

William Penn School District



K-12 Reading/Language Arts Program Review

April 19-20, 2018



June 8, 2018

To the William Penn School District:

The Delaware County Intermediate Unit K-12 Reading/Language Arts Program Review team would like to extend a "thank you" and commend those who participated in the review process. We greatly appreciate the positive and professional attitude displayed by staff and administration.

The visiting team found the administration, teachers, staff, students, and parents of the district to be most cooperative and proud to discuss their ELA program. Your graciousness, openness, and hospitality were evident throughout our two-day visit.

The team members collected information in a variety of areas and provided detailed answers to questions along with strengths, needs, and recommendations. Program needs were identified and recommendations made by team members, applying their experiences in the field to the information available, realizing that local conditions will determine local action. Through the cooperative efforts of all those involved in the educational process, we hope you find our recommendations to be of value in educating your students in the future.

Team members were pleased to have had the experiences offered by this process and to have shared these experiences and results with your staff. We wish you continued success in what is the most significant activity for today and tomorrow - educating our children.

This final report is submitted by:

- Dr. Andrea Berry, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, School District of the City of York
- Ms. Stefani Doyle, Supervisor of Hearing and Language, DCIU
- Dr. Shellie Feola, Assistant Executive Director, DCIU
- Dr. Dorie A. Martin-Pitone, Supervisor of Literacy & English Language Arts and Federal Programs Coordinator, Marple Newtown School District
- Dr. Michael Masko, DCIU Consultant
- Dr. Kelly Murray, Assistant Director of Teaching and Learning, Radnor Township School District
- Dr. Jala Olds-Pearson, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Development, Chester Upland School District
- Ms. Maryanne Regan, DCIU Literacy Instruction Specialist
- Dr. Barbara Burke Stevenson, DCIU Consultant

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INTRODUCTION

The William Penn School District contracted with the Delaware County Intermediate Unit in February, 2018 to complete a review of the District's Reading/Language Arts program, K – 12. The Intermediate Unit identified Dr. Michael Masko and Dr. Barbara Stevenson, independent educational consultants, to lead the effort. The goal of their work was to “to determine if the current Reading/Language Arts programming is aligned with and supports the achievement of the Pennsylvania Common Core State Standards by students in grades K – 12.” The review was to include analysis of the written, taught and tested curriculum based on evidence found, not on individual opinions.

A program review is a “snapshot of a school district's program.” It is a review, not an evaluation of staff. The report is written from data gathered through interviews, observations, document reviews, triangulation of data and consensus data. This review was based on research questions in four focus areas: curriculum, instruction, assessment and leadership and professional development. Data were collected through a review of documents (philosophy of instruction with guiding principles, scope and sequence charts, grade level course outlines when available, planning guides, curriculum maps where available, rubrics and assessment calendars), analysis of standards alignment, vertical and horizontal alignment indicators, classroom observations, analysis of student achievement data and work samples, as well as, through interviews. Over the course of two days, April 19 and 20, 2018, the visiting team completed 54 K-12 classroom observations, interviews and focus groups. Interviews and focus groups included students, parents, regular and special education teachers, education specialists, principals, instructional facilitators, directors of special education and curriculum, the superintendent of schools, and the Success for All consultant.

As the District moves ahead with its comprehensive planning, this report can be disseminated, used to celebrate strengths, set priorities for action and determine procedures for accomplishing recommendations. The results of this study will provide recommendations and suggested direction regarding the District's evaluation of the program and future curriculum development deemed necessary to take place.

The initiation of this process began with a series of meetings with the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the Superintendent, other administrators, including building principals, and Drs. Masko and Stevenson. At these meetings, the parameters for the study were discussed, demographic and financial information was identified, district documents were shared, questions were addressed and foundations of the program and its selection were presented. The Superintendent told the consultants that the goals of the program were “cooperative learning and student engagement.” She also shared that in using this program focused the teachers on “accelerating students” and that instructional focus need not be on “small group instruction” as “all kids in one group are at the same instructional level.” The Superintendent articulated that the program cites as its priority “The Cycle of Effective Instruction.” This cycle

includes active instruction, team work, assessment and celebration during a 90-minute block of time.

The consultants found the district to be in suburban Philadelphia with a profile of various types of communities all with the wish for their children to receive a strong education. The school district has a population of 5,200 students (approx.) with 8 elementary buildings, 1 middle school, 1 ninth grade building and a high school that is housed in 2 buildings. There appears to be a concerning turnover of students within the school. In the last year, almost 20 teachers retired necessitating the hiring of numerous new education graduates. The budget for textbooks is \$300,000, most of which is utilized for replenishment of used (consumed) materials. There is no professional development money identified in the District budget. Professional development monies that are utilized are realized through Federal Title grants.

