLC focused on the field of unit design and assessment. As the group met week to week, it found itself in a healthy and somewhat profound argument: *If we are teaching American literature, aren't we teaching content? Sure, we build skills as we go, but aren't our essential questions and big ideas about content, not Standards?* As you will see in what follows, Ms. Zmuda's work with the group helped them to overcome this tension in methodology and shape units around both skills and topics.

### **PLC/ Backward Design**

The work with Ms. Zmuda has been both a summative assessment for teachers and administrators of the good work done by Larry Ainsworth a few years ago and instruction on how to get it right moving forward. Ms. Zmuda's, *no question is not worth asking* approach, and her incredibly clear models, emboldened those who were unsure about the differences between a Big Idea and an Essential Question. A Big Idea is an insight derived from inquiry that requires discovery; an Essential Question frames and provokes dialogue about that big idea in student -

friendly language. For instance, a Lit and Comp I Big Idea is: “Stories reveal truths about the human experience and cultural values.” Corresponding essential questions for the unit are: “Why do we tell stories?” and “How does an author’s choice affect meaning?” These questions and ideas help a student scaffold his/her learning. Ms. Zmuda’s instruction helped teachers learn to develop units and lessons based on these Big Ideas and Essential Questions, and to vertically align a curriculum within a school year and among years by looking at the Standards progression. In the afternoon sessions with Ms. Zmuda, all staff met in PLCs to process ideas and to build a single unit. Ms. Zmuda’s work with the junior PLC broke open at long last an intellectual impasse about teaching content vs. skill. Ms. Zmuda suggested simply putting all the themes that teachers wanted to cover (regardless of text) on the board. Back in their PLC and working on the *Death of a Salesman* unit, someone thought the theme of family might help students master the MA Standard (Grades 11 - 12) Reading Standard # 2 *Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas*. Students were asked to view analytically contemporary depictions of family on television. They practiced the skill of analyzing the theme of family and the dynamic of character development in a family before even being handed the text. Ms. Zmuda helped the members draw lines between content and skill. Ultimately, the use of Priority Standards and unit building around them have helped students practice and then master skills.

### **Recommendations/ Next Steps**

**Completion of Units** - The ELA department will continue to map and complete curriculum units for Priority Standards and assess their success by looking at student work. Indeed, while some successful unit building occurred, ELA committee members often default to summative vs. formative assessments. Assessment should inform teachers about next steps for instruction. Teachers learned what to look for when looking at student work as a group. With the new units up and running, we will work in our PLC to write and assess better formative, smaller assignments. We will have professional development in assessment because our own work has made clear that we struggle with developing rubrics and smaller, formative assessments that could support students as they move towards major essays. We need additional training in looking at student work together and in planting some of the skills of inquiry into daily class. We are in contact with the Right Question Institute to plan professional development for next year.

**Summer work** - The freshman team (English and history) applied for summer money in order to look at what skills are particular to freshmen and how we are supporting freshmen in those

skills. The sophomore PLC would also like to work on gathering and vetting non - fiction sources for their new, non - fiction unit. The junior PLC, inspired by their recent work, would like to work over the summer on creating units. It is admirable how inspired the groups are by their work, especially at the end of a long, school year. This indicates how much this curriculum work is desired by all and a tremendous growth in the desire to work together to problem - solve around curriculum issues.

Finally, the high school English department has applied for a summer grant from the Lexington Education Foundation in order to create an on - line writing guide. The idea was inspired by ELA work. In informal discussion, teachers learned they often use different academic language for parts of the essay and for basic grammar concepts. The guide to common, Lexington English language will include:

- Parts of an essay
- Literary devices
- Mechanics
- The perils of plagiarism
- MLA citation
- Rules for outside sources
- Examples of student work of mastery at all grade levels for both critical and narrative writing

The goal of this endeavor is to expand it to become a cross – grade level and cross - curricular writing guide.

**Implementation** - The best data and information comes from anecdotal feedback from students about their learning process and the evaluation of work they produce. As units are built, teachers will use assessments to understand what students have learned and need to learn and to provide inquiry - based classroom activity to support student learning. The building of more common rubrics and common, formative assessments, which provides a snapshot of student learning, helps provide data about student growth. We must continue to have students understand what mastery is through models and interventions.

## CONCLUSION

The work done to support the efforts of the ELA Review Committee, and most importantly, the curriculum guide to implementation of an aligned K-12 Lexington ELA program with the MA Framework, was the basis of the work in Year 3. The charts below provide a concise picture of the many accomplishments and professional development opportunities provided to support this effort.

