

BOARD OF EDUCATION OF HARFORD COUNTY

INFORMATIONAL REPORT

Elementary Reading Program

May 22, 2023

Background Information:

The current Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) elementary reading program, Units of Study in Reading and Phonics, was purchased and implemented beginning in 2019. Due to community feedback, it has been determined that HCPS should explore and pilot a new program and evaluate its impact on student literacy measures.

Discussion:

The Office of RELA received approval from the General Curriculum Committee at the March 14, 2023, meeting to begin the formal review process for alternative reading programs. The following action plan outlines the process that was utilized. A chart indicating dates, tasks, and audience has also been embedded in the Power Point presentation.

- **Sought approval from the General Curriculum Committee to form the Elementary Reading Program Selection Committee.**
- **Created an Ad-Hoc committee of GCC for the initial vetting and determination of programs to review.**
- **Invited elementary educators and stakeholders to be involved in the selection process. Representation across all schools and grade levels required. A list of committee membership has been included in the Power Point presentation.**
- **Identified final resources for a rigorous review process to include evaluation tools.**
- **Planned the professional development for review teams using the Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool provided through the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).**
- **Implemented the review process with identified publishers.**
 - The team began the review process with three days provided to independently preview the programs.
 - Whole team review sessions were scheduled for each identified program.
 - 90 minutes for the publisher presentation.
 - 90 minutes for committee discussion and analysis.
 - Criteria tools were completed by grade level pairs of reviewers.
 - Instructional technology and accessibility components were reviewed and evaluated.
 - Post presentation discussions with each publisher about technology integration was conducted.

- Ranking of programs by grade level groups with cross grade level articulation for consensus took place.
- Final selection(s) made based on the data generated from scoring tools and group feedback.

As highlighted at the March GCC meeting, the RELA Office returned to GCC on May 16, 2023 to present the findings of the selection committee and to seek approval for a pilot of a new elementary reading program during the 23-24 school year at identified schools.

The following programs were reviewed in depth by the selection committee:

- American Reading Company- *ARC Reading*
- Amplify- *CKLA*
- Benchmark Education- *Benchmark Advance*
- Houghton Mifflin Harcourt- *Into Reading*
- Imagine Learning - *EL Education*
- McGraw Hill- *Wonders*

After initial grade level ranking, programs from Amplify, American Reading Company, and Imagine Learning were all ranked in the bottom three for each grade level and received the lowest scores from individual committee member scores on the vetting rubric. Based on that information, the selection committee agreed to remove those programs from further discussion and continued the debrief based on the top three scoring programs. After the final deliberation, individual votes were received by the Office of Accountability.

Final votes:

1. Benchmark Advance – 25/44 votes (56.8%)
2. Into Reading HMH – 17/44 (38.6%)
3. Wonders – 2/44 (4.5%)

Since the majority of the final votes were for *Benchmark Advance* and given the fact that this program also earned the most points from the individual committee member scores on the vetting rubric, the recommendation was made to move forward with this program. More details about this program are included in the Power Point presentation. The GCC approved this recommendation to move forward to the Superintendent and the Board of Education.

Superintendent's Recommendation:

The Superintendent of Schools recommends that the Board of Education approve the pilot of the Benchmark Education Company and the program, *Benchmark Advance* for identified elementary schools during the 2023-24 school year.