Curriculum Findings

The review team found no evidence of a systematic William Penn School District review and renewal cycle for curricular areas that allows the school professionals to study, plan for, select, budget for, prepare for, introduce, monitor, evaluate and adapt curricular programs and materials in various subject areas and for various grade levels. Therefore, the review team was unable to evaluate an internal process for curriculum development.

The core reading curriculum for students in grades kindergarten through eight in the William Penn School District is provided by *Success for All* (SFA), which was developed by Robert Slavin and Nancy Madden in conjunction with Johns Hopkins University, and introduced in the Baltimore, MD public schools during 1987-1988.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) of the United States Department of Education describes *Success for All* as:

“a whole-school reform model (that is, a model that integrates curriculum, school culture, family, and community supports) for students in prekindergarten through grade 8. *SFA* includes a literacy program, quarterly assessments of student learning, a social-emotional development program, computer-assisted tutoring tools, family support teams for students’ parents, a facilitator who works with school personnel, and extensive training for all intervention teachers. The literacy program emphasizes phonics for beginning readers and comprehension for all students. Teachers provide reading instruction to students grouped by reading ability for 90 minutes a day, 5 days a week. In addition, certified teachers or paraprofessionals provide daily tutoring to students who have difficulty reading at the same level as their classmates.”

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_sfa_032817.pdf

In March 2017 the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) of the United States Department of Education reviewed nine of 49 studies that meet WWC standards. The WWC analysis indicates that:

“SFA had positive effects on alphabetics, potentially positive effects on reading fluency, and mixed effects on comprehension and general reading achievement for students in grades K–4.”

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/EvidenceSnapshot/672>

Reading Edge is the middle school literacy component of *Success for All*. *Reading Edge* emphasizes cooperative learning, goal setting, feedback, classroom management techniques, and the use of metacognitive strategy, whereby students assess their own skills and learn to apply new ones.

In June 2012 the What Works Clearinghouse found only one study of *Reading Edge* that meets WWC evidence standards:

“The one study that contributes to the effectiveness rating in this report covers one domain: comprehension.... Chamberlain et al. (2007) did not find a statistically significant positive effect of *Reading Edge* on the total Gates-MacGintie Reading Test score for students in grade 6. The effect was not large enough to be considered substantively important according to WWC criteria (i.e., an effect size of at least 0.25). Thus, for the comprehension domain, one study showed indeterminate effects. This results in a rating of no discernible effects, with a small extent of evidence.”

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_readingedge_062612.pdf

SFA requires an endorsement vote among teachers as a precondition for introducing SFA:

“Due to the comprehensive approach to reform, the significant and ongoing professional development across multiple years, and the focus on faculty support and buy-in from the outset, a vote of at least 80% of teachers in favor of program adoption is required.”

<http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/factsheet/success-for-all>)

Schools whose staffs expressed interest in Success for All and achieved the required 80% majority vote to adopt it may have greater motivation and interest in improving their schools than the control schools’ staffs who did not seek out the program.

<http://www.successforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/SFA-RE-First-Year-Results-by-Borman3FINAL.pdf>

In the fall of 2011, the William Penn School District introduced SFA in five of the eight elementary schools, assisted by a United States Department of Education i3 grant in the amount of \$5 million. A review of ballots from 2011 reveals that SFA was introduced with 100% teacher approval at four of the five pilot elementary schools, and with 94% teacher approval at the fifth elementary school. In 2014 SFA was introduced as a district-wide initiative in the remaining three elementary schools without a vote of the teachers. In 2016 SFA was introduced at the middle school without a vote of the teachers.

The SFA program relies on a very structured, highly scripted and tightly scheduled sequence of lessons that is designed to ensure consistency of instruction. The teachers are expected to follow the pacing charts with which they are provided to stay on track in material coverage. *Reading Roots* is level 1 of the elementary SFA program. *Reading Wings* is level 2. In grade 4, all students move on to *Reading Wings*, even if they have not mastered the *Reading Roots* skills, and these learning gaps are not addressed or closed in *Reading Wings*. The review team considers this disconnect to be a significant flaw in the reading program and a strong contributor to gaps in students’ proficiency in reading.

In each of the eight elementary schools in the William Penn School District, a full-time SFA facilitator coordinates and supports the instruction and collaboration of teachers. Facilitators meet with teachers on a once a week basis, if time allows. Principals indicated that they are not permitted to attend these meetings. These facilitators meet as a district group once a month.

At these meetings, they share, discuss performance data and set goals for the next month. They also discuss best practices, professional articles and training possibilities for teaching strategies. They also discuss the Roots Stages of Growth, data which indicates the number of students moving in accordance with their expected performance levels. Some of these facilitators are former School District reading specialists, and some have master's degrees and reading and/or reading specialist certification. A school district SFA facilitator coordinates and guides the work of the eight school facilitators. Additionally, the school district contracts with SFA to provide a consultant who visits schools and meets with principals on a monthly basis. Two SFA facilitators serve the middle school teachers and students.

