

English Language Arts Task Launched

The ELA Task Force met for its opening meeting on February 10, 2005 at Taylor from 12:30 until 3:30. The committee includes thirty-five members representing each of the schools in the district. Superintendent Deb Delisle welcomed the members of the task force, and Joe Micheller presented a powerpoint describing the evolution of literacy in our district from the last task force until present. Helen Hirsch presented an overview of the goals of the task force and detailed the process that will be used to gather data to determine whether current resources adequately support ELA instruction.

The task force will focus on an examination of our district's core literacy program. If a need for additional or different instructional

resources is identified, the literacy department at central office will hone the list of publishers that meet our needs to a manageable few. Additional expertise will be tapped as needed to narrow the possibilities. Classroom pilots will occur with at least two teachers at each grade level. Each teacher participating in the pilot will have opportunities to evaluate two programs for several months focusing on a few ELA standards. District literacy coaches will support this process

The goal of the task force, if data demonstrates that materials are needed, will be to recommend purchase of new materials by February 2006 in order to put materials in the hands of

teachers as early as possible. The development of curricular guides and the refinement of our district assessment plan will be ongoing work. The committee will provide valuable input to inform this work. The next meeting is scheduled for March 23rd from 3:30-5:30 at Taylor.

Each committee member received the book *Effective Literacy Instruction: Building Successful Reading and Writing Programs* by Judith A. Langar. This book, published by the National Council of Teachers of English, describes six major characteristics of effective literacy instruction based on two years of research with 44 teachers in 88 classes within 25 schools. This book will help support a shared vision.

Peer Coaching Takes Shape at Oxford

Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis



Think Nonfiction!



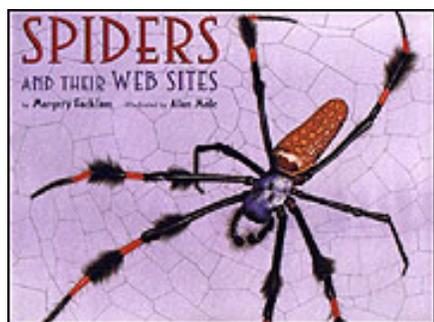
Modeling Reading and Research

Oxford teachers have been enjoying monthly video lunches. Each month teachers are invited, on a voluntary basis, to watch a professional video. In January teachers viewed, *Think Nonfiction!* by Stephanie Harvey & Anne Goudvis. The video was particularly powerful in highlighting key strategies to support student learning in nonfiction text. After viewing the video the teachers were excited to use the strategies in their classrooms. Interested in helping her staff become comfortable with using this strategy, principal Kelly Stukus arranged opportunities for collegial learning. By developing a peer coaching model, interested teachers were able to observe a modeled lesson by a teacher who has been implementing the strategy in her classroom on a consistent basis. Teachers were then encouraged to talk with one another and plan a lesson that would reflect the targeted strategy. With the support of the building's literacy coach, teachers then implemented the new strategy and reflected on the effectiveness of the lesson. This model of peer coaching allowed teachers to experiment with new and effective strategies that might not otherwise be attempted. With collegial support, teachers were able to problem-solve and discuss the practical application of the lessons.

Language-Literacy Connection

Word knowledge is an important communication skill affecting a person’s ability to understand, speak, read, and write. As educators, we know that vocabulary development does not stop at the bold-faced words in text books. Word understanding is further nurtured through stimulating conversation and wide reading with varied texts in multiple genres including informational text, fairy tales, chapter books, poems, and newspaper and magazine articles. Consider the following tips:

- **Emphasize the meaning of root words:** Select prefixes & suffixes to expand root word knowledge, even in the primary grades.
- **Use words that invite deep thinking:** Select words with multiple meanings or words that can be used in a variety of contexts. Provide students with many examples of what the word means and what it does not mean.
- **Help children make inferences:** Provide students with opportunities to make inferences based on context clues, pictures and thinking about their experiences.
- **Have fun with new words:** Celebrate the learning of new words. Encourage students to use the words at home or in the classroom, find the word in the newspaper or other print, or nominate a student as the “Word Wizard” for using a spectacular word.
- **Connect word instruction to engaging texts:** *Spiders and their Web Sites*, by Margery Facklam, for example, is a book that will fascinate readers while immersing them in rich language.

