



School Committee Meeting Superintendent/Receiver Report

April 25, 2022

Literacy Update (request from Wilson)

Reading Instruction and Assessment

Successful literacy instruction and interventions provide a strong core of highly explicit, systematic teaching of foundational skills such as decoding and spelling skills, as well as explicit teaching of other important components of literacy such as vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

*Our curriculum resources address the learning for all six components of reading: **comprehension, oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, and vocabulary.***

Structured Literacy is: **Systematic and Cumulative.** Systematic means that the organization of material follows the logical order of the language. **Explicit Instruction.** Requires the deliberate teaching of all major reading concepts with continuous student-teacher interaction. **Diagnostic Teaching.** The teacher must be highly skilled to individualize instruction that meets the students needs. The instruction is based on careful and continuous assessment, both informally and formally.

HPS uses research-based core curriculum that supports quality structured literacy instruction and is aligned to state standards:

Reading and Writing Curricula in K-12 English (non-dual language classes)

K- 2 Curriculum

- FUNdations (explicit phonics instruction)
- GEODES (small group instruction-phonics readers)
- Making Meaning and Being a Writer

3-5 Curriculum

- Expeditionary Learning (knowledge building)

- Being a Writer

6-8 ELA Curriculum

- Expeditionary Learning
- EL adapted with The Writing Revolution

9-12 ELA Curriculum

- Springboard AP
- Springboard with The Writing Revolution

Reading and Writing Curriculum in K-7 Dual Language classes

- Wonders (English) /Maravillas (Spanish) (K-5)
- Foundations/Canciones y Cuentos - explicit phonics instruction English and Spanish (K-5)
- English: Expeditionary Learning adapted w/ Writing Revolution (6/7)
- Spanish: Maravillas (6th), homegrown Spanish units in collaboration with other DL districts (7th)

Assessments Used:

The district primarily uses STAR Assessment as our universal screening tool. In addition, we use curriculum aligned/embedded assessments aligned with state standards and our core programming including the following:

K-12: STAR – Beginning of year (BOY), Middle of year (MOY), and End of year (EOY), PAST - K-2 screener only (required 1x/year but given additionally at the discretion of the teacher), District Benchmark/ curriculum-embedded assessments – BOY, MOY, EOY

Dual Language assessments are slightly different but follow the same purpose for assessment. The dual language assessments include: STAR- Early Literacy/Reading-English and Spanish, Curriculum Embedded assessments, and the STAMP (Spanish Language Development L/S/R/W) at grades 2-5-7. The STAMP assessment assesses all 4 domains of Spanish proficiency (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing). Next year the STAMP assessment will be given at grades 2-5-8. 8th grade will need it to place into world language /Dual Language courses in 9th grade. It also links to the Seal of Biliteracy (can be earned in 5th, 8th, HS). It is recommended that students in a dual language program take the assessments at these transitional grade levels to provide a good benchmark on their success of earning the Seal of Biliteracy in high school. Information collected from the STAMP assessment will also be used to support program design and development.

ELA STAR Data Summary*

K-1

- 40% of grades K-1 are at benchmark
- 41% of grades K-1 are in need of urgent intervention

2-10

- 25% of grades 2-10 students are at benchmark
- 56% of grades 2-10 students are in need of urgent intervention
- 2nd grade has the highest proportion of students in intervention

Results broken down by school and grade level are found [here](#), and attached in the appendix.

**Dual Language students take the assessment in both the home language and in English. The results are reported in the aggregate and for Dual Language students, the higher score from their assessments is used.*

STAR assessments are computer-adaptive tests that measure student achievement on early literacy, reading, and math skills.

The assessment is computer-adaptive which means it is tailored to accurately measure each student's unique level of achievement. STAR is a universal screener that can be used for all students and all learning levels. STAR testing provides **easy to use data** and instructional tools to assist teachers in planning small group core instruction and interventions.

With multiple testing points throughout the year, teachers are able to measure student growth and modify plans to suit the changing needs of their students.

Priority Action Steps

Based on the STAR assessment results the following top priority action steps have been identified.