Because SFA provides only a reading program and not a complete English language arts program, the school district has recently found it advisable to supplement SFA with a writing program, *Writer's Companion*, and a grammar program, *Grammar Workshop*. In the elementary schools, 90 minutes of daily reading instruction takes place in the morning; 30-45 minutes of daily writing and grammar instruction is scheduled in the afternoon; however, teachers indicate that the afternoon instructional time often varies as a result of other school and instructional priorities.

Some elementary school teachers indicated that the pacing of the SFA curriculum is too fast. For example, teachers stated that the program is "too rushed," they "cannot fit in all of the SFA program components," or there is "not enough time to teach decoding and phonics appropriately." Students are unable to keep up, and these teachers feel frustrated by attempting to maintain the pace and not being able to meet the needs of individual students. Furthermore, teachers state that it is difficult to modify the program to meet the needs of their students due to the scripted nature of the program and the strict pacing requirements. Teachers are provided with skill development sheets related to specific titles of books they are utilizing for instruction. These sheets have a targeted skill identified upon which to work, they identify academic language to be utilized, they suggest a graphic organizer to utilize in reinforcing concepts and identify standard alignment in each level, as well as, eligible content. (These sheets were created by the instructional facilitators, but their use is not monitored.) There are also a series of best practice sheets for oral language practice provided. These sheets are to be utilized with students. Star stories contained in the materials are read to students by the teachers, while the students read the shared stories by themselves. Although there are several instructional support materials provided for the teachers, overall, they feel pressured to cover material for which the students are not ready. They also feel that more small group instruction than is prescribed is needed.

Review team members often heard that there are few opportunities to "reteach" and allow all of their students to experience success or proficiency in reading. Teachers are required to "be on the same page" without time for teachable moments, creativity in addressing the same standard in a different way, or authentic application and transfer of skills and knowledge.

The review team found that the SFA reading curriculum lacks strong supports for English language learners and does not provide a variety of reading interventions to students when

grouping and regrouping strategies fail to bring about progress in learning to read. The response to intervention program is weak. While intervention teams exist, the burden to carry out intervention team recommendations rests solely on the classroom teacher.

In the elementary schools, primary grade teachers generally express more satisfaction with SFA than intermediate grade teachers. Primary grade teachers appreciate the SFA phonics and decoding strengths, the requirement that students write frequently and in complete sentences, and the fiction selections, but they voice concern regarding the lack of development of students' reading comprehension strategies. Intermediate grade teachers frequently explained that many of the books in the program are not age appropriate, books are not interesting or engaging for students, and that leveled readers are not meeting students at their appropriate level.

At the middle school there was no writing or grammar text or program to supplement SFA reading and provide a complete English language arts program. Therefore, the school district brought together a team of middle school teachers in order to identify and assemble materials appropriate to the development of writing skills in grades 7 and 8. However, the middle school provided materials for only one of the grade levels. Over the course of a ten-day cycle, seven class periods are devoted to SFA reading, and three class periods are devoted to writing instruction.

Middle school staff members express a low level of confidence in and support for the SFA Reading curriculum. Reasons include a perception that SFA is a middle school reading intervention program rather than a core reading program, that SFA does not provide a coordinated and comprehensive English language arts curriculum, the lack of engaging texts in the SFA program, and the lack of young adult novels that match student interests and/or advanced reading levels.

Students in grades 9-12 have a standards-based English language arts curriculum including:

- 9th grade composition, literature and Keystone Exam skill preparation
- 10th grade literature and Keystone Exam skill preparation
- 9th and 10th grade Read 180 and System 44 programs to provide additional reading skill development opportunity for selected students
- 11th grade American literature and research skills
- 12th grade world literature and college and career writing skills
- 11th and 12th grade advanced placement courses
- Elective Courses

High school teachers have developed a curriculum scope and sequence for grades 9 through 12. Curriculum is further outlined and coordinated by course in teacher-developed curriculum binders that provide essential questions, identify focus concepts and skills, specify assessments, and identify instructional resources for teachers. Although courses seem carefully planned, the articulation of skill development raises questions. For example, the 9th and 10th grade goal for

ELA is stated to “build skills for the Keystone Exam.” The skills, however, are not defined. Teachers revise the instructional plans in these binders periodically during in-service days. The curriculum binders are available to all teachers at the high school, and the teachers take pride in being able to work together throughout the school year to make necessary revisions, additions, or deletions. Furthermore, the curriculum binders give seasoned teachers the autonomy to enrich, extend, intervene and remediate without the confines of a “packaged” program.

