



# Lincoln Public Schools

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To: School Committee  
From: Mary Sterling, Judy Merra  
Re: K-8 Literacy Assessment plan for the district  
Date: March 3, 2010

This report offers a brief background regarding the district work on the English Language Arts curriculum and describes the current initiative to implement a K-8 Literacy Assessment Plan.

## **Background**

In April 2006, the School Committee received a report by Paul Naso outlining a project to determine performance expectations in student composition for three intermediate grades. The project went forward in 2006-07 and involved several grade-level teachers in administering a common assessment and doing some common scoring according to a set of criteria, aligned with Massachusetts standards. This work was truly foundational to the subsequent work in all areas using Common Assessments.

In 2007-08, the ELA focus expanded to the development of Lincoln Learning Expectations for all dimensions of English Language Arts, which incorporated the work on composition developed in the previous year. The Learning Expectations were finalized and made available on the website in September, 2008, just as Judy Merra joined the Lincoln faculty as Content Specialist for English Language Arts.

Judy spent her first year in Lincoln on many aspects of literacy learning. Among her goals was the charge to research current district practices in literacy assessment and advise us on a comprehensive assessment plan. She worked with teachers and literacy specialists to gain an understanding of current practices and needs. In May, 2009, Judy met with principals, the Administrator for Student Services, and me to report on her research and to guide us in formulating a district plan. The assessment plan, described below, was communicated to all faculty in September 2009.

This plan builds on past assessment measures and practices that have proved to be valuable and adds new practices and assessment instruments that are targeted to certain grade levels and dimensions of literacy. We began the implementation process in September; it will likely take two years to be fully operational.

## **K- 8 Literacy Assessment Plan**

A comprehensive literacy assessment plan must serve three purposes:

1. To inform classroom instruction
2. To provide data for entry and exit criteria for literacy services
3. To track progress in literacy learning at the district level

Our district-wide plan is designed to meet these purposes. In selecting certain types of assessments and mapping them out over the school year at each grade, we believe that our assessment practices truly contribute to our understanding of student progress and our efforts to improve achievement.

In broad terms, this chart depicts the key assessments and approximate time of year that they are used district-wide in grade spans.

READING & WRITING		SCHEDULE
K-2	DIBELS, DRA 2, Marie Clay HRSW	2x year: Fall, and either Winter or Spring
3-5:	Fountas & Pinnell Benchmark Assessments, Foundations (gr. 3)	2 x year: to begin at Hanscom mid-year, once training has occurred
6-8	Common Assessments in literature	Fall: add try outs of other options to make a decision for 2010-11
K-8	Writing prompts -- Common Assessments on Key Outcomes	Sept.(optional this year) January Try-outs of other options for specific skills
3-8	Open Response -- Common Assessment in several subjects	1-2 x year in several subject areas (to be developed)

### Implementation: Resources, Administration, Training and Recording Results

In order to put this plan into action, we first took an inventory of the assessment resources currently in the district that would be used in our plan. Then, we compiled a purchase plan for new materials. Some assessment materials have been purchased this year; other materials are part of the improvement initiatives for FY11.

Judy Merra also determined which literacy specialists and teachers already have skill in using the assessment instruments and what training may be needed for other teachers. She arranged for a day of training on the Fountas & Pinnell Assessment System this past fall, which involved all literacy specialists and some classroom teachers. Teachers in grades 3-5 received an initial training in December. Judy is currently doing follow up coaching with individual grade level teams. The Fountas & Pinnell assessment approach is fairly new in our district and so additional training for teachers will be offered in the summer of 2010. Some training of teachers may still be needed for the DIBELS and DRA-2, which are used in the primary grades.

In January, all K-8 teachers administered the Common Assessment in composition, based on grade-level writing prompts. Common scoring was undertaken by each grade level and then analysis of results occurred on Institute Day, January 15<sup>th</sup>. This practice will continue next year at each grade level.

During this school year, we are developing a district-wide data-base of student achievement on both state and selected local assessments. Once the database design is complete, we will begin to enter the data from literacy assessments so that we can track student progress over the years.

As we move this initiative forward, input from literacy specialists, teachers, and principals will be important in refining our plan. We are committed to using worthwhile assessment instruments in timely ways to inform teacher instruction and promote the literacy learning of all our students.