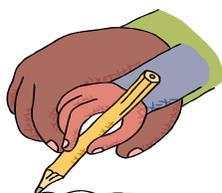


Joining the Literacy Team



Karen Heinsbergen has joined the district’s Literacy Team. Karen has taught at Coventry and Wiley and has been a teacher in the district for thirteen years. In addition to being a National Board Certified Teacher, she has served as an adjunct instructor at John Carroll University. She has taught SIRI and has presented on literacy topics on a state and national level. She is currently teaching Adolescent Core and is part of the Ohio Literacy Specialist Initiative. She is a welcome addition to the team!

Talented Writers & Illustrators Wanted!



Attention students in kindergarten through third grade: Reading Rainbow invites you to enter the 11th Annual Reading Rainbow Young Writers and Illustrators Contest. Students are encouraged to submit their original writing (fact or fiction, prose or poetry) to Reading Rainbow. Entries will be judged on originality, creative expression, storytelling and integration of copy and illustrations. Winners from each grade level will be selected, and will receive a library set of 10 Reading Rainbow episodes on DVD with the related books. What a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the wonderful writers we are growing in Cleveland Heights-University Heights. Hurry! The deadline is Thursday, March 31st. For more information, log on to <http://www.wviz.org/edsvcs/rr/index.asp>. Good luck!



MARCH TESTING SCHEDULE

March will roll in like a lion and bring with it a full testing schedule. Three grade levels will experience achievement testing for the first time. The following is our March testing schedule for Diagnostic Writing, Reading and Math Achievement, Proficiency, and OGT. Make-up sessions follow the regular testing administration.

Grade	Test	Date
1,2,3	Diagnostic Writing	March 14
3	Reading Achievement	March 7
3	Math Achievement	March 8
4	Reading Achievement	March 7
4	Writing Achievement	March 8
4	Math Proficiency	March 14
4	Citizenship Proficiency	March 16
4	Science Proficiency	March 18
5	Reading Achievement	March 7
6	Writing Proficiency	March 7
6	Reading Proficiency	March 9
6	Math Proficiency	March 11
6	Citizenship Proficiency	March 14
6	Science Proficiency	March 16
7	Math Achievement	March 7
8	Reading Achievement	March 7
8	Math Achievement	March 8
10	OGT	March 14-18
11	9 th Grade Proficiency	March 7-11
12	9 th Grade Proficiency	March 7-11

Diagnostic Roll-Outs

Teachers in grades K-3 in each elementary schools participated in a workshop to learn how to administer the new short screening diagnostic. These new shorter diagnostic instruments will be administered to all 1st and 2nd graders between now and May 13.



F.A.B. FAMILIES AT BOULEVARD

February 24th marked the fifth session of eight evening learning sessions that are scheduled at Boulevard. The F.A.B. program (Families at Boulevard) offers an opportunity for families to come with their children to increase math and reading achievement. A *fabulous* component of this initiative is that families commit to come to each session offering an opportunity for growing relationships through the year. This family outreach opportunity is led by Angela Chapman, Stephanie Myers, Margie Dunlevy, Sandy Axner, Jennifer Bennett, and Lorene Varley.

This month's session included a hands-on measuring activity and a literacy activity inviting children to look at characters from fairy tales using a different point of view in grades K-2. Children in grades 3-5 planned a mock trial for various characters from fairy tales. For example, they brainstormed the evidence and the witnesses to indict the wolf in "The Three Little Pigs" for murder.

Dinner and dessert and door prizes were donated by merchants and other members of the community. Each child who attended was provided a magazine subscription for an entire year. This ongoing project was funded by grants provided by Reaching Heights.



“North, South, East and West: Building Literacy is our Quest!”

By Mary Nemes, Title I—Fairfax

Fairfax’s literacy team has developed this slogan to promote literacy. It has been printed on a large banner displayed in the main hallway near the front door of the building. It also has been printed on notepads that were given to each staff member. Literacy is a very important part of Fairfax School.