INSTRUCTION FINDINGS

The Success for All program was put into place in the William Penn School District 8 years ago. At first it was piloted in a few of the elementary schools, then expanded to all of the elementary buildings and then to the Middle School. The program was selected by the Director of Schools at the time, who is now the Superintendent, after the District received an I-3 Grant for five million dollars. The program was adopted as a school reform model. The Director was very familiar with the program, its materials and its outcomes as a result of her experience working with the Success for All cadre for a number of years prior to coming to William Penn School District.

Prior to the adoption of this program, teachers in the district created their own reading lessons from materials that were available to them. Therefore, a lack of consistency was realized and students moved from grade to grade with unlike sets of skills developed. The Success for All program is a highly structured and scripted program with specific timelines to be followed in instruction and specific strategies to be utilized in instruction. The underlying philosophy of the program works to the idea that when students are highly engaged in their learning they perform at higher levels. If the teachers implement the program as written, they are, in fact, utilizing strong, research-based best practices in instruction as this program is built on a solid foundation of research.

In some elementary buildings, where there is strong building level instructional leadership overseeing and supporting the instructional process, the program is being implemented with fidelity. In other buildings, where instructional leadership, oversight and support were lacking, the team observed inconsistent delivery of the program. It did appear that the principal's level of knowledge of the program had a significant impact on the delivery of the SFA program.

Building level Facilitators work with the elementary staff, and have done so, since the initial adoption of SFA. The teachers speak positively about the support being offered, but voiced concern that some of the Facilitators are not certified reading specialists or that they do not have the depth of knowledge and/or experience to understand the problems involved in the implementation of this program.

Reviewing the data available for SFA demonstrated that students across grade levels do not show satisfactory (as prescribed by the program) levels of growth in SFA as they move through the grades. Also, the PSSA data do not correlate with the data available for the SFA program. Special Education students' data were not available in an aggregated format to analyze. A service, The Success for All Member Center, provides a report indicating the percentage of students reading at grade level for each marking period. The analysis of this report is completed at the end of the school year in preparation for the upcoming school year.

Many of the teachers interviewed voiced frustration and the feeling of constraint in using the SFA program. Some said they are not sure how to fit all of the components of the program in each day. It was noted that in very few situations were lesson plans available in classrooms. The teachers also voiced concern that their instruction was not meeting the needs of all of the learners in their classrooms. A comment that was heard frequently was that “I was trained to teach, but I cannot utilize my creativity to teach in an engaging way for each of my students.” It was clear to the observers that there are many different levels of skills among the teachers in delivering instruction. Although there is a lot of embedded training as part of the SFA program, teachers are either uncomfortable with the processes and procedures involved, or they are not being held accountable to teaching the program as prescribed. A group of students stated that they feel that some of the readings are too long and they don’t have enough time to do the ensuing assignments well.

There are no spelling, writing and grammar components to the SFA program. The district has put into place The Writer’s Companion and The Grammar Workshop to attend to this discrepancy. The teachers are not satisfied with these two additions. The teachers are provided with pacing charts for writing and grammar, developed by the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, to guide their lessons and the time spent on them. These charts are skill based, standards aligned, include pacing guidelines, are aligned to report card competencies, and note assessment tools and essential vocabulary. Although teachers feel the texts are “good,” they point out the disconnected manner in which these books are used in a 30 minute period for language arts that is separate from the 90 minute block designated for teaching SFA. Students watch numerous SFA videos during instructional time.

Tutoring blocks are provided for students. At grades 1 and 2, the blocks are 20 minutes long. For older students, the tutoring block is 30 minutes long. This tutoring is provided by a cadre of retired teachers and takes place after the 90 minute SFA block.

At the middle school level, students reported having no formal homework in SFA. Students do write every day in the program. Students said they did not like to go reading as they are not engaged or permitted to utilize their creativity in that class.

The middle school teachers reported that they tried to regroup for reading last year, based on SRI, in an attempt to differentiate instruction for learners with different needs. They found that the regrouping did not work because all reading blocks are simultaneous and conflict with team scheduling. There continues to be attempts at intervention for these students with Tier 3 intervention taking place when a teacher team meets with the counselor and/or a school psychologist, Tier 2 interventions being determined at the teacher team meetings twice per week and the Tier 1 interventions taking place within the classroom.

At the high school level, English Language Arts (ELA) is taught 53 minutes per day for the length of the school year in each of the four years. Students with lower lexile scores on their assessments have a second instructional period every day in grades 9 and 10.

The High School Framework Charts reviewed were well done for College Prep classes. These charts focus on big ideas, essential questions, standards, concepts, skills and resources on which the lessons concentrate.