### Year 3 Accomplishments

Year Two Goals 2010-2011	Actions 2011-2012	Decisions/ Next Steps 2012-2103
Research specific programs, assessments, and practices	<p>Piloted and received professional development: <i>Phonics, Words and How They Work</i></p> <p>Piloted and received professional development, <i>Empowering Writers</i></p> <p>Purchased and used <i>Units of Study for Teaching Writing</i></p> <p>Purchased and distributed <i>Units of Study for Teaching Reading</i></p> <p>Purchased grade specific <i>Curricular Guides to the Readers and Writers Workshop</i> for all K - 8 teachers</p>	<p>Adopt <i>Phonics Words, and How They Work</i>, K - 2</p> <p>Decide handwriting curriculum</p> <p>Add <i>Empowering Writers</i> to Tier 2 Interventions</p> <p>Implement Writers Workshop in elementary classrooms (12 - 13)</p> <p>Implement Readers Workshop in elementary classrooms (2012 - 2014)</p>
Design and implement interdisciplinary projects around new curriculum wherever possible	<p>Conducted professional development: Integration of Social Studies, Science and literacy at Bridge School</p> <p>Planned additional opportunities for 2012 - 13</p>	<p><i>Connecting Science and Literacy</i> August 6 &amp; 7, 2012, 15 elementary teachers</p>
Project budgetary implications of full implementation of new curriculum	<p>Wrote grants for summer phonics work</p> <p>Wrote grants for coaching professional development in Writers Workshop</p>	<p>29 Grade level teams of teachers will select lessons and prepare materials: June &amp; July 2102</p> <p>Implementation K - 2, 2012 - 2013</p> <p>Literacy specialists to support classroom teachers in Writers Workshop</p> <p>Determine 3 - 5 Language/ Word Study</p> <p>Continue in 2012 - 2013</p>
Discuss implementation of new curriculum with task force, grade level teams, and curriculum specialists to share best practices	<p>Communicated the review process, meeting information, and decisions to all teachers on designated Monday afternoons and through newsletters (Appendix D)</p>	<p>Teachers will develop curriculum in ATLAS, 45 teacher days June 2012</p> <p>2012 - 2013 meetings will focus on development, review, refinement of curriculum</p> <p>Continue in 2012 - 2013</p>

**Professional Development Accomplishments**

Year Two Goals 2010-2011	Actions 2011-2012	Next Steps 2012-2013
Identify professional development needs to successfully implement new curriculum and train all faculty appropriately	<p>Department heads attended: <u>Whole School Writing Reform</u></p> <p>Planned PD, Writing Workshop, July 9 - 13 50 teachers k - 8</p> <p>Planned PD: Backward Design, Ms. Zmuda August 15, 2012</p> <p>Provided PD: <i>Using assessments to determine lessons <u>Phonics Lessons</u>.</i> February 29, 2012</p>	<p>Plan on - going, sustainable and consistent professional development for classroom teachers by coaches, consultants, district personnel</p> <p>Purchase professional texts that support professional growth</p>
Identify continued, sustained professional development/ consultation to support implementation of new curriculum	<p>Wrote grant to send one literacy coach from each elementary school to: Teachers College, fall 2012, to attend <i>The Coaching Institute Within the Writers Workshop</i></p> <p>Wrote grant to send team of MS teachers to Teachers College June 2012</p>	<p>Continue district - wide effort to improve writing instruction</p> <p>Develop K - 5 writing rubrics to assess student writing and determine progress towards the Standards</p>
Provide opportunities for lesson modeling, coaching, and mentoring around new curriculum	<p>Provided professional development for literacy coaches</p> <p>Identified the various responsibilities of literacy coaches</p>	<p>Continue to provide professional development</p> <p>Conduct self assessments within the literacy coaching model</p> <p>Plan for new teacher orientation and <i>Phonics Lessons Fountas and Pinnell, Estabrook, grades K - 2</i></p>
Train teachers to use Atlas Rubicon and quality curriculum development tools	<p>Provided on - site professional development in ATLAS</p>	<p>Continue to train teachers to use ATLAS</p>
Determine best practices in implementing a process approach to reading and writing instruction at all grade levels, K - 12	<p>Researched and determined Readers &amp; Writers Workshop will be the instructional model for elementary classrooms</p>	<p>Determine best practices for reading and writing instruction for MS teachers</p>
	<p>Provided professional development in a three - tiered model of direct instruction, modeling by the consultant and model lessons by selected staff members in K - 2 and 3 - 5 grade level cohorts.</p>	<p>Plan for continued support for teachers</p>

### **Curriculum Review Committee 2012 - 2013**

- August 15, 2012, elementary and middle school committee members will participate in professional development with Ms. Zmuda regarding Backward Design and evaluating essential questions and big ideas.
- All Lexington educators will be engaged in the Curriculum Review on designated Monday afternoons during the school year, dates to be determined.
- Full day committee meetings on three days during the fall semester to determine methods to achieve the following goals:
  - Engage all Lexington educators in the MA Standards and the revised curriculum
  - Implement the revised curriculum
  - Identify professional development needs to successfully implement new curriculum and train all faculties appropriately
  - Design and implement interdisciplinary projects at all levels
  - Determine the use of technology as a learning tool for both students and teachers
  - Project the budgetary implications of full implementation of new curriculum
  - Share overview program goals of new curriculum with all stakeholders

We look forward to meeting with Dr. Ash and the members of Lexington School Committee on Tuesday, May 8, 2012 to share the highlights of Year 3 of the ELA review. We will welcome your questions at that time.



