

To: Members of the School Committee

From: Margaret Adams, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning  
Angela Singer, Director of Humanities, 6-12

Subject: ELA Program Review

Date: September 27, 2016

**Define the Issue/Question:**

Evaluate the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, and assessment in English Language Arts grades PreK-12 as measured by student achievement, student work, curriculum alignment, instructional practices, and by teacher, student, and parent surveys.

**Essential Questions:**

The ELA Program Review developed the following questions to guide the collection and analysis of data:

- How well does ELA prepare students to be effective global communicators for 21 century college and career? (How well do we prepare students for college level reading and writing skills?)
- How effectively are ELA skills applied across other content areas?
- How is the ELA curriculum aligned vertically and horizontally?
- How well does instruction and assessment meet the varied needs of students?
- How well do our assessments measure reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills?

**Brief Overview/Background Information:**

A team of educators spanning grades Pre-K-12 met to begin the first year of a two-year process during the 2015-2016 school year. The group reviewed the current ELA curriculum including assessment and instruction in grades PreK-12 in the Melrose Public Schools. The team began its work by developing a timeline and identifying essential questions for the study. Each grade span, Pre K, elementary, middle, and high school, researched current curriculum, assessment, and instruction and presented the information to the group as a whole this school year. The team also created surveys to collect data from ELA teachers, students, and parents to be administered in the fall of 2016. The administration and the results of these surveys will be published as part of our final report.

The team will meet again next year to continue its analysis of data and documentation of current curriculum. The team will facilitate a site visit in early December by other educators to the district to help inform the review.

The following teachers and staff participated in the ELA Program Review during 2015-2016:

- Margaret Adams, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
- Angela Singer, Director of Humanities
- Donna Rosso, Director of Early Childhood
- Jessica Patti, Kindergarten Lincoln School
- Lindsay Martin, Grade 1 Horace Mann
- Stephanie DiLorenzo, Grade 2 Horace Mann
- Joanne Dwyer, Special Education, Horace Mann
- Jillian Duzz, Grade 3 Horace Mann
- Cynthia Amirault, Special Education, Hoover
- Laurel Neubauer, Grade 4 Horace Mann
- Chelsea Slosberg, Grade 6 ELA MVMMS
- Adam Azia, Grade 7 ELA MVMMS
- Suzanne Fogarty, Wellness Teacher MHS
- Tanja Hiti-Stearns, ELA Teacher MHS
- Lindsey Dobbins, ELA Teacher MHS
- Megan Kisling, ELA Teacher MHS
- Heather MacDonald, ELA Teacher MHS

**Recommendations:**

There are no recommendations at this time. The team will present a report when it completes the review in the spring of 2017. The report will outline the findings and an action plan to remediate any areas of need.

**Budget Implications:**

There are no budget implications at this. The review of the curriculum, instruction, and assessment may present areas of need that may require additional resources.

**Statement of Impact:**

The ELA Program Review provides an opportunity to complete a detailed review of current practices in curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development. By outlining current programming, an action plan can be developed to meet identified areas of need and also build upon existing strengths of the program.

**Identify Potential Policy Implications:**

The Program Review Process will continue with subsequent content areas by adding one content area each year.

**MELROSE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS**

**PROTOCOL**

The Program Review Process (PRP) is characterized by a systematic evaluation protocol consisting of the following components:

- **Self-Study**

During this phase, the Assistant Superintendent leads the Program Review Team as they coordinate the work. The key work in this phase consists of three stages: 1.) Developing essential questions to focus the self-study, 2.) Documenting the district's curriculum and instructional resources in preparation for evaluation, 3.) Conducting the self-study by surveying students, teachers, and parents, and 4.) Inviting a review group representing area schools to MPS to view and assess ELA classes, and 5.) Completing the self-study.

- **Action Planning**

This phase is the district's response to the Program Review Team's report and recommendations. The action plan sets the agenda for program development and curriculum updates/changes, identifies professional development needs, and is used in the budgeting process to allocate resources.

- **Program and Professional Development and Implementation**

This phase is the implementation of updates and/or changes based on the report's recommendations. During this phase professional development is provided and recommended resources are reviewed, piloted, and purchased. The effectiveness of any updates and/or changes are monitored through teacher observation, student achievement, and staff self-reflection and collaboration.

Each of these phases is described in further detail later in this document.

The PRP is the key responsibility of the Assistant Superintendent, the Department Director in his role as instructional leader, and other facilitators and coordinators with program responsibilities. However, the success of this process requires participation by the faculty.

**RESOURCES**

The PRP is an extremely important process for the development of curriculum and the instructional program. It requires significant resources, must be supported by the administration, and must remain one of the high priority goals for administrators and instructional leaders in diverse positions.

Resources that will be allocated to the PRP process include:

- Substitute teachers, if appropriate, so that the documentation team can schedule working days or observation times during the school year.

- Access to appropriate technology and technology support.
- Financial resources, research, and resource materials and support for pilot projects.\*

### **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?**

Program review is an inclusive process. Within the district, a Program Review Team for each content area K-12 will facilitate the PRP.