High School students feel their voices are not being heard and are dissatisfied with the program. It was noted, however, that instruction does include student choice of reading materials and a diversity of authors. Students fear being “written up” or suspended for asking questions regarding controversial topics in the classroom. There is a feeling that the teachers are unprepared to or are afraid of discussing these topics with the students. It is interesting to note that there seems to be a cultural understanding at the high school that “cultural diversity is an important facet of curriculum” and that “we help each other to be culturally sensitive.”

Observers noted concern regarding high school level intervention for students reading significantly below grade level. A teacher reported that students not able to read at a primer level in 9th grade are expected to read and comprehend *To Kill a Mockingbird*, rather than use evidence-based interventions that will help them to make progress toward literacy. The use of Read 180 and Systems 44 interventions was not observed in high school special education classrooms.

During classroom observations, the only rubric that was observed was one that is utilized in the scoring of the PSSA assessments. Other than that, rubrics did not seem to be available, or were not utilized. One child in a fifth grade class, when asked how he knew the level of expectation for his work, stated that “the teacher lets us continue to work on our things, after she returns them to us when she has reviewed them, so that we can continue to correct them to get a better grade.” The student did not have any guidelines, however, to “get a better grade.”

In most cases, teachers are not able to instruct other than as stated in the manuals they are using. Some teachers who are deemed to be highly skilled have received permission to modify their instructional strategies. Visiting team members observed low student engagement in many of the classrooms visited. The teachers were unable to do any differentiation as they were following the program. Nor were the teachers observed doing any modeling for the students. Instruction consisted of lecture, work and teacher monitoring. Some individualized pacing on computers was observed.

Consideration should be given to incorporate Total Participation Techniques that will challenge students to think at higher levels and to make that thinking “visible” through writing to show understanding. In addition, through student collaborative conversations, students can model vocabulary and framing of thoughts for one another, with facilitation by the teacher. These strategies foster evidence-based instruction that provides more accurate data for differentiation of instruction.

Instruction is not fresh and engaging due to the regimented delivery. The program also is not engaging for older students who are placed in lower grade level materials. The highly structured program and pacing schedule allows little time to re-teach skills or to expand/explore student

knowledge about topics of interest. Students who are challenged by the acquisition of basic reading skills may nonetheless be able to think and articulate at higher levels. Some students stated that they enjoy writing and answering questions when they involved topics of interest, as well as, reading in those areas.

Teachers, for the most part, are not instructing their own students for SFA but are for other components of Language Arts. Teachers are told that they will be working with one level of student but in reality are working with multiple levels making it difficult to adjust instruction. This makes it difficult to know the skills of the students as there is little to no communication between teachers. One result of this is that students feel that their teachers really don't know them and their skill levels.

Teachers voiced concern about meeting the needs of Special Education students within the SFA groups. Several stated that they were not trained to be Special Educators and often were the only teacher with a group of 25 -27 students in which Special Education students are included. Teachers stated that the 90 minute timeframe is too long for Learning Support students in grades K-3.

The teachers set targets for students each quarter. Some small group instructional stations where questions were modified to enable access to each student were observed. In one classroom, students were observed working on transforming their rough drafts of writing to good drafts. Students were able to confer with other members of their group in doing so. The teacher provided students with choices of writing prompts. Students were observed to take turns reading from the "author's chair." The Kindergarten instructional practices observed were: whole group, partner and individual one to one.

Assessment Findings

The Success for All approach uses the following “Cycle of Effective Instruction,” in which assessment follows active instruction and teamwork, and precedes celebration.



Teacher accountability is central to Success for All. Assessments are required before each cycle of instruction. In the instructional calendar required by SFA, students are assessed during every third day of instruction in grades K-2, during every fifth day of instruction in grades 3-6, and during every seventh day of instruction in grades 7-8. Teachers enter student assessment data into the Member Center Data Management System on a weekly basis, and teachers use assessment data to inform the subsequent cycle of instruction. The assessment data help teachers to know what strategies are working and what their students are learning.

Teacher meetings with building facilitators to review student data take place every two weeks in the elementary schools. While teachers are supposed to have access to their student data in real time, some teachers stated that they do not have access to student data until it is shared by the school SFA facilitator. Other teachers stated that the brief meetings with school SFA facilitators provide general data that is not specific to classrooms or individual students. The facilitators' role is to support data collection and insure component implementation. They meet with the solutions coordinator in each of their buildings one time per week. The solutions coordinators help the teachers in identifying strategies that will be successful with individual children in their classrooms. This position is considered “extra duty” and is financed with a small stipend. These coordinators communicate successes and concerns within the building on a prescribed basis. This arrangement causes trust concerns among the teachers. In addition, the Success Support visits are intended to be supportive, but the teachers report that these visits usually result in their being told what they are doing wrong. The building principals are charged with the accountability for complete implementation of the SFA program and for the data that results.