- Continue to develop the Early Literacy Plan with the Early Lit. Leaders group in partnership with Pupil Services
 - Early Lit plan will be inclusive and focused on the needs of English Learners (ELs) and have explicit small group instruction and Differentiated Instruction that will support ELs and Students with Disabilities (SWD) by increasing inclusive practices.
- Select a partner to support Literacy Plan development and leader support in conjunction with Relay
 - All grades- supports in place aligned to highest leverage Relay practices- Internalizing lessons (Planning!!) and releasing students to independent work.
- Plan PD for K-2 teachers in structured literacy
 - K-2 explicit and ongoing PD in Structured Literacy and strengthening small group instruction
- The Assistant Superintendent, Chief Instructional Officer, Chief of Pupil Services and PS Directors, Executive Director of School Leadership, Academic Directors and Expert Teachers continue to observe and provide feedback on core instruction in all grades and provide in time adjustments/supports.

Special Education Program Update (request from Wilson)

Curriculum Training & Implementation

The Pupil Services Department has continued to partner with the Academic Team to include special education staff in district curriculum training and materials. It is important that all students are able to access the core curriculum materials. Many of the curriculums used have built in interventions and support for all learners. Using uniform curriculum materials allows for predictability for students who move between more restrictive settings and inclusionary settings, and for students who move between schools.

The Pupil Services Department has also adopted two specialized curriculums to support students with disabilities. These curriculum programs are *S.P.I.R.E.®* and *Rethink*.

S.P.I.R.E.®

S.P.I.R.E.® is a research-proven reading intervention program. It is designed to build reading success through an intensive, structured, and spiraling curriculum that incorporates phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in a systematic 10-step lesson plan. *S.P.I.R.E.*® is a multisensory intervention geared towards struggling readers. There is a pre assessment given to students to determine where within the 8 levels they should begin the intervention. Each lesson contains 10 steps that address phonemic awareness and phonics, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. It includes Introductory lessons and Reinforcing lessons. *S.P.I.R.E.* is available in printed curriculum and a digital version, iSPIRE!

The district began to pilot the SPIRE curriculum during the 19-20 SY, however implementation was impacted by COVID and remote learning. Four PD sessions were held in the Fall of 2021. Ongoing coaching and support has been provided during the school year by the District Special Education Expert Teacher/Coach. Currently, there are 32 trained special education teachers.

Rethink Curriculum

This SY we had provided training for the Rethink platform for our ABL teachers, paras, BT's/RBT, and BCBA's. This was a refresher training for some staff and an initial training for newer staff. The purpose of the trainings were to provide an orientation to Rethink's platform for staff to implement Rethink's discrete trial platform.

We provided an intensive 2 day training for our 72 K-8 ABL staff during district PD day, which included training around: assessment, how to merge their VB-MAPP & ABLLS/AFLS curriculum, target program identification, use of data collection with their tablets, supplemental programming through Rethink, and other Rethink platform features. We've provided ongoing weekly to biweekly live coaching sessions as well through our Rethink coach representative. We are currently piloting Rethink training for our PK ABL staff, in anticipation for next SY, where we will expand our use of the Rethink platform for our PK ABL classrooms as well, to increase alignment and continuity across ABL programming.

Additionally, we have utilized Rethink to also have our 83 SIP paraprofessionals (including BT's) at E.N. White, McMahan, and Donahue participate in critical professional development, by engaging them in the RBT 40 hour training. This PLC, led by our SIP BCBA's, provides foundational training in ABA methodologies, to provide an extensive background in ABA to help them better understand the "why's" and "how's" behind what they do on a daily basis to better serve our students and increase fidelity of implementation of many of our student accommodations.

As part of our ABL staffing allocations, we also have BT/RBT positions assigned to each K-8 ABL classrooms. Many of these positions are still vacant, but we are continuing to recruit and have been successfully able to identify current ABL paras who are interested in taking on this role. Those paras are also currently participating in the 40 hour RBT training and will be continuing their path for national board certification to become RBT's. Our BCBA's are providing the additional training and data tracking for these staff to help them prepare to sit for their board certification.