**APPENDIX A**

**English Language Arts Curriculum Review Committee 2011 - 2012**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Building</b>
Carol Pilarski	Assistant Superintendent	CO
Meg Colella	Principal	Bridge
Mary Anton - Oldenburg	Principal	Bowman
Kathleen McCarthy	K - 5 Literacy Dept. Head	CO
Dane Despres	English Dept. Chair	Diamond/Clarke
Elizabeth Crowell	English Dept. Head	High School
Anne Garcia - Meitin	Literacy Coach	Estabrook
Nancy Taylor	Literacy Specialist	Harrington
Maggie Aikenhead	Literacy Specialist	Bowman
Ann Tenhor	Technology Integration	CO
Kristen Baranofsky	Kindergarten	Bridge
Amanda Roache	Kindergarten	Harrington
Jeanne Cole	SPED	Bowman
Katie O'Hare - Gibson	Grade 1	Estabrook
Kate Jones	Grade 1	Bowman
Elizabeth Conway	Grade 2	Bridge
Cara Dwyer	Grade 2	Fiske
Roseanne Barbacano	Grade 2	Bowman
Alex Kuschel	Grade 3	Bowman
Patty McLaughlin	Grade 3	Hastings
Nancy Alloway	Grade 4	Hastings
Amanda Doyle	Grade 4	Harrington
Kristina Lieberman	Grade 5	Estabrook
David Pittman	Grade 5	Bridge
Ellen Silberman	Grade 5	Estabrook
Jessica Caverly	Grade 5/ Literacy Specialist	Fiske
Hillary Moser	Grade 6	Diamond
Tami Hancock	Grade 6	Diamond
Krystal Bavin	Grade 6	Clarke
Mary Quirk	Grade 6	Clarke
Audra Alexander	Grade 7	Clarke
Patricia Kascak	Grade 7	Clarke
John Chamberlain	Grade 8	Clarke
Kathleen Hanna	Grade 8	Diamond
Jennifer Wright	Grade 8	Diamond
Andrew Baker	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
Rosemary Loomis	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
Roanne Bosch	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
Marshall Dury	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
Kristen Terpenney	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
David Walsh	Grades 9 – 12	LHS
Ann Boese	Community member	Lexington

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Piloted Programs & Professional Development**

#### ***Phonics, Words, and How They Work***

##### **Accomplishments:**

Teachers and literacy specialists at Estabrook School and other schools piloted multiple components of *Phonics Lessons* from March of 2011 through March of 2012. They engaged in weekly PLC meetings to look at student data: writing samples, spelling inventories and high frequency word assessments, in order to identify core phonics and word study lessons from the “Month by Month” planning guide.

Two professional development sessions were attended, March 2011 and March 2012. Both of these sessions provided an overview of the resources and how to get started. At the March 2012 training, fifty - six teachers representing all elementary schools had the opportunity to learn more about *Phonics, Words and How They Work*. After guiding teachers in an analysis of a student’s DRA and writing sample, the consultant had teachers use the information to brainstorm focus areas of instruction for the sample student. Teachers then worked in small groups, analyzed literacy data, and identified foci for instruction for students in their own classrooms. Once foci for instruction were identified, teachers selected appropriate lessons from the *Phonics Lessons* binder.

##### **Recommendations/ Implications**

Although adjustments to the pacing of some of the lessons would be recommended for next year, teachers learned that many of the lessons were appropriate for the whole class as introductions to phonics/word study principles. Students who needed more time with concepts were given further practice with games and activities during the reading workshop and during guided reading sessions with the teacher. Of special note, was a discovery that several lessons within each domain of word study were anchor lessons for how to teach a principle or concept. These anchor lessons, could be taught multiple times with both whole groups and small groups, depending upon students’ needs. Work this June and July will consist of identifying core lessons from *Phonics Lessons* that align to the ELA Language and Foundation standards. In addition, this team of teachers is making a strong recommendation for further professional development in how to balance the assessment pieces of this resource with other assessments currently being used.

#### **Empowering Writers**

##### **Accomplishments**

Grade 3 - 5 teachers at Bowman and Reading Specialists received training on how to teach explicit writing strategies to students through *Empowering Writers*. This program provides students with opportunities to practice skills in isolation and then in the context of their own writing.

Explicit strategies include:

- Writing Introductions - leads and main idea sentences
- Developing details - including adding description, providing examples, explaining why the detail is important to the topic, and offering a key detail in the form of a quote, description, statistic, anecdote, or amazing fact.
- Transitions
- Sentence variety
- Conclusions - restatement of main idea that leaves the reader thinking

##### **Recommendations/Implications**

- Use as a Tier 1 or 2 **intervention** for children who benefit from explicit instruction
- Continue to align *Units of Study for Writing* with *Empowering Writing*

*Vertical Alignment, Essential Questions and Big Ideas with Ms. Zmuda Zmuda, Consultant at LHS*

**11th Grade Teacher**

In teaching and designing English, there seems to be an inherent friction - something good, sometimes challenging - between content and skills. Having the chance to have Ms. Zmuda talk with our PLC shed some light on how important Big Ideas and Essential Questions are in activating students' own desire to learn about a topic. Our PLC has taken on the task of redesigning much of American Literature based off of overarching Big Ideas/Essential Question for why American Literature exists as a course at our high school.

**11th Grade Teacher**

Ms. Zmuda's presence at our PLC was invaluable. She got us to step back from the document - focused minutia and really think about what we want our course to be about. Her guidance and focused questions helped reignite our enthusiasm about content and our potential as a team.