In interviews, elementary students agreed that their grades do not always accurately reflect their learning. Students in the 5th and 6th grades feel that they should have more homework than the “one or two sentences” that they are required to write. Furthermore, these sentences are graded for completion, but the students state that “our teachers do not read what we

write.” Students also indicated that skills are repeated “over and over,” even though students are ready to progress to new or more challenging skill levels.

In the primary grades, students often memorize the shared story by the time of the assessment, so that the assessment does not provide an indication of the students’ reading skill development. Furthermore, the reading passages in the assessments mirror the passages in the stories, so that students are not assessed on their ability to apply and transfer reading skills.

Differentiation of reading instruction, in a broad sense, comes the end of each eight weeks of the school year. Based on a quarterly reading inventory, students in grades 1-6 are grouped and regrouped as they progress through the program. Students did not remain in the same level of the program for more than two quarters. At the middle school, benchmark assessments are given twice a year, because scheduling and time constraints prevent regrouping every eight weeks.

SRI provides some leveling information outside of the SFA assessments; however, SRI does not provide an item analysis or information to guide instruction.

Students are provided with SFA rubrics for discussion, including Strategy, Word Power, Team Talk and Fluency.

WPSD SFA facilitators have created charts that correlate the PA Core Standards in ELA with each of the titles in the SFA reading collection.

The writing rubrics used in the William Penn school District do not correlate (more delineation is needed for teachers) with PSSA Grades 3-5 Narrative, Informational and Opinion scoring guidelines found at: <http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Narrative%20Scoring%20Guidelines%203-5.pdf>
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Informational%20Scoring%20Guidelines%203-5.pdf>
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Opinion%20Scoring%20Guidelines%203-5.pdf>

The writing rubrics used in the William Penn school District do not correlate with PSSA Grades 6-8 (more delineation is needed for teachers) Narrative, Argumentative and Informative scoring guidelines found at: <http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20>

[Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Writing%20Narrative%20Scoring%20Guidelines%206-8.pdf](http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Writing%20Narrative%20Scoring%20Guidelines%206-8.pdf)
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Writing%20Argumentative%20Scoring%20Guidelines%206-8.pdf>
<http://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/K-12/Assessment%20and%20Accountability/PSSA/Scoring%20Guidelines%20and%20Formula%20Sheets/English%20Language%20Arts/Writing%20Informative-Explanatory%20Scoring%20Guidelines%206-8.pdf>

Assessments specified in the ELA Curriculum Frameworks for grades 9-12 include:

- Writing Assignments
- Literary Analysis Papers
- Projects and Presentations
- Quizzes
- Analytical Question Packets
- Quarterly Assessments

High school teachers indicate that they give few formative assessments. Student grades result primarily from classwork, homework and tests.

High school quarterly exams must include questions that indicate a range of depth of knowledge, but teachers rarely, if ever, conduct an item analysis to inform future instruction.

In interviews, high school students and their teachers expressed concern regarding time, relevance and inequities involved in the senior project.

There is no formal, published assessment plan available for the district. Assessments that are noted are those that are required by the Commonwealth. Other assessments that are discussed are those that are components of the SFA program. A plan should be developed that indicates all assessments that are utilized with the students including those that are formative, creative, performance based, cumulative and those that are components of each students grades.

The following data provide a summary of different categories of Reading and ELA/Literature performance for the school year 2016-17 as reported by the Pennsylvania Department of Education at <http://paschoolperformance.org/>

Indicators of Academic Achievement

Grade 3 Reading Percent Proficient or Advanced: Two elementary schools between 60 – 70%; six elementary schools are below 60%

Grades 3-6 ELA/Literature Percent Proficient or Advanced: Eight elementary schools are below 60%.

Grades 7-8 ELA/Literature Percent Proficient or Advanced: 27%

Grades 11 ELA/Literature (best score to date) Percent Proficient or Advanced: 47%

Indicators of Closing the Achievement Gap – All Students- All student scores are used to define how well a school is making progress toward proficiency of all students.

Elementary Schools: 2 elementary schools met the percent of required gap closure; one elementary school partially met the percent of required gap closure, and 5 elementary schools did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Penn Wood Middle School did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Penn Wood High School did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Indicators of Closing the Achievement Gap – Historically Underperforming Students - Historically Underperforming Students' scores are used to define how well a school is making progress toward proficiency. The high needs students are students who have historically not demonstrated proficiency.

Elementary Schools: 1 elementary school met the percent of required gap closure; one partially met the percent of required gap closure, and 6 elementary schools did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Penn Wood Middle School did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Penn Wood High School did not meet the percent of required gap closure.

Indicators of Academic Growth/PVAAS - Measures the school's impact on the academic progress of groups of students from year-to-year.

