



Morris Elementary School MRA Reading Award Application

Section 1: The Reading Program is consistent with sound theory, research, and practice

At Morris School we utilize a literacy approach that encompasses the five components of reading outlined by the National Reading Panel. We hold true a belief, that we teach children, and that programs are tools in our box that allow us to meet that goal.

- Phonological Awareness- In our younger grades we develop skills in phonological awareness utilizing the Heggerty program. Our students receive direct instruction in this area. We assess all children in eight phonological areas until they demonstrate proficiency. Students struggling with phonological skills may also have instruction in this area built into tier two and tier three instruction as needed. In younger grades, our computer based program, Lexia also provides students with instruction in this area.
- Phonics and Word Study- Our Pre-K students develop skills in this area using the Learning Without Tears curriculum. In grades K-2 students receive daily instruction for thirty minutes in the Wilson Foundations program. Working within the scope and sequence of this program, students gain knowledge of sound/symbol relationships, rules for decoding, sight word recognition skills, and knowledge of basic grammar. In addition to this time of direct instruction, students in grades K-2 also work together during differentiated small group time to learn sight words and practice phonics skills utilizing our Literacy Footprints curriculum and other materials selected from our bookroom which also includes decodable text. In grades 3-5 students continue their work in word study by completing lessons in the Spelling Connections program. In grades K-2 Students continue work in this area for thirty additional minutes weekly utilizing the Lexia program. In the upper grades, select students have access to the Lexia program if phonics remains an area of weakness.
- Fluency- We assess students in the area of fluency utilizing normed probes available through Fastbridge in grades 1 through 5. Students who are not meeting goals outlined by normed benchmark targets are progress monitored one or two times per month depending on their level of performance. Fluency is practiced in the Foundations curriculum and with teacher guidance during small group differentiated instruction. Teachers have access to Foundations fluency tasks. For our tier two and tier three students we utilize Wilson, Read Naturally, and other programs as needed. In addition to normed assessment in the area of fluency, we also assess student fluency on grade level text using informal reading inventories. We carefully evaluate student progress monitoring data to ensure that students are obtaining scores consistent with their individual goal lines and make recommendations for the utilization of other programs as needed.
- Vocabulary- We currently build vocabulary in shared read aloud experiences and during small group differentiated instruction. In younger grades, the Lexia program contains a section designed to build vocabulary. In grades 3-5 the Spelling Connections program builds word knowledge through tasks that ask students to consider word roots and origins, etymology, and greek and latin roots and

suffixes. Targeted vocabulary is taught in the intermediate grades and for students reading above grade level in grades 1-5 at the beginning of a Literacy Footprints lesson. In addition, teachers are encouraged to bring trade books and novels into the classroom. During author studies and novel studies teachers frequently bring in the vocabulary that needs to be highlighted in those books. Some teachers bring in additional vocabulary work in ways they feel best meet the needs of the students in front of them. In addition to reading instructional time, we also teach vocabulary in the content areas during a structured one hour block in which we alternate instruction in social studies and science.

- Comprehension- Students in our youngest grades develop comprehension skills by orally answering questions. In Kindergarten, teachers use the Literacy Footprints Shared Read Aloud kit to expose students to quality picture books and then introduce students to the reading comprehension strategies that they will utilize in grades 1-5. Some of these strategies include: paraphrasing, summarizing, identifying a character's traits and showing their change over time, asking and answering inferential questions, and identifying the main idea.

A wonderful component of the Literacy Footprints curriculum is the guided writing section which allows teachers to work with small groups of students to develop their written response to text that is often centered on a comprehension strategy.

Grade level teams in our building select grade level novels to build literacy, comprehension and social emotional learning skills. Our fifth graders study comprehension skills during targeted whole group meetings in which they record their learning in Reading Notebooks. Students in our fourth grade also develop skills in this area with the Performance Coach curriculum.

How have we moved our work forward taking the latest research into consideration?

In wanting to make sure that we are offering students the best opportunity to become literate, we have made some tweaks over the last few years.

- We added the Heggerty program so that we could include direct instruction in phonological awareness to our curriculum.
- While we always gave a phonological screener in kindergarten, we decided to continue testing for each student until they demonstrate proficiency in each assessed area.
- We modified benchmark assessments to include foundational skills outside of required composite testing to align with state guidelines. Students must show proficiency in these foundational skill areas before we release them from testing in these areas.
- We began implementation of Heggerty, phonological screening, and benchmark assessments for our 4 year old Pre-K students.
- In addition to letter name and sound subtests in Fastbridge, we began to assess students in untimed letter sound assessments to identify kids most at need and to determine a proper starting place in the Literacy Footprints Curriculum.
- We have increased the number of decodable books in our classrooms and book resource room.
- While we have retained book collections from older programs, we do not always utilize the lesson cards that accompany them.

