



ELA Task Force Report
January 8, 2025

Contact Information:

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Executive Summary:

The ELA Board Report was developed to provide an update to the Pelham School Board from a range of representative perspectives on the teaching of English Language Arts (ELA) in the Pelham School District. This report reviews our current curriculum, assessment, instruction and professional development efforts in ELA. It identifies potential goals for measurable improvement and it outlines proposed action items through 2027. We have determined the following:

- Our current curriculum map covers the key state standards for ELA concepts.
- We offer a variety of assessments across grade levels including diagnostic assessments, benchmark assessments and state-mandated assessments.
- Our core instructional program and textbooks are reasonably selected and adopted. We offer interventions for students who struggle. A more systematic approach for remediation and intervention is necessary for students that are missing foundational skills.
- Our professional development efforts appear insufficient. We need to provide professional development in the Science of Reading and evidence-based strategies. Additionally, we have found we could do more to help teachers interpret student data to adjust instruction. Teachers should be trained in the Science of Reading so there are improved student outcomes including stronger foundational skills. Additionally, the Science of Reading focuses on data-driven instruction and effective interventions.
- This report outlines the immediate actions that we plan to implement this school year. We need to approach this with a sense of urgency, and have several items in the works. We will have assessment data available in May, and will course correct this summer where needed.

We are proposing three goals in ELA

- Improve our performance on the ELA portion of the New Hampshire State Assessment System to be in the top 5 among our 12 peer districts.
- Increase by 5% per year the number of students at Pelham High School whose SAT score is at the College Board benchmark of “college and career ready,” a score of 480 out of 800. Additionally, be in the top 4 among our 7 peer high schools. There are 7 high schools in our peer group currently.
- Strengthen formative results for K-2 classroom teachers using diagnostic tools in i-Ready to build early literacy skills.

We recommend these action items:

- Professional development in the Science of Reading, i-Ready data for interventions, reading, writing and vocabulary development across content areas
- Continued curriculum improvement and assessment development in content specific writing, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and analysis

Pelham School District English Vertical Committee Charge 2024-2025

Purpose:

To provide regular feedback from a range of representative perspectives on the teaching of English in the Pelham School District. This will include vertical alignment of curriculum, summative assessments and rubrics.

Commitment

- Tentative Meeting Dates:
 - October 7, 2024
 - October 29, 2024
 - December 4, 2024
 - January 15, 2025
 - Feb/March TBD
 - April/May TBD
- Professional staff participants will be allowed additional time to collect information, at \$36 per hour.
- Summary findings will be compiled at the end of the school year and shared with district staff.
- This is a one year commitment, although could turn into a permanent committee based on findings 23-24 Minutes

Membership

- Co-Chair- Sarah Marandos
- Co-Chair Jessica Parent
- PES
 - Amie Libby
 - Shannon Hansen
 - Elaina Higgins/Tracy Hussey
 - Libby Byrne
- PMS
 - Amy Branco
 - Megan Delucia
 - Jenna MacKinnon
- PHS
 - Jen Nugent
 - Krista Day
 - Rebecca Morrin
- Library Media Specialist-Erin Henderson
- Instructional Coach-Pattie Lamontagne
- Related Service Provider-Karen Emery
- Special Educator-Erin McCune

- Administrator-Adam Barriere

Committee Structure/Tasks

- ☐ The committee will meet quarterly and have additional time for gathering information and analysis. Professional staff participants will be compensated at \$36 per hour, per the CBA.
- ☐ The committee will review information about the current state of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and professional development in English throughout the district. Committee members will then complete an analysis.
- ☐ Committee members will be responsible for maintaining the K-12 curriculum documents.
- ☐ Additionally, the group will examine data relative to student performance in English over time as a reference.
- ☐ The committee goal this year will focus on the district wide goal of literacy, with road map due January 2025
- ☐ Each meeting will end with a quick check in on what each school team will be expected to have completed by next meeting (Ex. SAT data dives, etc.)

Definition of Literacy

- A literate student demonstrates developmentally appropriate comprehension, draws connections between new learning and the real world, and communicates their understanding effectively.

Curriculum:

In 2023, the Pelham School Board approved the revised K-12 Curriculum Documents for English Language Arts.

This summary information suggests that at a broad level, the Pelham School District curriculum identifies the knowledge and skills we expect students to know by the end of each term each year. The scope and sequence also aligns generally with the grade level expectations enumerated in the state curriculum frameworks.

Assessment:

The Vertical Team identified the common assessments that students take at each grade level. The assessments identified here are those used to help improve overall performance in the district and those required for accountability at the state level. This does not include the grade level tests and quizzes used to help adjust instruction (formative assessments) or to track student progress and give grades (summative assessments). Additionally, New Hampshire state law requires us to screen for dyslexia in Grades K-2. We use i-Ready to complete this screening.

