

Amity Regional School District No. 5
Summer 2008
Sheila Wycinowski, Amanda Palmieri

Why Literacy in Amity?

In the past reading and literacy development in elementary school students has been extensively studied and examined. In 2000, the Connecticut State Department of Education published *Connecticut's K – 3 Blueprint for Reading Achievement*. This document outlined the literacy strategies and reading competencies that supported student success in grades K – 3.

However, recently research has focused on the reading development and literacy skills of the older students. Research has found that majority of younger students; whether they are struggling learners or high achievers, acquire a basic core of literacy strategies while in kindergarten through Grade 3 (Beyond the Blueprint). Yet research on older students has indicated that the majority of secondary readers (60%) are able to read at a basic level but only 5% are able to read and interpret the more complex and challenging information texts found in the secondary grades. (The National Assessment of Education Progress) Research has given several explanations for this discrepancy. First most students have limited experience with informational texts as elementary schools typically emphasize narrative texts over informational texts. Also, the National Reading Panel found that content teachers generally do not teach strategies students need when reading textbooks or informational texts because they are unsure of which strategies will be most beneficial to their students (The National Reading Panel, 2000).

In 2003, as an extension of the *Connecticut's K – 3 Blueprint* and in response to new research and data, the Connecticut State Department of Education organized a task force to define a program of comprehensive literacy instruction in Grades 4 – 12 (Beyond the Blueprint). This 96 page document is a tool that teachers and administrators can use in order to support literacy instruction in English language arts and all content areas. *Beyond the Blueprint* is based on research that supports the idea that all students need a systematic, ongoing literacy program and that all teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community members share the responsibility for developing student literacy.

Amity recognizes the critical role that literacy plays in student achievement both in and outside of the classroom. Amity believes that literacy instruction has to be shared responsibility throughout the entire District. As such, Amity has launched its own District Wide Literacy Initiative that supports the current research and recommendations in *Beyond the Blueprint*. Amity has made the development and implementation of its' literacy initiative a top priority as it believes these literacy skills are essential in ensuring that Amity fulfills its mission of “enabling every Amity student to become...an effective world citizen” Amity believes that by providing training and supporting its teachers in effective literacy practices and strategies student learning and achievement will be enhanced across all content areas. Additionally, recognizing the ever changing and developing technological world that students live in today Amity has put a special emphasizes in the upcoming school year on digital literacy.

**Literacy Committee
2008-2009**

District

John Brady	Superintendent
Sheila Wycinowski	Director of Curriculum

Bethany

Richard Dellinger	Principal
Jason Tracy	Assistant Principal
Sara Frank	Art
Kathy Habersang	Science
Gail Huitt	Reading
Eileen Kazdan	Reading
Faith Miller	Library Media Specialist
Tammy Saisa	Reading
Carolyn Stanley	Computer Technology

Orange

Robert Slie	Principal
Vi Gibbons	Assistant Principal
Jen Bshara	Reading
Barbara Ceneri	Reading
Nancy Goss	Library Media Specialist
Barbara Haag	Science
Jen Marganski	Social Studies
Emily McGalliard	Music
Bobbie Miller	Guidance

High School

Charles Britton	Principal
Kim Vigliotti	Associate Principal
Alberta Conte*	World Languages
Estelle Fanucci*	Science
Warren Gohsler	Technology
Cara Haas*	Social Studies
Janice Holzer*	Media/Fine/ Performing Arts
Kelly Kane	English
Yvonne Klancko	Reading
Grace Loman*	Applied Education
Sean Mack	Reading
Anna Mahon*	English
Len Marazzi*	Physical Education
Pat Martin	Library Media Specialist
Marie Mastandrea	* Math
Amanda Palmieri	Social Studies
Regine Randall	Reading
Sue Trovarelli	Library Media Specialist

*= High School Department Head

Question and Answer Response Regarding Literacy

- **Why literacy?**

Three years ago the Amity School District requested that ACES review Amity's Reading Department and student preparation for the CMT and the CAPT. Out of the ACES review came the recommendation that the District should focus on literacy to help students achieve academic success across the curriculum.
- **What is Amity's district literacy goal?**