APPENDIX C

TEACHERS COLLEGE

# Reading & Writing Project

82nd SATURDAY REUNION

Saturday, March 24, 2012

9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Teachers College

New York, NY

Pam Muñoz Ryan - Keynote Speaker

The ELA Review Committee will secure a coach bus to attend the Saturday Reunion.

DEPARTURE: **4:30 am sharp** Saturday morning from Central Office

RETURN: approximately **11:00 pm** to Central Office

This is a chance to learn more about planned Lexington summer PD,  
July 9 - 12, 2012:

Writing Institute (Grades K - 3 & 4 - 8)

- The central role of curriculum development and planning in the teaching of writing;
  - Units of study across the year in the writing workshop;
  - Methods of holding students accountable for doing their best work;
  - Assessing and planning for work with individuals and small groups;
    - Using literature to help students craft their writing;
  - Classroom structures that support inquiry and collaboration.

If interested, please email Karen Boodakian,

[kboodakian@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:kboodakian@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us)

By Monday, March 12, 2012

**There is no cost to educators for this trip**

*This exciting event is a celebration of the Reading and Writing Project's three - decades - old effort about keeping hope and imagination alive, for teachers and students. Created by Lucy Calkins, the Reading and Writing Project today arguably conducts more professional development for elementary and middle school educators than any other organization in the country.*

*But perhaps most of all, the Reading and Writing Project has helped teachers to feel that they are not alone. That was evident throughout the morning and early afternoon of the October reunion, as educators wandered through TC's labyrinthine hallways, attending the more than 140 free workshops on methods of teaching reading and writing to grades K-8.*

The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project  
*presents the*

# The 82nd Saturday Reunion

## March 24, 2012 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

Join the entire TCRWP community as we open our doors to thousands of K - 8 educators from around the world for more than 140 free workshops, keynotes and closings on state - of - the art methods in the teaching of reading, writing, performance assessments and the Common Core. The entire TCRWP staff will present on this day, including Lucy Calkins. Guest literacy leaders will present as well. Topics will include: argument writing, embedding historical fiction in nonfiction text sets, opinion writing for very young writers, managing workshop instruction, aligning instruction to the CCSS, using performance assessments and curriculum maps to ratchet up the level of teaching, state - of - the - art test prep, phonics, guided reading and more.

### Major Speakers include:

**Pam Muñoz Ryan**, our opening keynote speaker, has written over thirty books for young people including the award - winning *Esperanza Rising*, as well as *Riding Freedom*, *Paint the Wind*, and *The Dreamer*. She is the recipient of the Civil and Human Rights Award from the NEA, of the Virginia Hamilton Award for Multicultural Literature, and of the Willa Cather Literacy Award for writing.

**David Booth**, an expert in children's literature and drama, has keynoted TCRWP conferences and authored many of our favorite professional books including *Reading Doesn't Matter Anymore*, *The Literacy Principle*, *Guiding the Reading Process*, and *Even Hockey Players Read*. He has been a literacy leader through his work as a classroom teacher, language arts consultant, keynote, speaker, and author, as well as a Scholar in Residence at the University of Toronto.

**Sarah Weeks**, our closing keynote speaker, is famous throughout the TCRWP community for her light - hearted speeches. She is the author of more than fifty picture books and novels including the bestselling novel, *So B. It*. Two of her most recent contributions are *MAC AND CHEESE* and *PIE*. Sarah is an adjunct faculty member at the New School and a founding member of ART, a traveling troupe of authors who perform readers' theatre across the country.

**Carl Anderson** is the author of the acclaimed books: *Assessing Writers and How's it Going? A Practical Guide to Conferring with Student Writers*. His latest project is a book series: *Strategic Writing Conferences: Smart Conversations That Move Young Writers Forward*.

**Lucy Calkins** is Founding Director of the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project, as well as the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College. She is the author or co - author of over a score of books, including the *Units of Study* books for K - 2 and 3 - 5 writing and for 3 - 5 reading, *The Art of Teaching Reading*, *The Art of Teaching Writing* and the upcoming *Pathways to the Common Core*.

**Kathy Collins**, author of *Growing Readers: Units of Study in the Primary Classroom*, and *Reading for Real*, teaches large group and advanced sections of TCRWP institutes.

**Colleen Cruz**, a senior staff developer at the Project, is the author of

*Independent Writing, of Reaching Struggling Writers, K - 5* and of the young adult novel, *Border Crossing*, as well as co - author of *Writing Fiction: Big Dreams, Tall Ambitions*.

**Mary Ehrenworth** is Deputy Director for Middle Schools at the Project. She is co - author of *The Power of Grammar*, of two books in the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3 - 5*, and of the upcoming *Pathways to the Common Core*.

**Amanda Hartman**, Lead Coach at the Project, is co - author of *Authors as Mentors*, of *The Conferring Handbook* and of *One - to - One: The Art of Conferring with Young Writers*.

**Laurie Pessah**, Senior Deputy Director of the Project, is co - author of *Nonfiction Writing: Procedures and Reports* and of *A Principal's Guide to Leadership in the Teaching of Writing*.

**Jennifer Serravallo**, a senior staff developer at the Project, is author of *Independent Reading Assessment: Fiction, Teaching Reading in Small Groups*, and co - author of *Conferring with Readers*.