Attendance Update

Current attendance rates show improvement when compared to our rate at the end of last year, however, we continue to see lower attendance rates compared to pre-pandemic years (SY19/20 EOY = 92.3%, SY20/21 EOY = 84.5%, SY21/22 MARCH = 85.3%)

Covid related absences continue to have a negative impact on attendance and chronic absenteeism.

- Our overall attendance increases about 3 pts when excluding medically excused absences (from 85.8% to 89.2% as of 4/8)
- Chronic absenteeism drops by nearly 18 pts when excluding medically excused absences (from 53.4% to 35.4% as of 4/8)

When looking by grade band, we see an approx 3-4% increase in attendance and an approx 15-20% decrease in chronic absenteeism. The biggest change in chronic absenteeism is a 23.1% drop in the K-2 grade band.

At the school level, we see our highest actual attendance (90.8%) and lowest chronic absenteeism rate (39.4%) at McMahon. Excluding OA, we see our lowest actual attendance (82.3%) and highest chronic absenteeism rate (68.9%) at Peck. When excluding medically excused absences, we see the greatest changes in both attendance and chronic absenteeism at EN White and Lawrence.

At all grade levels we see a drop in attendance when comparing SWD and LEP students to their non-SWD and non-LEP peers. The most significant gap is at the high school level, where overall attendance for SWD is 5.9% lower than students without disabilities, and overall attendance for LEP students is 5.2% lower than non-LEP students. Similarly, chronic absenteeism for SWD at the high school level is 16.6% higher than non-SWD, and 13.4% higher for LEP students compared to non-LEP.

Middle School Building and Rezoning Update

Middle School Building Project

First, Holyoke has completed its deliverables for the eligibility phase, ahead of the April 29th deadline.

Second, on Wednesday, April 20th, we received confirmation that Holyoke's Peck School project will be on the MSBA's April 27th meeting agenda for two votes: feasibility and preferred schematic. The meeting is **April 27th, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m., on zoom**. The only way to access the meeting is for Erin Linville to provide your email address to the MSBA. **If you want to attend the meeting, please [complete this form](#) by 10 a.m. Monday, April 25.** (You do not need to complete the form if you don't plan to attend.) Erin will send the list of attendees to the MSBA and then they will send you the zoom information early next week. The slides will be available on the MSBA's website following the meeting. Each district can only have one person speak on its behalf, so Supt. Soto or Mayor Garcia will speak for Holyoke.

Third, given the work that Holyoke completed from 2017-2019 for the middle school building project, MSBA is considering an expedited process for us. We expect to have more details and information by late April or early May. We are hopeful that we may be invited to a City Council meeting in May to share an update and clearly articulate any next steps required by the Council. It is likely that the Council will need to vote on a few items.

Fourth, many members of the School Building Committee are meeting on Monday, May 9th from 4:15 - 5:15 p.m. to tour the Peck School building. You are each invited to attend. If you have questions, please contact Erin Linville, elinville@hps.holyoke.ma.us, 312.415.1864, or Whitney Anderson, wanderson@hps.holyoke.ma.us, 413.519.4613. If possible, please RSVP to Erin Linville, so we know to expect you.

Finally, the School Building Committee continues to meet monthly on the first Thursday of each month at 6 p.m. (This month, we moved our meeting to Monday, May 4th since we had Senator Velis and Representative Duffy as guest speakers.) We have [zoom webinar](#) access for guests, and you are always welcome to attend. Alternatively, you may review prior meetings on the [Holyoke Media video archive](#). We also post brief updates on our [middle school building project webpage](#) and through our weekly newsletter, the Holyoke Update. We have been really impressed with the engagement of the School Building Committee and working groups. We had 100% attendance at the May meeting. We also appreciate the leadership of Erin Brunelle, SBC ViceChair.

Rezoning and Grade Reconfiguration Update

For reference, the rezoning and grade reconfiguration history and progress to-date can be found on the district's [website](#).

