

BLUE VALLEY SCHOOLS

Board Advisory Committee

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Minutes

February 6, 2025 @ 4:00 PM

Board of Education Room

MEMBERS PRESENT

Alicia Anderson, Jody Mason, Dr. Sonya Evans, Courtney Carlson, Wendy Connelly, Lisa Jensen, Jennifer Smith, Sarah Markowitz Schreiber, Shahzad Zafa, Celia Byers, Caroline Caboo, Jodie Dietz, Manal Wiedel, Kelly Peterson Miranda, Scott Roberts, Kelly Wessel

MEETING MINUTES

Scott Roberts opened the meeting by acknowledging the current climate surrounding DEI and reminded the committee that we would discuss the future of the committee in April.

Scott then introduced the presentation for the committee on Selection of Reading Resources and the presenters:

- Bill Smithyman, Instructional Design Coach, 6-12 Literacy/English Language Arts
- Abigail Crane, Instructional Design Coach, 6-12 Literacy/English Language Arts
- Jennifer Luzenske, Director of Curriculum & Instruction

Abby opened the presentation by asking committee members to share their personal and educational experiences with reading.

Abby and Bill shared that in 2020 they surveyed students about their experiences reading, including how they would describe reading (the majority answered boring); and if they are reading outside of school (the majority said no).

The survey results generated a challenge to address - "Students don't like to read, and often choose not to. Students who don't read become illiterate adults." They shared that college freshmen are expected to read at least 40 pages per course per week (at least 200 pages a week for a full-time student). They also shared only 22% of incoming college freshmen read on level. Based on the statistics, the additional question was, will Blue Valley students be

prepared?

Bill and Abby continued to explain that reading enjoyment has been reported as more important for children's educational success than their family socioeconomic status. Motivation and engagement are critical for adolescent readers. If students are not motivated to read, the research shows they will simply not benefit from reading instruction.

The committee then looked at BOE Policy 4600. In 2020, revisions were made to allow students more choices for their reading selections.

Abby presented the concept of "Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors."

- Mirror – a child that reads a book and sees a reflection of themselves.
- Sliding Glass Door – a child sees someone they might want to be.
- Window – a book that allows a child to broaden their perspectives and understanding of others.

Additional points shared included:

- Reading literacy fiction helps develop social skills.
- Nonreaders: teachers find a mirror first. Teachers look through every kind of window, they expose themselves to a wide range of children's literature to help students find a "mirror." Partner with library media specialists.
- Choice creates diverse + richer reading experiences.
- Windows provides new perspectives
- Mirrors affirm their experiences

Bill and Abby then explained how teachers confer with students about their reading. They displayed the link to the 6-12 Novel Resources by Grade Level and explained that just because a book is on the list, it doesn't always mean the book is taught or in the classroom.

They reviewed the data measures teachers use three times a school year to assess students' reading levels, including a universal screener and embedded formative measures in the literacy resources. For elementary students, the screener is Acadience; for secondary students, it is FastBridge. ELA teachers analyze data and identify the individual strands to help make data-driven decisions to best support students learning progression.

Bill and Abby outlined that our secondary ELA teachers use a common resource that aligns with the Kansas standards: AmplifyELA + StudySync.

This is the first year with a new secondary ELA resource. The resource was selected through a collaborative process that involved teacher feedback and was chosen by consensus. Each resource has its unique approach to diversity and representation. In both resources, over 50%

of the voices are diverse and rich in non-fiction.

Abby and Bill opened it up for questions from the committee and the following topics were discussed:

- Book clubs in the school; shared examples of middle school book clubs (run by a librarian), chat and chew, battle of the books; clubs are often run PTA/PTO.
- Interventions - explained the process of determining the best course of action, which may include enrolling in reading strategies if they need additional support. In elementary, if they were not at benchmark, a student may be in a small group in their classroom and get another dose of the learning experience or work with the reading specialist. The goal is to catch early, intervene, and get them back on track.
- Reading specialists - at every elementary school and two at the middle school level, determined by the greatest area of students at risk.
- How to support teachers
- Relationship between schools and public libraries because of all the rich resources and programs at the libraries.

At the conclusion, Abby showed a video of students answering questions about their experiences with reading. Students shared that they have been reading more books because of the independent reading time and choices allowed in their ELA classes.