

Columbia Heights Public Schools

Elementary Literacy Plan: Grades PreK-5



Meets Requirements for:

WBWF: World's Best Workforce (Minn. Stat. § 120B.11)

RWBTG: Reading Well by Third Grade (Minn. Stat. § 120B.12)

ESSA/SRCL: Every Student Succeeds Act's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant (Public Law No. 114-95, § 1177)



Columbia Heights Public Schools is committed to ALL students achieving reading proficiency in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 5 in order to lay a strong foundation for continued literacy development throughout the remainder of their formal educational process. The district goal is that every child is college and career ready upon graduation from high school with the skills and passion to be a lifelong reader. Building a strong foundation in reading at an early age is critical to realizing this goal.

Contents:

1. [Data](#)
 - a. Comprehensive Needs Assessment
 - b. Assessment Plan
 - c. Identification for Dyslexia
 - d. Identification for Convergence Insufficiency Disorder
2. [Action Plan for Continuous Improvement](#)
 - a. Teams and Meetings
 - b. Strategic Planning
 - c. Action Planning
3. [Evidence Based Interventions](#)
 - a. Identification Process
 - b. Multi-Tiered System of Supports
4. [Parent & Community Engagement](#)
5. [Communication Plan](#)
 - a. Reporting to Stakeholders
 - b. Reporting to Parents/Guardians
6. [Professional Development](#)

1.Data

Columbia Heights Public Schools (CHPS) recognizes the need to provide instruction to students targeted to their specific needs. In order to customize instruction to individual students, it is important that accurate data are reviewed on a regular basis to determine the level of incremental growth in proficiency students demonstrate in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary. The use of multiple assessments for screening proficiency level, diagnosing specific areas of need, and monitoring progress is an important part of the process. With these data, staff determine the steps needed for Columbia Heights students to reach their highest potential.

a. Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Columbia Heights Public Schools is a small urban district with many needs. The district borders Minneapolis and has three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school with a total enrollment of 3,309. The racial and ethnic makeup of the district is 43% Hispanic students, 30% Black students, 16% White students, with a smaller number of students identifying as Asian, American Indian, Biracial and other. CHPS students and their families speak more than 30 languages in their homes. The free/reduced lunch rate, an indicator of poverty, in CHPS is presently 82%, which is 39% higher than the statewide average and higher than urban districts such as Minneapolis and St. Paul. All five schools qualify for Title I services due to such a high student poverty level. Additionally, CHPS has a homeless rate of about 2%, which is almost double the statewide average. Finally, the population of English Learner students in CHPS is more than four times greater than the statewide average (37% vs. 9%). While the district averages surpass the statewide average, each individual school also varies. For example, Valley View Elementary contains 57% Hispanic students, 84% free/reduced lunch rate and 55% of the students receive English language services.

Data has become part of weekly conversations by Columbia Heights Public Schools administrators and teachers. It is used to support instructional decisions, intervention plans, progress monitoring assessments, and discussions with families. Each year, time is dedicated for teachers, administrators, and the district supporting staff to collaborate and look at data. These conversations utilize the story behind the data to see what students are telling us through trends in standardized and diagnostic tests including the MCA-III, FastBridge screening data and ACCESS for ELLs 2.0.

Academically, CHPS has performed significantly below state averages in reading, math, and science. Last year alone (2022), CHPS had lower MCA-III proficiency rates compared to the state average in Reading (55% vs. 49%), in Math (15% vs. 42%), and in Science (17% vs. 41%).

According to the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) grade 5 data, 21% of students report changing schools one, two or three times within the school year, thus interrupting their learning. Approximately 80% of the students report that they care about doing well in school. Outside of the school day, approximately 68% of the students report they do not visit a library during a typical week. Students show an interest in school and doing well, unfortunately the lack of access to opportunities and other barriers have impeded student academic growth.

b. Assessment Plan

Assessments are given to PreK-5 students on a regular basis. These assessments include screening assessments, diagnostic learning assessments, progress monitoring assessments, informal assessments, and formal assessments. Below is a chart of the various assessments by grade level, type, frequency, and proficiency determination. Identification of students needing intervention support is described in the [Intervention](#) section.