Elementary Schools: 3 elementary schools met between 90-100% of the annual academic growth expectations; 5 elementary schools met between 78-85% of the annual academic growth expectations.

Penn Wood Middle School met 62% of the annual academic growth expectations.

Penn Wood High School met 100% of the annual academic growth expectations.

**William Penn School District PSSA/Keystone English/Language Arts
Percent Proficient Increase/Decrease from 2015/16 to 2016/17**

	2015/16	2016/17	Increase/Decrease
Grade 3	36.9	41.0	+4.1
Grade 4	33.9	38.8	+4.9
Grade 5	29.4	35.7	+6.3
Grade 6	38.8	42.6	+3.8
Grades 7/8	29.0	27.1	-1.9
Grade 11	56.1	46.6	-9.5

LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FINDINGS

Professional development is a large component of the Success for All program. Much of the activities in this regard are job – embedded. The district administration articulated this embedded training as a priority for the program. The district supports this training through the placement of program facilitators in each of the elementary buildings and in the middle school. These facilitators are paid through the district’s Title I funding. There is also a district facilitator who oversees the work of these staff members.

Time is allotted for teams of teachers to meet to discuss student performance in their classrooms. At these times the teachers are expected to, not only, share successful teaching strategies, but also, plan methods by which they can improve instruction. This time also gives opportunities for reflection and growth for the teachers. Teachers are also given time on district professional development days to develop their skills further. On these days topics of district priority and importance are presented.

The Superintendent and the Curriculum Director have been committed to providing on-going training for staff in the implementation of the Success for All program. The secondary staff reported that they receive training on timely issues on professional development days. The teachers seem genuine when they talk of being appreciative of the training they receive. Some professional time, basically in the summer months, has involved teachers in the development of curriculum materials and documentation. The teachers are paid for this time. It was noted, however, that some of the Middle School materials that were developed in this manner were not distributed as intended and therefore were not utilized as designed. “Getting Along Together” training, the school climate component of the SFA program, has been provided in all schools; however, some staff members have not received training due to staff turnover. When one examines the professional development for special educators utilizing this program, it seems that they are not given any differentiation strategies to utilize with students. They are provided the same training as those staff members identified as regular education. There seems to be little coordination of programs, K – 12. It was reported that the only source of funding available for professional development is Title II.

There were several comments from teachers that related to the need for principals (and other administrators) to receive more training on the expectations for them in overseeing and understanding the program. Teachers felt that principals, for the most part, do not understand how the program is to work and therefore cannot (or do not know how) to provide constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement in the delivery of the program. A useful strategy may be the development of a lesson planning format, or graphic (K – 12) that would be helpful for instructional organization and articulation. This vehicle would help principals to understand how the programs “work” and would aid them in fulfilling their accountability to program implementation.

The interview data indicated inconsistencies across the district in the area of instructional leadership. The interview data revealed that teacher responses were based on their individual experiences within their buildings. Some felt supported in their efforts to implement the ELA program, others were dissatisfied with or depressed about their isolation from the principal and the support provided and/or articulated.

Another theme that became evident in the data was that the roles of administrative leadership (and some teacher leadership positions) were unclear to the persons interviewed. The names and the responsibilities of positions seem to change without a vehicle for communicating with staff members affected by the changes. In addition, over the last several years, administrative and teaching positions have been eliminated. Job responsibilities were not eliminated, but were added to others' work. This resulted in individual and system overload contributing to the lack of explanation and other clear communication.

The teachers and administrators indicated that most of the direction for the SFA program comes through the Program Consultant, the District Facilitator, the building facilitators and the solutions coordinators. Some follow up direction is given by the Superintendent and the Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Most communication from district offices seems to come through e-mail and occasional face to face meetings. The K-12 principals meet with the Superintendent every 2 weeks. Program guidance is given at some of these meetings.

Each time the SFAF Educational Coach visits the District (about 6 times per year), a report is issued to the Superintendent about the findings of that specific visit. These reports include things such as a recapitulation of a work session for principals, solutions coordinators that focused on student engagement as observed through a learning walk and strategies for improvement for the facilitators. Other reports mentioned review of data and a follow up discussion about impact variables, the continuous improvement process, the development of next steps, the use of an "evaluating results flow chart", findings in Failure to implement documents (utilized as a resource to demonstrate root causes for why goals/targets were not met) and plans for student engagement.

It seems that there is some confusion among teachers regarding what can and cannot take place during instruction of the SFA program. Some are being told by the facilitators that they can be flexible in providing for their students' needs once the program requirements are met. Others are told that they may not do anything that is not specified in the program. This needs to be clarified so there are unified expectations for all.