To inform and support these changes, HPS will engage in extensive community discussions and analysis, with guidance from expert consultants, to decide which schools will be elementary schools and which will be middle schools, which programs will be offered at each school, whether any schools will close, and which students attend which schools. These changes will require redrawing current attendance zones. We also commit to ensuring that any changes we make will be feasible, whether or not we are able to build a new middle school in fall 2026. Moving students and redrawing zone lines is a difficult conversation for any community, and we want to make sure that the plan we put into effect in fall 2023 will still work in fall 2026.

HPS has hired two consultants to support this work.

- AppGeo, with Project Leader Priya Sankalia, has been hired to lead the technical analysis, which includes using geographic information system (GIS) mapping that utilizes student and school locations to redraw boundary lines.
- A group of community leaders (Cynthia Espinosa Nayrobey Rosa, Jose Bou and Yadi Colon-Rivera), with Nueva Esperanza as the fiscal agent, has been hired to support the district to lead, plan and implement inclusive community engagement that promotes all voices being heard.

There are many ways for people to get involved:

- [Apply to be a member of the Rezoning Task Force](#), which will meet up to 5 times between May - October on Mondays from 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. We are especially looking for family representatives

from all elementary and middle schools and a couple School Committee members. Apply by May 3! The first meeting is May 9.

- Attend a community conversation about Rezoning (dates TBD).
- Look for HPS staff or consultants at community festivals to learn more.
- Take a survey (date TBD).

Strategic Planning Update

Holyoke Public Schools has entered the next phase of its Strategic Planning process. Supt. Soto's entry plan findings report, which was publicly released on February 28, sets a strong foundation for strategic planning. Next, [two groups](#), the Advisory Committee and Steering Committee, were formed. The Steering Committee crafts the strategic plan and the Advisory Committee provides input and feedback along the way. A special thanks to School Committee members Mildred Lefebvre and Rebecca Birks for serving on the Steering and Advisory Committee, respectively.

A video explaining the process and showcasing interviews and footage from the first meetings of the Advisory and Steering Committee is available on our [website](#). Each Committee has met twice (Advisory on March 24 and April 11; Steering on March 25 and April 14) and will meet a few more times.

Consultant Angela King Smith, a partner with Education Resource Strategies (ERS) in Watertown, MA, is facilitating the meetings. The actual plan is being written in-house by Supt. Soto and members of his leadership team.

The strategic plan will be released in June/July 2022.

School Calendar Update

Calendar SY22-23 Revisions after staff feedback was collected

- Feedback was mixed about having ½ day on 11/23 and 12/23 with slightly more wanting 11/23 as a full day off. Because the feedback was so close, the compromise made was to **give 11/23 off as a full day and leave 12/23 as ½ day.**
- **April PD day moved to March 24th.**
- While we completely understand (and agree with) the staff feedback on keeping Jan. 3-5 off for students and potentially using a few of the days for PD, it just wasn't possible. This year we were able to extend the winter break because we started so early. That early start date did receive negative feedback. Furthermore, the PD days are specifically placed in the calendar following quarterly assessment dates to allow for cross district data meetings and collaborative planning. Furthermore, giving those days off for staff and students would extend the school year to June 23 w/o inclement weather days and to June 30 if we needed to use 5 inclement weather days.

Other changes:

- New Staff Orientation moved to 8/23

- Convocation moved to the District PD day to allow schools more PD time.

Calendar SY22-23 Rationale

In developing the SY 22-23 Calendar the following was taken into consideration:

- **Not starting as early as we did this year** (*the earlier start was a 1 and done recommendation based on covid numbers potentially spiking in the winter months and wanting to get as many school days in prior to potential spikes*)
 - Support families in having a more traditional start
 - Extend this year's summer break for staff - also supports those teaching summer school in actually having a break
 - Allow for more time for hiring any last minute staffing needs in August.
 - Supports more new staff being able to attend summer institute
 - Summer institute is 1 week (5 days) as opposed to two weeks.
- **Aligned the PD days to the Quarterly Assessment Calendar in order to focus Full Day PDs on cross-district data meetings and collaborative instructional planning.** These days should be run district-wide to provide some cross district collaboration. Feedback on the cross district collaboration days from last year was positive and continues to be a request from teachers. This schedule allows us to do that at least 3 times a year.
 - 11/8 PD day is used as conference day for PK-8 teachers and school-based PD for 9-12
 - 11/23 changed to 3 hr. early release to reduce adding another day to the end of the calendar.
 - Full days vs. ½ day early release for PD days
 - Hasn't been approved by DESE in the past due to reduced Time on Learning for students.
 - Would not be able to run district-wide cross-dept/grade level collaboration on ½ day PD days due to different release times by Tiers.
- **Tried to create a calendar that allowed for as long a summer break as possible in Summer '23 to support the move to distinct elementary and middle schools across the entire district, which requires rezoning students and moving classrooms.**
 - In order to capitalize on the summer break, we need to consider a later start to the SY23-24 school year. We should consider starting after Labor Day for SY23-24. This will be a decision made in February-March of 2023.

COVID 19 Update

HPS COVID-19 Cases by Month

	Aug 23-21	Sep1- 20	Oct 1-31	Nov 1-30	Dec 1-31	Jan 1-31	Feb 1-28	Mar 1-31	Apr 1-13
Total	25	162	76	98	300	807	145	57	35
Students	20	151	71	75	235	676	118	34	25
Staff	5	11	5	23	65	131	27	23	10

We are seeing a bit of an uptick in COVID-19 cases across Massachusetts and Holyoke has reflected this trend. We hit a low of 6 cases during the week of March 9-16 and have been very slowly creeping up since then, with 17, 19, and 22 cases in the weeks since. People can be reinfected by the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19, and especially by one of its sub-variants, BA.2, which has been described as being about 30% more contagious than the original omicron virus.

While masking is now optional for HPS students and staff, all other mitigation strategies remain in place. These strategies include, among others, staying home when sick, participating in both routine and symptomatic COVID-19 testing, using proper handwashing techniques and alcohol-based hand sanitizers when hand washing is not an option, ventilating classrooms and office spaces, using Isolation Rooms for those who have symptoms while at school, and maintaining physical distance around other people.

We continue to ask that students and staff remain home when sick. Allergy symptoms can be similar to COVID-19 symptoms. For those individuals experiencing any symptoms, the Board of Health recommends wearing a mask until they self-test or PCR test and receive their results.

HPS students and staff can participate in ongoing COVID-19 testing programs offered by HPS: At-home rapid COVID-19 testing and/or in-school COVID-19 testing, as well as symptomatic testing by the school nurse.

We continue to offer COVID-19 vaccine clinics and during the month of April, health services collaborated with Holyoke Health Center to offer four COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

We continue to track COVID numbers in Holyoke and surrounding school districts. The chart below shows the data through 4/13/22. The purple shaded areas indicate dates post dropping the mask mandate.

COVID DATA POST MASK MANDATE

DISTRICT	2/3/22	2/10/22	2/17/22	3/2/22	3/9/22	3/16/22	3/23/22	3/30/22	4/6/22	4/13/22
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Holyoke	82	97	29	22	6	6	18	17	21	19
Chicopee	118	77	36	20	20	13	6	27	37	26
South Hadley	38	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	38
West Springfield	67	29	27	29	13	17	26	13	14	24
Westfield	73	14	30	15	0	3	9	10	7	19
Agawam	35	21	13	7	9	4	4	1	1	8
Granby	11	6	6	0	2	0	4	3	3	4
Longmeadow	0	14	0	7	0	0	8	0	13	0

John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

We are pleased to share the following selections for the 2022 John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. Students will receive, a UMass credit of \$1,575 or at a state university a credit of \$1,036 or at a community college a credit of \$740, per year toward student charges.

- Jacqueline Jourdain, Holyoke High School North
- Daley Levesque, Holyoke High School Dean Campus
- Emmie Lundren, Holyoke High School North Campus
- Annalyse McBride, Holyoke High School North Campus
- Leeani Olivieri, Holyoke High School Dean Campus
- Zander Pinheiro, Holyoke High School Dean Campus
- Armanie Ruiz, Holyoke High School Dean Campus
- Julian Salgado, Holyoke High School North Campus

Appendix