Assessments by Grade Band

<p>Kindergarten-Grade 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• i-Ready - A computer based diagnostic assessment given three times per year. Students are scored in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, High Frequency Words, Vocabulary, Comprehension: Literature, Comprehension: Informational Text. Students in Grades 1 and 2 are also growth-monitored¹ using i-Ready.
<p>Grade 3-5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• i-Ready - iReady - A computer based diagnostic assessment given three times per year. Students are scored in Phonics, High-Frequency Words, Vocabulary, Comprehension: Literature, and Comprehension: Informational Text. Students are growth-monitored using i-Ready.• NH State Assessment System - This is the state assessment for students, typically administered in May. Students are assessed in both reading and writing. Students are scored Level 4 - Proficient with Distinction, Level 3 - Proficient, Level 2 - Below Proficient, or Level 1 - Substantially Below Proficient.
<p>Grade 6-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• i-Ready - A computer based diagnostic assessment given three times per year. Students are scored in Phonological Awareness, Phonics, High-Frequency Words, Vocabulary, Comprehension: Literature, Comprehension: Informational Text• NH State Assessment System - This is the state assessment for students, typically administered in May. Students are assessed in both reading and writing. Students are scored Level 4 - Proficient with Distinction, Level 3 - Proficient, Level 2 - Below Proficient, or Level 1 - Substantially Below Proficient.• Common Lit - a computer based diagnostic assessment based on the curriculum resource given three times a year. They are scored in evidence, vocabulary and structure, point of view, central idea and theme, interaction and ideas
<p>Grade 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PSAT 8/9-The SAT suite of assessments are designed to help measure student readiness for college and career, monitor student progress and growth over time, identify areas of strength and areas of focus in curriculum and instruction, vertically align curriculum, and focus interventions for students who need to work on skills.
<p>Grade 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PSAT/NMSQT: The SAT suite of assessments are designed to help measure student readiness for college and career, monitor student progress and growth over time, identify areas of strength and areas of focus in curriculum and instruction., vertically align curriculum, and focus interventions for students who need to work on skills.

¹ Growth monitoring is a tool in i-Ready which provides data in intervals.

Grade 11

- PSAT-The SAT suite of assessments are designed to help measure student readiness for college and career, monitor student progress and growth over time, identify areas of strength and areas of focus in curriculum and instruction., vertically align curriculum, and focus interventions for students who need to work on skills. When taken in 11th grade, it can also qualify students to become National Merit Scholars and earn additional scholarship opportunities.
- SAT - This is the state assessment required for all juniors and is taken in March during the school day. It is also the standardized assessment used in many college admissions processes.

The assessments used in Pelham align with the state standards and our curriculum. They are administered regularly. The assessments appear sufficient to measure student progress and diagnose instructional gaps.

Instruction/Texts and Materials:

The District uses a variety of instructional materials to help teachers. These are the tools teachers use to aid students gain the necessary knowledge and skills.

Instructional Texts and Materials by Grade Band

Kindergarten

- Core Program: Wilson Foundations and Heggerty, shared and guided reading in leveled small groups, and developmental writing. (For example: journal what you did in guided play).
- Interventions:
 - What I Need (WIN) Block - flexible grouping for student review and reteaching.

Grade 1

- Core Program: Wonders by McGraw-Hill textbook and consumables
- Heggerty (adopted 2024) for whole-group instruction
- Interventions:
 - i-Ready Tool Kit - provides instructional resources for students based on their specific scores on the diagnostic
 - What I Need (WIN) Block - flexible grouping for student review and reteaching.
 - Foundations as Tier 2 Instruction/Support

Grade 2 - 5

- Core Program: Wonders by McGraw-Hill textbook and consumables:
- Interventions:
 - i-Ready Tool Kit - provides instructional resources for students based on their specific scores on the diagnostic

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What I Need (WIN) Block - flexible grouping for student review and reteaching. ○ New in 24-25: IXL online subscription
<p>Grade 6-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Program: Common Lit, Novel Based Instruction, Writing: narrative, argumentative, informational ● Interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FLEX: daily time built into the schedule for remediation. ○ New in 24-25: IXL online subscription ○ Vocabulary.com: school wide tool to build vocabulary skills
<p>Grade 9: Intro to Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Program: grammar instruction (units based on Sadlier's <i>Grammar for Writing</i> and the Standard English Conventions section of the SATs), Writing: personal narrative, compare and contrast, business/professional writing, persuasive. <p>Grade 9: Freshmen English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Program: <i>Wordly Wise Book 10</i> (units 1-10), whole-class novels, Redesigning Digital Literacy approach (RDL), curriculum, Writing: Literary analysis, argumentative, personal reflection, research project (PHS research guide) <p>Grade 10: Sophomore English</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Program: <i>Wordly Wise Book 10</i> (units 11-20), RDL, whole-class novels, Writing: literary analysis, argumentative, research project (PHS research guide) <p>Grade 11: American Literature Contemporaries and Classics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Core Program: <i>Wordly Wise Book 12</i> (units 1-10), RDL, Common lit, Whole-class novels, Writing: literary analysis, argumentative, research project (PHS Research Guide), ● SAT "Boot Camp" for all juniors <p>High School Interventions-Available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advisory: Students are scheduled through MyFlex to meet with teachers for test prep, remedial instruction, competency recovery, etc. ● Academic help/Writing lab during advisories Tuesday-Friday ● After school academic space on Wednesdays