The leveled bookroom has continued to grow as the literacy team and bookroom committee find grants and other creative ways to fund the purchase of leveled books.

Ms. Mindy Hamilton’s class has developed a quick and easy graphic organizer to review the books in the book room. As each child reads a book, a form is completed and posted in the hallway near the book room for other students to read. The area has become quite a gathering place for children and adults.

Ms. Stacy Hertz, first grade teacher, introduced a graphic organizer to help each young child produce a thoughtful writing piece. It is called “Four Blocks.” A topic is written in the center and then one word/phrase/idea is written in each corner. Sentences are then generated from these words. As the children grow in their abilities to use the form, more and more details are added until each corner of the paper has enough information to produce an entire paragraph. Snowman stories generated using this technique are currently on display in the first grade wing. Their stories are truly amazing and the children are so proud!



Young Ladies of Noble

Our new school club, *The Young Ladies of Noble*, has taken to heart one of our “Connect 4” Noble goals – to have every child reading at or above grade level. These 18 fifth graders have taken on the task of seeing that our first grade students meet that goal.

Twice a week, for the next eight weeks, these potential “teachers in the making” have all agreed to give up part of their lunch recess to help read with first graders. Under the direction of Ms. Luxenburg and Ms. Glickman, these girls eagerly assembled *Reading A-Z* books, and prepared word sorts and folders for their first week’s assignment. Kudos to these “heartfelt” *Young Ladies of Noble* as they begin their community service at Noble School.

Professional Development Focused on 6 Traits

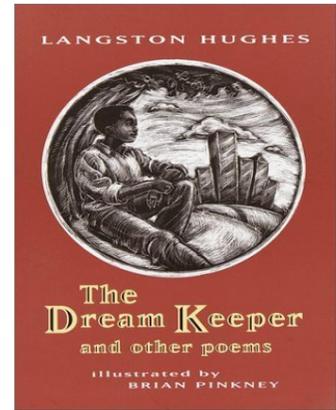
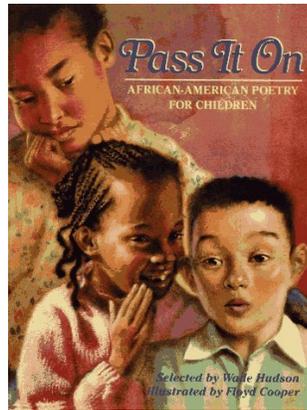


During the month of February, K-5 classroom teachers met by grade level to explore 6 Traits. Word choice, voice, sentence fluency, and conventions were the traits emphasized. Strategies and specific books to support student understanding and learning were presented. Teachers shared the techniques they are currently using in their classrooms. Remember these tips from our sessions?

- Word Choice— Highlight overused words using colored discs on the overhead projector.
- Voice— Present different versions of the same story from the point of view of various characters or cultures.
- Sentence Fluency— count words in sentences using tallies or determine length of sentence using colored yarn.
- Conventions— Look like a detective by using magnifying glass or editing checklist to hunt for errors in writing.



LIT BITS is a monthly publication produced by the district literacy team.



DON'T MISS THESE POETRY COLLECTIONS

Pass It On! is a collection of poetry for young, elementary children. Contained within the book are 19 short poems, by some of the finest African American poets. Included are works by Nikki Giovanni, Eloise Greenfield, and Gwendolyn Brooks. Universal concerns of childhood are explored via words and the beautiful oil paintings that accompany each poem. You will probably find many selections that you will want to share aloud with children.

The Dream Keeper and Other Poems by Langston Hughes speaks to the older elementary child. Even though this collection was originally published in 1932, this edition has seven new poems. The struggle and celebration of the African-American experience is captured within the words. Brian Pinkney's black-and-white scratchboard illustrations breathe life and expression into the poems. This is a very inspirational collection of poems.

MEASURE BY MEASURE

Rebecca Sarkos, Math Title I teacher, helps children measure themselves with pipe cleaners and more conventional tools such as measuring tapes. This math discovery lesson occurred at Boulevard's FAB night on Thursday, February 24th. This hands-on educational night demonstrated to families how much fun they can have co-learning with their children..

