



The goal of the K-5 Wellesley English Language Arts Curriculum is to create students who are independent, critical thinkers and confident, effective communicators by developing strong reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. We use a comprehensive approach to teaching literacy that is simultaneously responsive to the needs of each individual student. Our classrooms have a reading and writing workshop structure that is focused on the gradual release of responsibility from teacher to student, fostering independence and mastery. Each day students will actively and purposely read and write, work collaboratively with peers and participate in whole group and small group instruction.

Foundational Skills

What:

In every WPS classroom K-3, students will engage in a systematic study of phonics, spelling and handwriting using the Foundations program with ongoing end-of-unit assessments and progress monitoring. Heggerty is used to teach phonemic awareness. DIBELS 8, a dyslexia screener, is administered to all students K-2. This year, the district has also made a significant investment in decodable texts for students to practice and apply phonics skills. For students in grade 4 & 5 who need more time and practice with systematic phonics, Just Words is used in small group instruction.

Why:

Research shows that systematic, explicit instruction is the most effective way to teach children how to read. The goal of phonics instruction is to help readers quickly determine the sounds in written words. When readers encounter new words in texts they use the elements of phonics to decode and understand these words. This instruction is most effective when integrated into a literacy program that includes practice with decodable texts as well as exposure to literature with rich vocabulary. The aim is for children to read with fluency and for their minds to be freed up to think deeply about and comprehend text, which is the purpose of reading.

Engagement with Complex Text

What:

All students will engage with complex text regularly by reading and/or listening using the WPS Units of Study in Reading that have been adapted from *Units of Study in Reading by Lucy Calkins and Colleagues at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project* along with a wide range of curated literature. Ongoing assessment using the Benchmark Assessment System (BAS) allows teachers to understand an individual student's development in reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension.

Why:

All students, regardless of grade or current reading ability, need access to rich, engaging, culturally diverse, relevant and authentic literature everyday in school. Research shows that providing texts that build vocabulary, knowledge and opportunities for grappling with complex ideas, supports the growth of comprehension. In addition, student engagement, agency and stamina are built by honoring student voice and choice in text selection.



Writing

What:

The *Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing* by Lucy Calkins and Colleagues at Teachers College Reading and Writing Project is currently used in K-5 classrooms as the core writing curriculum. This curriculum includes learning progressions, rubrics, and checklists which enable teachers to set goals with students and monitor their progress toward proficiency as writers. Students study mentor texts to develop critical thinking around how writers make decisions in order to communicate with an audience.

Why:

In order to become proficient writers, students engage in explicit instruction, practice, and feedback in writing skills and craft. Oral rehearsal, feedback, revision, and the study of mentor texts contribute to the development of skilled, confident writers who can write clearly and communicate ideas in all three domains: narrative, information, and opinion.

Intervention

What:

When student performance demonstrates that additional time is necessary to master grade level skills, teachers are able to differentiate instruction and supplement the core curriculum with intervention. Intervention takes place in small groups in which the teacher works with students to solidify their understanding of a targeted concept or skill. Intervention materials at each school include: Foundations Intervention and Fluency materials, Wilson Just Words, Heggerty Bridging the Gap, a variety of decodable texts, and Leveled Literacy Intervention. Classroom teachers, reading intervention teachers, and literacy specialists provide intervention when needed.

Why:

We know that learners develop at different rates and we work hard to meet each individual student's needs. Teaching teams monitor progress toward mastery of grade level standards. When assessment data shows that a student needs additional instruction, more practice, or new strategies in order to access the content, intervention is provided to move the learning forward.