Amity's district literacy policy is that all students should be able to read, write and think effectively in all curricular areas. Amity's objective is to implement systematic, explicit and effective literacy strategies across the curriculum in order to achieve the district's mission. Amity focuses on digital literacy so students are prepared to confront the ever changing and demanding technological world of the 21st century. The literacy goal focuses on traditional and digital literacy.
- **Who are the members of the literacy committee on both the district & school level?**

District Level - The Superintendent John Brady, and the Director of Curriculum, Sheila Wycinowski. District Literacy Committee teacher volunteers.

Middle School Level - The Vice-Principal, the Library Media Specialist, Reading Teachers, and teacher representatives from the content areas that serve on the literacy building-based committee.

High School - The principal, the reading consultants, technology director, Library Media Specialist, content area department heads and teacher representatives
- **How is the Literacy Initiative being carried out at Amity's middle schools?**

Before the start of the new school year the middle school administrators along with Director of Curriculum and the reading specialists review the CMT Reading and Writing scores for each school. They then use this data along with other information to revise each school's Literacy and CMT Plan for the upcoming school year. The building-based literacy committee works to focus the building literacy initiative.
- **How is the Literacy Initiative being carried out at Amity's high schools?**

The Principal and the Associate Principal (Kim Vigliotti) direct the literacy initiative. The Department Heads and the Reading Specialists work together to define the direction. School year 2008-2009 is considered year I of the high school literacy plan. The focus of the program will be teacher training across the curriculum and teacher creation/implementation of reading foundational assignments (formative assessments) that correlate directly to the Reading for Information portion of the CAPT.
- **What are "walk throughs"?**

Walk throughs are an administrative tool used to collect literacy data and confirm the embedding of literacy strategies across content areas.

- Who conducts the walkthroughs and what is he/she looking for?**

The school building administrators and district administrators conduct the walk throughs. Walkthroughs happen four times a year and are announced ahead of time. The administrators are looking for data on teacher instruction and student use of literacy strategies in the classroom. This data is then used to help monitor student progress, inform instruction, and provide feedback and support to teachers in order to help them achieve their literacy goal for the year. During the 2008 - 2009 school year special attention/emphasizes will be placed on digital literacy in the classroom.
- What are embedded literacy strategies?**

Embedded literacy strategies are strategies that teachers use when reading in their discipline. Teachers weave these strategies into content lesson plans and across classes using large group instructional methods.
- What is the "flip chart"?**

The flip chart was created to be used as a ready reference aid for content literacy instruction. Although it is not an exhaustive compilation of BDA strategies it does highlight several effective BDA strategies that teachers commonly use in their classrooms. Each activity is accompanied by a brief explanation and example of the strategy. Additionally, the chart includes vocabulary lessons, the Six Strategies to Literacy and a glossary of commonly used literacy terms. The flip chart is an excellent place for teachers new to literacy strategies to start without feeling overwhelmed or confused.
- Will there be professional development opportunities for the use and development of literacy strategies?**

Yes! Amity is committed to providing numerous professional development opportunities to help new teachers develop and strength the teaching of literacy strategies in their classrooms. New teachers are given Reading Across the Curriculum training by the Reading Specialist. All teachers receive training in the scoring of open-ended writing prompts. Both new & veteran teachers meet with their administrator to discuss effective literacy strategies already in use their classrooms and ways they can improve literacy instruction. Professional development days during the school year are used to provide support to all teachers on literacy instruction across the content areas. Professional development & support is also provided to help enhance teachers' knowledge of digital literacy. Also, the reading specialists are available to work with teachers and answer their questions on effective literacy practices and instruction.

Before – During – After Reading Strategies

What are BDAs?

Before Reading Activities

Research has shown that BEFORE reading fluent readers preview a text and look at design features such as titles, subheads, boldface words, study photographs, maps, charts, and graphs. These are activities that help readers activate their prior knowledge about the content, create interest in the topic, learn the essential vocabulary, and set purposes for their reading. Listed below are a few of the numerous Before Reading Activities that cover everything from vocabulary development to setting a purpose for reading.