Generally, we have the tools and information needed to help students progress in ELA. Even so, we identified students who have a grade level gap that is two or more grade levels below their current grade. We do not currently have a sufficient alternative intervention for students who need to make up that gap. These gaps need to be addressed in our plan for improvement.

Professional Development:

Professional development is the necessary training and support to help teachers put together the curriculum, assessment, and instruction in English Language Arts. Teachers need their own skills and knowledge to be able to teach evidence based strategies successfully. The textbook companies provide initial training on the use of their materials and our teachers explore professional development opportunities on their own. Our own staff has presented workshops for colleagues on instructional strategies for reading and writing. The ELA vertical team strongly encourages additional professional development in teaching writing, the Science of Reading, creating stronger formative assessments, and strategies to engage reluctant readers. It is critical that the professional development we provide is specific and timely. The most effective professional development model to improve practice is through on-going coaching.

Goals for Student Performance

In order to measure improvement in literacy teaching and learning, it is important to measure student outcomes. Measures such as professional development training hours or staffing level improvements measure the inputs not the outputs. The output, improved student learning, is the critical indicator of success.

NH SAS and Peer Districts

One way of understanding Pelham's performance in English Language Arts is through a relative comparison to peer districts. The peers below were selected for their relative proximity, size, and demographics.

Percent Students Proficient and Above NH SAS All Grades - Peer Districts Rank (out of 12 peers) on NHSAS - Percent Proficient and Above

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
PES	11	10	No Test	3	5	6	11
PMS	11	11	No Test	12	12	11	12

Peer Districts: Auburn, Candia, Derry Cooperative, Hampstead, Hooksett, Hudson, Lichfield, Londonderry, Pelham, Salem, Timberlane Regional, Windham

*Note: SAS was not required in 2020 due to COVID

One potential goal moving forward would be to improve our performance over time relative to our peers to be in the top 5 overall every year.

PHS SAT ELA Performance

A second measure of success in English Language Arts would be the number of students who meet the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark for English Language Arts (a score of 480 or better on the ELA portion of the SAT). This exam is the state assessment for ELA at the high school level. It is administered to almost all of our students, typically in the spring of their Junior year. According to ETS, the publisher of the SAT, the SAT College and Career Readiness Benchmark indicates a 75% likelihood of achieving at least a C in first-semester, credit-bearing college courses in related subjects and course work. The SAT benchmarks are designed to

reflect whether or not a student has a high likelihood of being successful in subject-specific first-semester courses. Additionally, it is a third party measure of student performance. We used this benchmark for the recent math goal. The class of 2025 scored 58% on the PSAT, and increased to 62% percent proficient on the SAT in March of 2024.

Percent Students Proficient and Above SATs (Grade 11) - Peer Districts

	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023	2024
Hudson	69	61		58	61	59	56
Litchfield	72	62		66	62	58	70
Londonderry	72	74		74	68	65	68
Pelham	64	61		60	53	53	62
Salem	66	59		58	54	46	60
Timberlane	62	69		68	63	57	63
Windham	79	83		75	77	75	78
State	65	63		63	61	59	63

*No test due to COVID

Recommendations/Timeline:

Based on our work, the task force recommends the following actions for 2024-2025:

Action Item	Timeframe	Budget Implications
Consistent use of the tools in SASS to allow students to practice using the tool and provide specific feedback to the teachers.	2024-2025	None
SAT Bootcamp-PHS	2024-2025	None
Increase professional development for teachers on the Science of Reading at	2024-2025 Kate McCaffrey in Fall/Spring of 2024	Title II Funding

PES		
Analyze data to create stronger interventions for students that struggle	2024-2025 January 15 (PMS) March 11 (PES)	Title II Funding
Evaluate assessment rubrics and resources for rigor and evidence-based strategies	2024-2025 Summer 2025	Curriculum
Implement ELA teacher bootcamp with focus on writing	2024-2025 Summer 2005	Title II Funding
Creation of preschool theme-based units	2024-2025	None

The task force is grateful to the Pelham School Board for convening us to investigate such an important topic for the District. We hope this report serves as a springboard for continued improvement of our literacy program.