Type of Assessment	Purpose of Assessment	Assessment	Frequency	Proficiency Determination
Screening Assessment	Used to drive better learning outcomes in research-based early learning standards	TS GOLD	3 times a year for every student	Proficiency benchmarks provided by TS Gold
Screening Assessment	Used to identify students in need of interventions and to screen for dyslexia.	K-1: FastBridge earlyReading screener 2-5: FastBridge aReading screener 1-5: FastBridge CBM English screener	3 times a year for every student	Proficiency benchmarks provided by FastBridge
Diagnostic Learning Assessment	Used to determine areas of weakness for students who are reading below grade level. Teachers use this data when choosing which intervention program or tool they will use with an individual student.	Intervention Inventories from PRESS Other assessments provided by Special Education staff FastBridge: aReading	Dependent upon students' needs	Proficiency benchmarks provided by PRESS and FastBridge
Progress Monitoring Assessment	Provides ongoing feedback on the level of growth being made by students. Data also provides essential information to teachers on how effective an intervention is for a given	K-1: FastBridge Progress Monitoring -Sight Word Assessments 2-5: FastBridge Progress	Ongoing throughout the year	Benchmarks for proficiency provided by FastBridge, Wonders, and PRESS

	student and helps them to determine in a timely manner whether or not a different intervention is needed.	Monitoring Passages -PRESS skill progress -Functional Phonics		Literacy by Design and Sight Word benchmarks determined by MN state standards and Lexile grade level ranges
Informal Assessments	Teachers use informal assessments to adjust instruction including flexible guided reading group and technology intervention supports.	K-2: -Wonders unit assessments -Teacher created materials 3-5: -Literacy by Design unit assessments -Teacher created materials	Every day in various forms	Grade level formative assessments, such as exit tickets, connected to PLC works Proficiency for teacher created materials determined by District Literacy Leadership teams
Formal Assessments	Standardized testing used to show student growth throughout the year as compared to others in the state or others of a similar age.	K-5: -ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 test for English Learners -Alternate ACCESS for ELLs 3-5: -MCA-III Reading Test -Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS)	ACCESS & MCA-III given once a year in the Spring	Proficiency determined by exam

c. Identification for Dyslexia

Columbia Heights uses data from the FastBridge fluency and earlyReading composite score and subtest score screeners that all students are given in order to determine if any students may be at risk for dyslexia. After reviewing the literacy screening data, students are provided interventions in addition to the grade level core instruction. Teachers document results of

students' responses to interventions to gauge growth and progress towards proficiency over time. Teams of teachers (which often include English Learner and Special Education teachers) evaluate progress to determine next steps, which could include Child Study, 504 plan, or evaluating for a disability if students are not showing progress.

d. Identification for Convergence Insufficiency Disorder

Columbia Heights uses data from the FastBridge fluency and earlyReading composite score and subtest score screeners that all students are given in order to determine if any students may be at risk for convergence insufficiency disorder. Students identified as needing further support are provided interventions in addition to core instruction. Teachers document results of students' responses to interventions to look for growth and abilities over time. Teams of teachers (including English Learner and Special Education teachers) evaluate progress to determine next steps which could include Child Study, 504 plan, or evaluating for a disability if students are not showing progress.

2. Continuous Improvement

a. Teams and Meetings

Monitoring and improving literacy in Columbia Heights Public Schools is done through the input and support of many stakeholders. All principals meet monthly with the Superintendent, Director of Technology, Director of Teaching and Learning, Director of Special Education, Director of Community Education and district coordinators to discuss continuous improvement. Other teams in the district that work toward continuous improvement include:

- World's Best Workforce Committee
- PreK-5 Literacy Leadership Team
- EL (English Learner) Leadership Team
- Teaching and Learning Leadership Committee
- Special Services Leadership Team
- Age Three to Grade Three Committee
- School Board
- School site teams

The aforementioned teams consist of district staff, school-level staff, parents and community members. The teams meet on a regular basis to discuss data and gather input on curriculum, inclusive curriculum/instruction, interventions, and school/home connection.

b. Strategic Action Planning

Columbia Heights Public School District has aligned district-wide required goals and plans such as the World's Best Workforce, Title, Achievement and Integration, American Indian Education Program, Strategic Plan, and AVID so the work of the district maintains a focus on academic achievement of all students. The current World's Best Workforce Goals are listed on the Columbia Heights website linked here: [Columbia Heights Public Schools World's Best Workforce](#).

c. Action Planning

i. Assessing and Evaluating Student Progress

Assessing and evaluating student progress occurs in a variety of ways. The administration participates in monthly Lead and Learn meetings which consist of data-driven discussions and check-in meetings among all principals, district staff and the superintendent. Additionally, site Literacy and Math leadership teams meet quarterly and the district PreK-5 academic leadership team meets monthly. During these meetings, staff participate in professional development and then lead the work in their school and grade level. At the building level, teacher teams participate in PLC data discussions to review pre- and post-assessment data, as well as progress monitoring data, disaggregated by student groups. During these collaborative team meetings, staff discuss instructional strategies and interventions. Columbia Heights Public Schools also incorporates district-wide Data Days into the academic calendar. During these specified days, each site/program reviews specific, relevant and time-appropriate data for their learners in order to best inform instructional practices.