**Kathleen Tolan**, Senior Deputy Director of the Project, is co - author of *Building a Reading Life, Following Characters into Meaning*, and *Navigating Nonfiction* in the *Units of Study for Teaching Reading, Grades 3 - 5*.

**The Morning Keynote will be held at Riverside Church at 9:00 a.m.** 490 Riverside Drive (between 120th and 122nd Streets) The ensuing workshops will be held at Teachers College, 525 W.120th Street, NY 10027 **No registration required**. For more information, visit our website at: [www.readingandwritingproject.com](http://www.readingandwritingproject.com)

## **Attending Lexington Teachers' Testimonials**

### **Elementary Classroom Teachers**

#### **Conferring with Strong Readers: Content for Ambitious and Effective Conferences**

There are readers in our classrooms that are at or above grade level and consistently apply all of the reading strategies taught. During conferences about their reading, the teacher may find many compliments, but very few really powerful teaching points...until now! There are three major reading skills that these readers can be taught: **character inference** and the **archetypes in literature, asking the right questions, and critical literacy**. Once students are introduced to the presence of these elements, they see them everywhere. These three teaching points deepen students' thinking about texts they already understand and expand their minds to the underlying layers to a story. Teachers can send students further into texts they already think they know and open their minds to look for these elements in other stories.

- Teach students to **think of characters relationally**. How do the characters interact and why are they acting that way? Teach students to look for a character's motivation for acting a certain way.
- Teach students to look for **archetypes in literature**. Conferences can be focused on looking for symbolism and metaphors. It is important that readers know that writers entwine all kinds of symbolism into books through the names and appearances of characters, to the names of places, the animals that are present in the text and the choice of settings.
- Teach students to look for the underlying meaning in texts. **Asking the right questions** is key in reading a text deeply.
- **Critical literacy**: Teach students that **no piece of writing is without bias** and all writing is crafted with the author's intentions. Teach readers to look for perspective, power, and positioning in texts. Students can ask: Whose perspective is the story being written from? Why did the author choose *this* character's perspective to write from? This can lead to discussions around who has the power in the story and who is marginalized.

## **Teaching Navigations – On the Joys and Challenges of Teaching Teachers and Youth to Navigate Literacy Contexts**

This session focused on teaching ‘how to navigate’ – to learn the use of different strategies in the multiple domains of literacy. The consultant advocated for more Science and Social Studies in the elementary schools. She went through case studies and showed how students know more than they have produced on tests, that teacher’s informal observations are very valuable.

What explains failure?

- Knowledge – do students have the necessary knowledge?
- Reading strategies – do students own them and use them fluently?
- Motivation/interest/relevance– is the material pertinent to students?
- Quality of the text – is it worthy, accurate, appealing, etc.?

### **Literacy Specialist**

*I will definitely go next year!*

I learned methods for getting a reluctant reader interested in his/her independent books by lining them up by what they wanted to read first during independent reading. It motivates the student. The student feels in charge of the reading and the teacher has chosen appropriate books.

### **English Language Learner (ELL) Teacher**

*I was most inspired* by a workshop I attended on creating a toolkit to confer with students about their non - fiction writing. I know that mirror texts and mentor texts are useful when talking to students about writing, but until now I haven't had the "right" mentor texts and mirror texts at my fingertips when I need them the most. This workshop taught me how to organize these materials so I can quickly reference them to show students. I don't work with the reading and writing workshop curriculum directly, but Lucy Calkins' workshop helped me get a better understanding of the process I see when I push - in to classes, and got me thinking of how I can bridge this with the ELL curriculum.

### **Middle School Teachers**

*The reunion was so terrific. It is hard to choose just one (workshop to write about).* I started to incorporate media to help students connect to more abstract concepts such as theme. Students are able to identify theme, symbols, and much more in T.V. shows, music videos, and video games. By including media in the classroom, students feel like their culture is honored, thus building respect. It also helps build the confidence that they can grasp more abstract concepts by making text to media connections.

*The reunion was by far the best Professional Development I've had in years. Someone aptly described it a bit like "speed dating" because the staff developers were trying to give us the gist of their very best ideas in record time. However, it provided great food for thought.*

The staff developer gave great suggestions about how to effectively manage reading classes by using sticky notes. The method provides quick analysis and efficient teaching. The teacher asks students to respond to the book or describe a character in a book he or she is reading. The teacher organizes these sticky notes into three categories: vague understanding, some complex understanding, or a solid theory or interpretation of character with thoughtful word choice. The teacher uses this information to group students for small group instruction.

### **Reading Conferences are Possible - - and Powerful - - in Middle School**

The consultant spoke about pre - assessing for conferences by researching the day before.

In a mythology unit I am teaching, I will ask all students to tell me the point of a myth that we read and see through their responses where they are with their analysis skills and sort students into three groups: a group that can name a moral, a group that can name the point and give text evidence for that claim, and a group that can do all of this and interpret the moral in some personal way. Then I will be able to differentiate instruction for groups rather than individuals.

### **Issues in Upper Grade Writing**

In the workshop, Anderson shared his condensed list of ten common writing issues for adolescent writers and his most effective interventions for each of the issues. These suggestions work for a wide range of writing types, spanning the spectrum from narrative to argumentative.