- Anticipation Guides
- Prediction Guide
- K-W-L Chart
- Possible Sentences
- List-Group-Label
- Word Storm
- Word Sort
- Story Impressions
- Probable Passages
- Content Predict-O-Gram
- Think Sheet

During Reading Activates:

Reading is an active, thinking process that demands that the reader be in charge of the process, monitoring how he or she reads and adjusting to ensure success. During Reading Strategies help to facilitate these important skills. Fluent readers monitor their comprehension while they read. They determine the key ideas, ask questions about the content, reread what is unclear, note differences & similarities and take notes. Below are some examples of During Reading Strategies.

- Q-A-R = Question-Answer-Relationships
- Read Aloud/Think Aloud
- Say Something
- Dialectical Notes
- ReQuest
- Inquiry Questions
- Visualization Squares

After Reading Activities:

After Reading Activities help students to revisit the text to clarify their and share their different interpretations of the text. After Reading Strategies help the students to examine their own and others' points of view, separate fact from opinion, support their own opinions, analyze issues, make inferences, draw conclusions and summarize their findings. Combining both the new information and personal experiences in after reading activities will enhance student learning and increase student engagement. Listed below are some examples of After Reading Activities.

- One Sentence Summaries

- Polar Opposites
- Open Ended Questions
- Multiple Choice Questions
- Support Your Position (SYP)
- Connections Chart
- Share What You Know
- Discussion Web

**Many of these activities involve different steps that cover the before, during and after reading strategies. Also, some before reading activities also function as vocabulary activities.*

Literacy - Our Mission
New Teacher Guidelines and Expectations

In order to implement the District Literacy Goal at Amity Regional Schools, teachers should follow the following guidelines:

Middle School New Teachers

- Read and follow the CMT Literacy Plan
- Actively participate in new teacher training in reading strategies and round-table training
- Discussions
- Read/Examine District flip-chart. Keep this chart handy and embed literacy strategies into daily instruction
- Review lessons already created by teachers in your content area and in grade level. See Assistant Principal in Orange and see Eileen Kazdan, Reading Consultant, in Bethany
- Set goals around literacy with school building administrator

Digital Media Literacy

- Attend media center orientation for new teachers
- Examine/Use on-line database resource in your building and incorporate them into daily instruction. (you can access them from home) See building Media Specialist.
- Emphasize digital literacy Web 2.0; please incorporate blogging, podcasting, etc. into your daily instruction (Warren Gohsler, Carolyn Stanley, Louise Fiondella, and the building technology coordinators will assist you) or your building media specialists, Nancy Goss, Orange/Faith Miller, Bethany
- Work with computer teachers to complete all technology competencies with students

High School New Teachers

- Read/review your literacy flip-chart
- Read/review reading strategies in your content area
- Read/review Amity's Academic Expectations and the high school rubrics that are aligned with the Academic Expectations
- Post the high school reading rubric and the reading strategies in your content area in your classroom
- Attend and actively participate in all reading/literacy training for new teachers and your department
- Review CAPT Plans on Reading for Information and writing across the disciplines
- Review strong foundational assignments with your Department Head. Select foundational assignments that strongly correlate/align with Reading for Information CAPT and adopt or adapt them into your daily lessons/instruction
- Create your own foundational assignments that align with the Reading for Information portion of the CAPT

Digital Media Literacy

- Attend new teacher training in digital literacy and media orientation
- Review/examine/use online databases available in your building and incorporate them into daily instruction. (you can access them from home) See Media Specialists
- The emphasis on digital literacy is Web 2.0 so please incorporate blogging, podcasting, etc. into your daily instruction (Warren Gohsler and your building technology coordinator can assist you)
- Work with your Department Head, Warren Gohsler, and your building technology coordinators to assist students in meeting the high school technology competencies outlined as part of the high school graduation requirements