The District Assessment Coordinator meets with administration and teacher teams to facilitate the dissemination of disaggregated data and to support the data analysis process. The district uses a secure online data warehouse where student data can be sorted and disaggregated. The warehouse is used by PreK – 12th grade staff.

ii. Process to Assess and Identify Student for Participation in Gifted and Talented Programs

Gifted services in Columbia Heights Public Schools exist to provide opportunities for academic challenge for high achieving and/or gifted learners. The identification process for gifted students is based on reviewing achievement and ability assessment data points. It is not limited to one or two measures. The district follows a three-step identification process. First, a universal screener is given to all students in grade 2, along with any other students upon request. They are assessed using the nonverbal Naglieri Nonverbal Ability Test (NNAT). After the scores are processed, students who receive a qualifying score in step one are then assessed using the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT). Finally, a team of staff members review multiple performance and ability data points for each learner, which then informs the identification process.

iii. Early Admission to Kindergarten

Columbia Heights conducts early childhood screenings twice a month during each school year. Through the results of the screening and in collaboration with parents/guardians, students have access to early admission to Kindergarten.

iv. Curriculum and Instruction

Columbia Heights staff receive annual professional development on effective instructional practices. The implementation of the instructional practices is monitored by school and district staff using formal and informal walkthrough rubrics, a feedback protocol is used to support the implementation.



The school board-approved curriculum implementation is evaluated by principals, lead teacher teams and the District Curriculum Coordinator. The four-step process includes: Study/Preparation, Program Design, Implementation, and Refine/ Sustain. Throughout this process, implementation rubrics are used by district and school staff to monitor the curriculum implementation process and its alignment to standards.

v. *Principal Evaluations*

The principal evaluations take place on an annual basis. The criteria for principal evaluations are; instructional leadership, school performance, stakeholder survey, smart goals, leadership action and other measures.

vi. *Teacher Evaluations*

The evaluation of teachers' use of effective instructional practices and curriculum implementation is evaluated by a combination of Principals and Peer Reviewers using "Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching" Model. Teachers work with their designated Peer Reviewer to set individual growth and development goals. Peer Reviewers and Principals conduct walkthroughs and formal observations of teachers. Other components of the evaluation process include student learning goals, student survey data and shared goals.

vii. *Equitable Distribution of Teachers and Strategies*

The district administrative team in Columbia Heights Public Schools, including the Superintendent, Principals, Assistant Principals when applicable, the Director of Human Resources, Director of Special Education and Director of Teaching and Learning follow an annual process to identify and discuss placement and evaluation of probationary and veteran teachers. Included in the process is a thorough discussion of evaluations based on the "Charlotte Danielson's Framework of Teaching" Model. During the discussions, the team identifies where additional support or staff development is needed. Probationary teachers who are not performing are not renewed. Tenured teachers are on a three-year cycle for evaluations; when identified as not performing, they are placed onto an improvement plan.

In addition to the annual staffing process, the district administrative team analyzes and discusses enrollment monthly. In the spring and fall of each year, the team discusses staff and student placement protocols in order to support students with special needs and language development. Enrollment for low-income and minority students is equitably distributed among the three elementary schools based on the attendance areas. Columbia Heights has one middle school and one high school so all students at those grade levels attend the same school and have access to high-quality instruction.

viii. Acceleration

Teachers who support students needing academic acceleration are provided opportunities to participate in professional development in these areas. At the elementary level, Columbia Heights has two multi-age accelerated classrooms, LEAP at Highland Elementary and LEAP at Valley View Elementary. In these classrooms, students identified as being a good fit for this environment have access to an accelerated curriculum and develop the skills needed to succeed in a fast-paced environment. The students are assessed using multiple measures, including FastBridge screeners in math and literacy, to measure proficiency and growth throughout the academic year. In other elementary classrooms outside of LEAP, students needing accelerated content may be clustered into flexible classrooms in which the teachers are able to differentiate instruction to provide enrichment and acceleration. At the secondary schools, all students have access to multiple levels of acceleration. This includes Advanced Placement (AP) courses, Anoka-Ramsey's Concurrent Enrollment Program, Century College Concurrent Enrollment Program, Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO), and Honors courses.

ix. Personalized Learning

Columbia Heights engages students through Personalized Learning which includes technology. Technology devices are used to create self-paced differentiated instruction to:

- individualize instruction
- use formative assessment to increase rigor
- increase student engagement through relevant, exciting learning
- provide equity by challenging and supporting all students with flexible tools and differentiated content
- increase rigor leading to college and career readiness for all students

The Personalized Learning Initiative spans elementary through high school grades and is supported by Technology Integration Specialists. The Integration Specialists provide professional development and in-class coaching and support. Columbia Heights has a professional collaborative culture. Staff collaborate in the following ways:

- Co-teaching: General education, Special education and English Learner identified students are supported in some classrooms through a co-teaching model.
- Professional Learning Communities: Teacher teams meet weekly, biweekly or monthly to review student progress toward standard and share instructional practices.
- Leadership teams: Math, Literacy and Science teachers meet in vertical teams (K-5 or K-12) and in grade-level teams representing the schools in the district. The leadership teams receive professional development and also inform instructional practices.

3. Interventions

Columbia Heights Public Schools implements a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) for literacy. Using screening data, diagnostic data, and progress monitoring data teams of teachers are able to identify and support students' growth.

a. Identification

Each fall, all students in K-5 are given a literacy screener through FastBridge (earlyReading English or aReading and CBM Reading - English). This screener includes a variety of subtests (such as letter names, onset sounds, etc.) based on the grade level needs. After the screener, classroom teachers, special education teachers, English Learner teachers, and administration meet to discuss the needs for each student based on the scores. Using the data, teachers determine which students need intervention support as well as which students may need enrichment. Teachers work with families to decide on a plan to support students using the Multi-Tiered System of Supports.

b. Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Teachers use diagnostic assessments including the inventories provided by PRESS (Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites from the University of Minnesota) and curriculum-created assessments based on standards to determine which students need additional support at Tier 1, 2, or 3. These supports include:

Tier 1: All students in grades K-5 receive a daily minimum of 90 minutes devoted to literacy development. These lessons are based upon the Minnesota State Standards and currently implement the Wonders curriculum in K-1 and Literacy by Design curriculum in 2-5. As part of the 90-120 minutes of literacy, Functional Phonics instruction is provided. For this instruction, students engage in 45 minutes of phonics instruction. Based on pre-assessment and classwide data, teachers are able to determine the starting point for their specific learners. From there, lessons follow a logical progression of phonics based skills for building reading and spelling skills. Each lesson includes a warm up activity, review of previous lesson, introduction of new concept, guided and extended practice, dictation, connection to word meaning, heart word routine, and decodable passage reading.

- Whole group instruction using increasingly complex texts.
- Flexible small group work to support: targeted instruction based upon diagnostic assessment, whole group standards/skills, and peer-to-peer collaboration in literacy
- Independent reading time with options of diverse and inclusive reading materials in print and online.
- Research-informed writing instruction and skills practice.

Students are frequently assessed for progress in their reading fluency or skill. This information is used to adjust instruction including the movement of individual students to more appropriate groups. Teachers provide students with explicit instruction in the areas of reading that research has identified as the foundation for continued improvement. These foundational components include phonemic instruction, phonics, and fluency. In addition, students work to develop vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Tier 2: When Level 1 assessments indicate that a student is struggling to reach grade-level proficiency, additional instructional support is provided through Level 2 Interventions. These interventions include explicit instruction and practice in areas which have been identified as a current weakness. A variety of interventions, including PRESS, are in place to ensure all students are receiving appropriate assistance. Students also receive individualized or small group instruction from teachers, building Reading Interventionist teachers, or members of the Minnesota Reading Corps (MRC). These interventions are based upon the diagnostic assessments given to students. Students receiving Level 2 interventions are assessed on a weekly basis to measure progress.

Tier 3: Some students require even more intensive service in order to achieve proficiency. This will be provided through individualized instruction using a research-based intervention that has been determined through the collaborative analysis of data by two or more teachers (often including Special Education and English Learner teachers) to best meet the current needs of a student. The Student Assistance Team (SAT) also supports this level of intervention. The District has a lengthy menu of interventions that can target specific needs in phonics, fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness and vocabulary.

Additional Support: In addition to the three levels of instruction described above, the District provides the following support for literacy development:

1. **Summer School:** The District invites below grade-level students to attend Summer School for additional instruction. Summer School is taught by licensed teachers and utilizes the same literacy curriculum and support system as the regular school year.
2. **ENCORE After School Program:** Each elementary school has after-school opportunities for students for extension and remediation. Families can choose to enroll their child in classes which provide additional literacy support. Some schools also provide before-school ENCORE programming which includes literacy support.
3. **Home/School Connections:** All elementary students bring home books and packets for practicing reading.