OVERALL STRENGTHS

1. The SFA program provides a consistent and uniform approach to instruction.
2. The SFA consultant helps to insure fidelity to the SFA instructional model, provides expertise in each of the elementary and middle schools on a monthly basis, and provides guidance to the school-based and district SFA facilitators.
3. The district has invested substantial resources in 10 school-based facilitators and the district SFA facilitator. Facilitators collaborate to insure program consistency among schools and to provide on-site guidance and expertise.
4. The SFA program serves to insure students' strong phonics and decoding skills in grades K and 1.
5. The high school principal and English teachers engage in ongoing review and revision of high school ELA courses.
6. The school district is committed to the consistent use of research-based instructional practices.
7. Teachers and SFA facilitators set quarterly achievement targets for students and monitor student progress towards those targets.
8. Uniform student data collection is intended to insure that student progress can be monitored in a consistent fashion.
9. Elementary schools and the high school are meeting PVAAS growth expectations.
10. The district has a clear commitment to on-going training for staff in implementing SFA.

NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Need #1: To develop a systematic review and renewal cycle for all curricular areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consult with specialists from the Delaware County Intermediate Unit and regional school districts regarding successful models for curriculum renewal that may be replicated or adapted. For example:
www.pennsburyisd.org/CurriculumRenewal.aspx
www.rtsd.org/domain/815
- Adopt and implement a multi-year curriculum renewal schedule that provides for research, program evaluation, discussion, redesign, materials selection, budgeting, professional development, implementation and evaluation.
- Consider a backwards planning process (e.g., Understanding by Design) that begins with desired student results, identifies evidence of learning and specifies a learning plan.

Need #2: To perform a cost benefit analysis of the SFA program

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Determine overall cost of the program
 - Staff
 - Materials
 - Training
- Aggregate performance data
 - Analyze data to determine if goals for growth have been met over 8 years
 - Identify root causes of lack of growth
- Identify how much actual time is spent in instruction, training, budgeting and planning
- Determine if costs, time and outcomes demonstrate program effectiveness considering expenditures involved (return on investment)

Need #3: To conduct a comprehensive evaluation of ELA curriculum K – 12, within the established curriculum review cycle, that results in affirmation of current program, adaptation of current program or selection of a new program and materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Form teacher/specialist/principal committees

- Formulate a focused vision statement for the ELA program that articulates the desired outcomes
- Develop clear expectations and outcomes for the ELA program relating to
 - Listening, speaking, reading and writing
 - Differentiation
 - Rigor
 - Cultural sensitivity
 - Remediation and acceleration
 - Response to intervention
 - Authentic application
 - Consistency of instruction
 - Engaging program components
 - Developmentally appropriate reading selections
 - Data rich assessment methods both formative and summative
 - Staff accountability for student results
- Develop a K – 12 scope and sequence that assures horizontal and vertical articulation
- Develop course outlines using a backwards planning model such as Understanding by Design
- Select materials that support instruction, including desired outcomes

Need #4: To develop an instructional model that allows for remediation, acceleration and analysis of data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Design and deliver instruction that consistently fosters
 - student engagement
 - cooperative learning
 - authentic reading and writing
 - increased learning stamina
 - student-centered instruction at appropriate levels
 - student selection of reading materials that are fresh and engaging
 - utilization of school/public libraries as instructional resources
 - articulation among all grades K – 12
- Aggregate, analyze, and act on data for students with special needs on a regular and ongoing basis.

Need #5: To provide multi-year, focused and job embedded training for program and instructional accountability for all district leaders in order to facilitate effective oversight

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus on Michael Fullan’s “Six Secrets of Change”
- Study data analysis and application of findings strategies
- Provide training at “model sites” to see the program in action
- Study formative assessment models, especially at the high school level
- Study student engagement models
- Investigate instructional strategies for students with diverse needs
- Research and design an observation/feedback model for administrators with an accountability component

Need #6: To design and administer more varied and appropriate forms of assessment

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Study performance tasks
- Design formative assessments
- Investigate and design assessments that require transfer of knowledge and skills
- Focus on developing authentic assessment tasks
- Explore external assessments

Need #7: To develop a comprehensive professional development plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Explore and consider affiliation with the 35 school district members of the Delaware Valley Consortium for Excellence and Equity
<https://pcel.gse.upenn.edu/programs/peec/projects>
- Include a cultural competence component in the teacher induction plan
- Focus on instructional strategies that foster student engagement
- Focus on Collaborative Conversations and Total Participation Techniques
- Design educational activities that focus on rigor and challenge
- Develop authentic, reinforcing and enriching homework assignments
- Study and implement Socratic discussions to facilitate understanding of current topics (i.e., race, LGBTQ issues, world affairs, etc.)
 - Socratic/Seminar/Discussionguidelines.montgomeryschoolmd.org
 - Authenticeducation.org
 - Paideia.org

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