The Program Review Team coordinates and organizes the Program Review under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum. Members of the Program Review Team for ELA Pre-K-12 may include:

- Assistant Superintendent
- Department Director
- Instructional Coaches
- General Education Teachers Pre-K-12
- Principals
- Specialists
- Special Education and English as a Second Language Teachers

Additionally, the Program Review Team is responsible for:

- Developing Essential Questions for the study
- Presenting the Program Review Team's report to the School Committee, School Councils, Faculty and Community
- Developing the Action Plan in response to the report
- Proposing changes and/or updates for presentation in the budget development process
- Reviewing the progress of work on the Action Plan on an annual basis

### **SELF-STUDY**

This phase of the process involves an in-depth review of the existing program and begins actual program evaluation. During this period, the Program Review Team, under the direction of the Assistant Superintendent/Director of Curriculum, review and document the course of study at each grade level. In addition, they must also interpret assessment data from MCAS, PARCC, and other standardized tests, common assessments, and essential questions to be answered by the review. The team also surveys students, parents, and staff regarding their experiences regarding curriculum and instruction.

The following will be reviewed by the Administrative Team:

- Essential Questions
- Self-study plan and timeline
- Questionnaires, surveys, etc.

### **Development of Essential Questions**

These essential questions should serve as a guide for program evaluation. Members of the Program Review Team should formulate these questions during the first month. Some common questions may be framed around the following topics:

- Alignment with the state or national frameworks
- Validation of written curriculum
- Range of student work
- Current instructional practices
- Program rigor and currency
- Provision for meeting the needs of all learners
- Assessment components
- Student performance

(Note: Each set of guiding questions should also include this question: How well is the program being evaluated promoting/meeting the **School wide Expectations** and the **District Mission**?)

### **Creation or Revision of a K-12 Program Review Document**

Components include Program Overview, Statement of Philosophy, Scope and Sequence and specific grade level units of study using a common UbD template format. Time allocated for this work is approximately 14 months. The Program Review Team may complete the work in a variety of settings such as grade level meetings, staff meetings, after school meetings, release time and summer professional development time.

### **Teacher Validation of the Pre-K-12 Curriculum**

Under the direction of the Program Review Team, teachers review and evaluate curriculum documents and validate them as being representative of what in fact, they do teach. This process should be ongoing and completed between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> month.

### **Collection and Organization of Other Important Information**

The information may be gathered from the Office of the Director of Curriculum. The designated time frame is month fourteen months.

- Assessment Data: District and departmental evaluations (MCAS, PARCC, Authentic and Performance Assessment data, common assessments, etc.)
- Budget Information/Resources
- Staffing Information
- Professional Development Activity: define and address needs (current/future as well as data regarding the amount of teacher participation.)

### **Documentation of Framework Alignment Pre-K-12**

This document should indicate how each level is meeting each of the specific standards prescribed by the Massachusetts State Framework for the particular curriculum area. The Program Review Team will also use national standards from professional organizations as a reference.

### **List of Special Concerns and Strengths**

Collect data from various groups of people who have a vested interest in the program: students, teachers, administrators, parents, and others. Note policies and mandates that may influence the program in a significant way. The Program Review Team should participate in this data gathering process during the first three months and again at the 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> month. Tools for data gathering may include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, forums, etc.

### **Collection of Student Work Samples**

Collect a variety of student work samples that represent a range of achievement levels.

### **ACTION PLANNING:**

This phase of the Program Review Process begins once the Program Review Team's report has been disseminated throughout the district. The purpose of this phase is to ensure the successful implementation of recommended changes. The responsibilities of this phase are divided among administrators, staff, and the Program Review Team.

### **Department and Staff Review of the Report**

The Program Review Team disseminates the report to staff for review and feedback.

### **Design Action Plan**

The Administration will take into account the recommendations of the Program Review Team, as well as staff feedback. In collaboration with the Program Review Team, the action plan for the program in review will be developed. This plan will establish short and long range goals for Professional Development and outline proposed changes in the program. Projected budgetary needs will be outlined in this plan as well. If the Program Review Team recommends new or additional materials, then it is during this phase that materials will be piloted and evaluated under the direction of the Curriculum Materials Working Group. The Administration and Program Review Team will continue to monitor and document changes in the curriculum with assistance from staff. Every three years, the documented curriculum will be reviewed and revised as necessary. Ongoing Pre-K-12 articulation will occur under the direction of the Director of Curriculum with Pre-K-12 content Teams

### **ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:**

At this stage, the district will pilot and evaluate program changes and new materials (as necessary). Curriculum documents will also be reviewed and updated to reflect any necessary changes. Proposed new resources will be included in the budget development, following review by the Curriculum Materials Working Group. As with all curriculums, the administration and staff will continue to articulate K-12 horizontal and vertical alignment. The Administration and the Program Review Team will monitor the implementation and success of the Action Plan.

### Timeline of ELA Program Review

Develop Essential Questions	October-November 2015
Gather Curriculum Documents and Assessment	October 2015-March 2016
Gather Assessment Data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mid-Year and Finals Grades 6-12</li> <li>● ELA MCAS Data</li> </ul>	April-May 2016
Gather Budget and Staffing Information	May 2016
Ongoing Collection of Student Work	December 2016-June 2017
Review of Information Collected by Level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Grades 9-12</li> <li>● Grades 6-8</li> <li>● Elementary</li> <li>● Pre-K</li> </ul>	December 2016-June 2017
Survey teacher and students	September-October 2016
Focus groups of students	March 2016
Develop and administer parent survey	October-November 2016
Review Electives at grades 6-12	November-December 2016
Develop Themes from the Data Collected around curriculum, assessment, and instruction	December 2016
Recruit and Orient Visiting Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Site Visit of Visiting Team</li> </ul>	December 2016
Document Findings of Visiting Team	January 2017
Complete K-12 Program Review Document	February-March 2017
Development of Action Plan	April-May 2017