### **Reading Specialist & Journalism Teacher**

*The day was invaluable for numerous reasons.*

What I recommend: It is clear each year that our elementary students are reading more than ever in school. If we are to move to more of a workshop model, we will need more books and more dedicated time within the school day for reading and discussion. Lucy Calkins spoke about the need for students to read for 45 minutes per day.



# Lexington Public Schools K-12

## English Language Arts Curriculum Review

### Year 3 September Newsletter

## Year Three

In the 2011-2012 school year, committee members will continue to align the Lexington English Language Arts Curriculum with the recently adopted MA Framework for ELA, using the on-line curriculum-mapping tool, ATLAS Rubicon.

At three district-wide meetings, committee members will share the process and the draft curriculum, and train ELA educators to browse the curriculum in ATLAS and to communicate to curriculum writers using ATLAS.

### What is a Curriculum Review?

An opportunity for a representative group of Lexington educators to review the existing curriculum, research best practices, analyze materials, resources, and data, and align instruction and assessment with grade level standards in *The Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, Incorporating the Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects*



November 21, 2011

# Lexington Public Schools K-12 school Schools

## English Language Arts Curriculum Review Update

Kathy McCarthy K-5 Literacy Department Head & Curriculum  
Review Facilitator

### Year 3 2011-2012

Lexington educators have the privilege to review the existing curriculum in a three-year cycle. Curriculum review committees consist of representative groups of teachers, administrators, and community members.

The ELA review coincides with the January 2011 release of the new *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy, Incorporating the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts, and literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects*. This mandate by the Commonwealth will inform curriculum development and changes to instruction and assessment practices. The intention of the new standards is to elevate student achievement; the standards document does not tell teachers how to teach.

The work of the ELA committee is to align the Lexington curriculum with the Massachusetts Framework, and capture that alignment in ATLAS Rubicon. Curriculum writers are creating maps that include researched based best practices. For the remainder of year three, committee members will plan to involve LPS teachers in the process, continue to develop maps in ATLAS, and plan staff development that will help teachers provide instruction that aligns with the Massachusetts Framework.

November 21, 2011

## K-12 District Wide Meetings

### Elementary Teachers @ 3:45

- Kindergarten Bridge library
- Grade 1 Bowman library
- Grade 2 Fiske room 183
- Grade 3 Harrington comp. room
- Grade 4 Hastings room 19
- Grade 5 Estabrook room 24

Middle School English  
Teachers @ home schools

LHS ELA Teachers @ 3 p.m.  
Room 222

*Please bring your green  
standards book and your  
ATLAS Rubicon  
password to this meeting*

**Year 1**  
**2009-2010**

The review committee convened to understand the three -year processes for all Lexington curriculum reviews. Committee members analyzed MCAS data, surveyed classroom teachers, researched best practices, and studied the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/ Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects* document.

**Year 2**  
**2010-2011**

Committee members began to prioritize, unpack and use the Common Core Standards to begin curriculum development. Committee members learned to use Atlas Rubicon, the newly adopted on-line curriculum-mapping tool, and began to develop curriculum maps. The committee continued to research best practices, participate in professional development, and plan for district-wide meeting days.

**Professional Development, Years 1-3**

237 teachers participated in staff development related to the work, including technology, content, standards, and instructional strategies. Teachers attended institutes on the Common Core State Standards, courses about reading and writing workshop, school based workshops about comprehensive literacy. Pilots in Word Study, EMPOWER and EMPOWERING Writers, assessments, handwriting and many other programs are in place across schools, providing important information about the resources and training needed to implement a standards based ELA curriculum.

## *District- Wide Meetings 2011-2012*

**Some of the reasons there are district -wide meetings dedicated to the curriculum review-**

- *Share the collective voice of the committee's work*
- *Represent the teachers, administrators, and parents on the committee who cannot participate in committee work*
- *Involve all Lexington teachers in curriculum development*

September 26- All Lexington teachers of English Language Arts attended a district-wide meeting and learned to browse the draft ELA curriculum maps in ATLAS and provide feedback to the committee.

October 19- Committee members reviewed teachers responses to the September meeting, map the curriculum, develop deeper understandings about prioritizing standards, and plan for the November 21 district wide-meeting.

In the 2012 - 2013 school year, this work continue, and will English Language Studies & Science.

**November 21, 2011  
District –Wide Meetings:**

will  
focus on  
Arts, Social

**Elementary teachers** in grade level teams, will discuss:

- *What do I believe are the big ideas related to this standard for my students?*
- *Can we identify assessments related to the units of study?*
- *How do the literacy assessments fit in to the curriculum*

**Middle School Teachers** will meet at their respective schools to map curriculum and discuss Priority Standards

**Lexington High School ELA teachers,** in the past year, built units around four Priority Standards from the Common Core State Standards. Teachers vertically aligned those skills from freshman, sophomore, and junior years, moving away from units based strictly on texts. The task is to develop common/formative assessments for one of these units. Then teachers will work to develop skill units for the new, semester-long senior electives.

**K-5 English Language Arts Curriculum Development-**  
**What does a standards based curriculum look like?**

Kathy McCarthy, Literacy Department Head & Committee Facilitator

**Reading**

Standard 10, *students will read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently*, begins in pre-k as a listening standard. To meet the standard at each succeeding grade level, students need to read a large volume and variety of texts in a comprehensive reading program.