4. Parent/Guardian & Community Engagement

Improving literacy skills of students begins with collaboration between the students, teachers, and families. Through various school events including curriculum night, EL (English Learner) Family Night, and conferences, families learn and provide input on literacy strategies the schools are implementing. Families are supported with literacy activities students can do at home in English or in their native language.

Columbia Heights schools work hard to support families and our community using various tools and engagement strategies to enhance communication. Some of these include:

- [College and Career Guides](#) for each step of their journey Pre K - 12
- Communication apps such as Seesaw, Blackboard, and Remind
- Home Visits by staff
- Neighborhood walks
- PTA and PTO
- PAS (Partnerships for Academic Success) Nights focusing in on student data
- Books, Backpacks, and Breakfast (Families receive books and literacy activities to support students)

World's Best Workforce plays an important part creating our literacy goals, monitoring our progress, and providing input into resources and strategies. More about the role of the World's Best Workforce and District Advisory Committee are included in the [Continuous Improvement](#) section.

5. Communication Plan

Literacy Plans are created in collaboration with many stakeholders including teachers, administration, families, and community members. Goals are created and analyzed in partnership with these stakeholders.

a. Reporting to Stakeholders

Communicating results to the many stakeholders is a joint effort between the Teaching and Learning department and Communications department. Communication around literacy data and results, efforts to identify students including students with dyslexia or convergence insufficiency, and literacy action plans are shared by:

- Publishing [WBWF](#) on the district website including the Annual Report
- Sharing with each school at Curriculum Nights and/or School meetings
- Holding an annual World's Best Workforce meeting for the public
- Sharing with district committees including World's Best Workforce, leadership teams, administration teams

b. Reporting to Parents/Guardians

Supporting students to the fullest includes a partnership with families. Each fall, families are provided with fall literacy data, showing where learners currently are at in regards to grade-level understanding/skills. Information about services to support students' progress is also shared. Families are updated with student progress via conferences, access to ParentVUE, report cards, meetings, and/or home visits.

6. Professional Development

Columbia Heights Public Schools professional development plan is grounded in research, national standards and equips teachers to meet state re-licensure requirements and to work collaboratively to support implementation of instructional practices. The plan articulates the needs identified for staff and by staff to ensure processes and practices are implemented well.

The professional development plan is based on a comprehensive needs assessment and aligned to the district, school, and individual goals grounded in "Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching" four domains: Planning and Preparation; Environment; Instruction; and Professional Responsibility. The framework aligns with the teacher evaluation program and supports all elements of effective instruction. The plan incorporates systems of provision and monitoring of fidelity tools to inform continuous improvement and future needs for professional development.

The World's Best Workforce comprehensive long-term strategic plan provides direction to professional learning to improve teaching and learning and includes education practices that integrate high-quality instruction, rigorous curriculum, technology, and a collaborative professional culture that develops and supports teacher quality, performance, and effectiveness.

Professional learning is provided in three ways: professional workshops, professional learning communities/collaborative grade-level teams/data teams, and individual coaching. This year's professional development reading goal met staff needs as identified through reading data to ensure the following:

- Elementary teachers are able to implement comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction, including instruction in: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and other literacy areas, including writing.
- Elementary teachers have sufficient training to provide instruction that meets students' developmental, linguistic, and literacy needs using intervention methods or programs selected by the district for identified students.
- Licensed teachers have regular opportunities to improve reading and writing instruction.
- Licensed teachers recognize students' diverse needs in cross-cultural settings and can meet the oral language and linguistic needs of students who are English

Learners by maximizing strengths in their native languages to cultivate English language development (including oral academic language) and build academic literacy.

- Licensed teachers are well trained in culturally responsive pedagogy that enables students to master content, develop skills to access content, and build relationships.

A distributed leadership model is used to provide professional learning in a collaborative setting allowing teacher leaders to facilitate the learning of their peers. Training and support are also provided to administrators to provide quality professional learning for capacity building. Peer Reviewers play a primary role in supporting educators with professional learning around individual goals as well.

To ensure the use of relevant research-based practices to support student learning in reading, Columbia Heights elementary teachers participate in professional learning led by the University of Minnesota. The professional learning is based on the Path to Reading Excellence in School Sites (PRESS) Framework.

The framework was developed by the Minnesota Center for Reading Research at the University of Minnesota. It focuses on literacy achievement in grades K-5 within Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) or Response to Intervention (RtI) contexts. PRESS interventions address five essential components of reading (Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension), using research-based practices for student success. The PRESS framework addresses quality core instruction, data-driven decision-making, tiered interventions, and ongoing, job-embedded professional learning.