A balanced and comprehensive reading program includes opportunities for shared, independent, and guided reading. Combined with expectations that students read at school and at home every day across genres and levels, this will ensure that all students meet the standard.

In the past two years, many teachers received staff development, after school, in the summer, in school -based study groups, and consultant visits to support the transition from a resource -based curriculum (Scott Foresman), to a comprehensive standards- based reading curriculum.

All teachers will receive professional development in balanced literacy following the curriculum review.

**Writing**

Standard 10, *Students will write routinely over extended time frames and shorter time frames for a range of discipline specific tasks purposes and audiences*, begins in grade 3. For students to develop the skills to write across genres and for extended time, they need to write every day, beginning in kindergarten.

The Writer's Workshop is an efficient way to teach writing. Many teachers currently use the *Units of Study for Teaching Writing*, an instructional resource that describes a sequence of units to develop young writers.

Principals developed schedules that support writing over extended times, an important step towards increasing the volume of student writing which will move all students towards achievement of the standard.

The committee is planning staff development in Writer's Workshop and the teaching of writing for elementary teachers following the curriculum review.

**Kindergarten Writing, October 2011**



## K-5 Language & Word Study

The Language standards require students to demonstrate and use Standard English in speaking and writing, including grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. This year, elementary teachers participating in the review are teaching using research-based resources to teach phonics, spelling, and grammar. Committee members are researching and learning about these different resources to support intervention and/or classroom instruction.

Some of these resources are:

*Phonics Lessons, Letters, Words, and How They Work,*  
(Fountas & Pinnell)

*Words Their Way, Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction,* (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, Johnston)  
*Foundations, a Literacy Intervention Program*

Committee members will recommend a resource to support the language standards for K-5 students at the end of the review cycle.

# English Language Arts Curriculum Review



## Important Dates:

- May 2- ELA Committee Meeting, Central Office  
8:30 AM-3:15 PM
- May 7- District-Wide ELA Meeting, all K-12 English &  
K-5 teachers, LHS auditorium 3:45-5:15 PM
- May 8- ELA School Committee Presentation (Time TBD)

## Teachers College 82nd Saturday Reunion

On Saturday, March 23, led by middle school ELA department head Dane Despres, 35 Lexington K-8 classroom teachers, librarians, and literacy specialists rose before dawn to gather at CO for the bus ride to NYC and attend the reunion:

- *I got a lot out of the trip yesterday, great idea!*
- *The professional development surpassed my expectations.*
- *Saturday was truly outstanding.*



# The Curriculum Review Committee has been busy!

## ATLAS Rubicon

Members of the ELA review committee develop and enter curriculum in ATLAS Rubicon on meeting days, after school, and weekends. There will be further curriculum development in June and July. Lexington educators can view the work in progress and virtually collaborate with committee members.

  Share your thoughts using the collaboration link in ATLAS:

<http://lps.rubiconatlas.org/Atlas/Authentication/View/Login>

## Curriculum Pilots

In 2011-2012, many teachers piloted various programs, attended conferences, and participated in professional development opportunities to learn about best practices in literacy instruction and the path to the 2011 Massachusetts English Language Arts Framework.

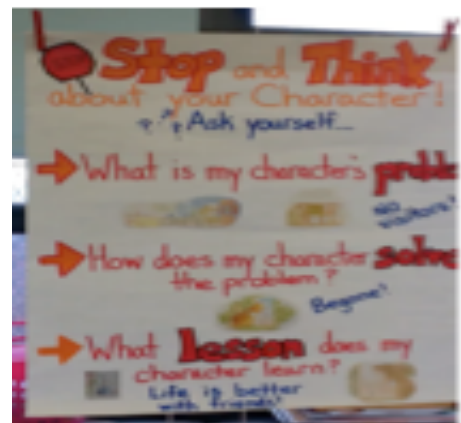
Committee members appreciate their colleagues' hard work and willingness to participate in the process.

Thank you to those who piloted *Handwriting Without Tears*, *Foundations*, *Phonics Lessons*, *Empowering Writing*, student-friendly standards-aligned rubrics, Writers Workshop, Readers Workshop, and the many courses offered through LPS related to the revised ELA curriculum.

## Standards-Based Report Card

Teachers on the Report Card and Curriculum Committees aligned the new report card, the Lexington curriculum, and the 2011 Massachusetts Standards for English Language Arts.

Elementary teachers participated in Professional Development about the report card. In the 2012-2013 school year, this work will continue, and will focus on English Language Arts, Social Studies & Science.





## The 2011 Massachusetts Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy

The Lexington Public Schools elementary English Language Arts and literacy curriculum is in the process of revision in order to align with the 2011 Massachusetts ELA Framework.

There are many changes, two examples:

- Write opinion, informative, and narrative pieces- all students, K-12
- Read increasingly more complex text- all students, K-12

In Lexington, and across the country, teachers are learning to understand what these changes mean and how they will affect teaching and learning.

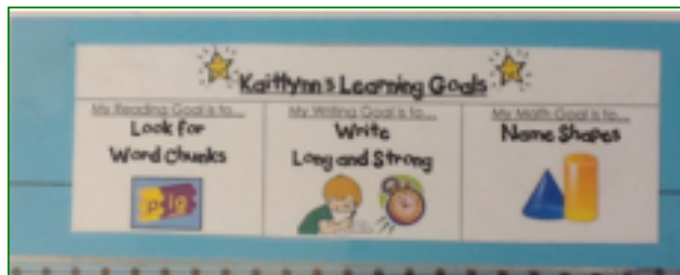
## Planned Professional Development

The ELA committee identified some of the professional development needed to prepare Lexington educators to teach to the new MA Standards.

Stay tuned to the LPS website for information about these offerings during the summer and the 2012-2013 school year.

In 2012-2013, the professional development focus will be on writing instruction. Many teachers will participate in professional development this coming summer, and there

will be additional opportunities throughout the school year.



## Assessment of the 2011 Massachusetts ELA Curriculum Framework

- The Massachusetts Department of Education expects that districts **nearly align** curriculum to the 2011 Framework this year; **fully align** by 2012- 2013.
- The MCAS that students take this spring assesses the **old** 2001 Massachusetts ELA Framework.
- In the 2012-2013 school year, the MCAS will reflect the **new** 2011 Framework.
- The ELA MCAS Composition tests will continue to assess writing in grades 4, 7, and 10. In grades 4 and 7, writing modes will include all modes in the 2011 Framework with an emphasis

## Reading Instruction

The review committee recommends the Reader's Workshop, a teaching structure that provides students with the conditions that they need to learn to read with stamina, fluency, and engagement.

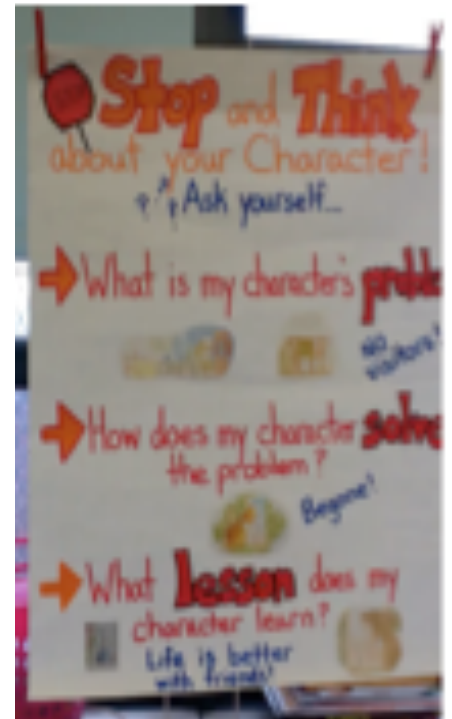
The Reader's Workshop lasts approximately 45-60 minutes each day.

Students become better readers when they have time to read, lots and lots of books, and direct, and targeted instruction in various structures by great teachers.

Lexington students are fortunate to have access to all of these conditions.

If you would like more information about Reader's Workshop, ask a literacy specialist in your building or:

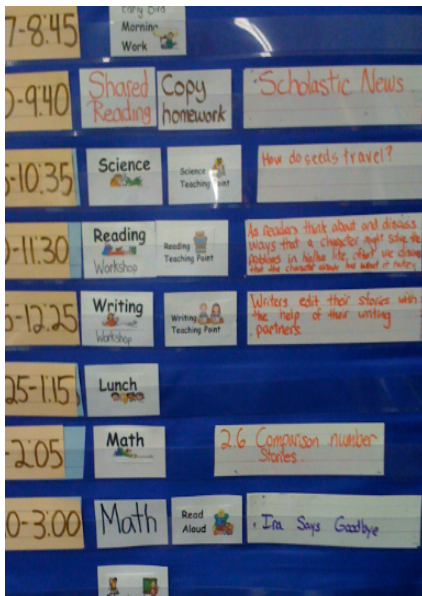
E-mail [kamccarthy@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:kamccarthy@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us)



## Writing Instruction

The committee recommends the Writer's Workshop model of writing instruction. Writers need direct instruction, lots of time to write, and choice of writing topics. In addition to the professional development described in this newsletter, one way to learn more about Writer's Workshop is to read *The Units of Study for Teaching Writing* (Calkins). If you do not have a copy of this resource and would like one:

E-mail: [kboodakian@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us](mailto:kboodakian@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us)



## Language & Word Study



The language strand of the 2011 Framework encompasses conventions, language, vocabulary and handwriting.

In a Standards - based curriculum, the goal is for all students to reach the standards. Teachers make instructional decisions based on their assessment of their students.

The committee recommends *Phonic Lessons, Words and How They Work* (Fountas & Pinnell) for K - 2 classrooms. In the past two years, fifty - six Lexington teachers participated in professional development about this resource and others will work this summer to select common lessons and assessments.

The committee is still considering the various programs for language and word study in grades 3 - 5.

# Spring Forward



The ELA Curriculum Review Committee will work through the summer months and into the first half of the 2012-2013 school year to develop curriculum, plan professional development, and support teachers as they learn to use ATLAS Rubicon to plan reading, writing, and language instruction.

**Kathleen McCarthy, K-5 Literacy Department Head  
& Curriculum Review Committee Facilitator**

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