What opportunities do we provide to staff to stay current and collaborate with regard to our reading program?

Teachers reflect on their practice in the DESE self assessment rubric. Last year, we had Leanne Nickelson come in to provide staff with some training in the area of close reading. Teachers meet weekly in PLC during which they have the opportunity to work on developing or refining curriculum or to meet with curriculum coaches. We carefully review student assessment data three times a year in data teams in

which we identify students for additional tier 1 or tier two support, or make recommendations to bring students to child study. Based on a student's nationally normed performance we make recommendations for the use of specific intervention programs. Title I interventionists also check in with teachers during progress meetings twice a year. One area that we are focusing on currently, is diversifying our read aloud and small group reading materials. We have met as a leadership team and at staff meetings to begin the process of adopting high quality, culturally responsive reading materials.

Section 2 Students have access to a wide variety of literacy and multimedia formats.

At Morris Elementary, students are provided with access to a wide variety of literacy and multimedia formats, ensuring a rich and engaging reading experience. Daily independent reading time is a staple within the school's 60-90 minute reading block, which includes differentiated reading groups in all grade levels. This approach supports students at their individual reading levels while fostering a love for books. Digital tools such as Lexia, Time for Kids/Storyworks, Digital Reader, and Google Classroom are seamlessly integrated into the curriculum, offering diverse ways to build literacy skills and engage with content.

The school prioritizes the availability of culturally responsive literature that represents diverse cultures, languages, and ethnicities, free from stereotypes and bias. Recent efforts to enhance access include weeding classroom libraries and removing books that are not culturally appropriate and adding new diverse book selections to classroom libraries. The book vending machine, an incentive for positive behavior, provides students with an exciting way to access high-quality books. Weekly library visits further reinforce students' exposure to diverse collections, and the school continues to invest in expanding its offerings to ensure all students feel represented in the materials they read.

Read-alouds are a central part of the school day, integrated across all grade levels to model fluency, foster comprehension, and build a shared reading culture. Kindergarten read-alouds align with comprehension strategies taught in the upper grades, supporting a cohesive and developmentally appropriate progression of literacy skills. The school also involves the broader community by inviting guests to read aloud in classrooms, creating connections between students and their local community through shared stories and conversations.

Morris Elementary has cultivated a culture where reading is celebrated and valued. Initiatives such as "Books Before Bed" and "One Book, One School" promote reading as a communal activity, fostering a sense of belonging and shared enthusiasm for stories. The book vending machine adds an element of fun and recognition, motivating students to engage with books as a reward for positive behavior. Teachers, administrators, and students actively share their reading interests, creating an environment where literacy is not only an academic focus but also a shared passion. Through these efforts, the school ensures that reading is both a priority and a joy for its students.

Section 3

Students in our school demonstrate success in reading in a variety of ways. At the conclusion of last year large numbers of students were meeting the oral reading fluency targets for our Fastbridge Assessment.

Grade 1- 74%, Grade 2- 79%, Grade 3- 81%, Grade 4 - 78%, Grade 5- 85%

On the MCAS assessment our school outperformed the state in grades 3-5. In some grades, the test item analysis shows that there were no questions for which we had a statistically significant score below the state.

Our early reading and intervention prepares our students well and this year that was reflected in our district's 10th grade scores where 92 percent of our students were meeting or exceeding on the MCAS. We were one of six schools in the state to achieve 90% or better.

Section 4

There is ample evidence that comprehension strategies are being effectively taught and applied across the curriculum at Morris Elementary. Students consistently utilize close reading strategies such as annotation, vocabulary analysis, and determining importance to enhance their understanding of texts. These strategies have been intentionally incorporated into instruction, supported by collaborative efforts during common planning time with LeAnne, where teachers have planned close reading lessons that continue to be a focus this year.

Students are demonstrating steady progress toward proficiency in comprehending both literary and informational texts. This growth is supported by data from MCAS results, which highlight improvements in comprehension skills. Furthermore, students are making strides in all four domains of reading: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Evidence of this progress includes performance on MCAS assessments, benchmarking data, open response questions, classroom presentations, and participation in interactive read-alouds. These achievements underscore the school's dedication to fostering comprehensive literacy skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Section 5

Students in our school utilize their literacy skills in the content areas during reading time with non-fiction texts during science in our Amplify Science curriculum, during social studies, and in math with picture books designed to teach mathematical concepts.

Students in our younger grades express learning through kinesthetic movements, music, and play. They move their bodies to form letters and learn sight words through song.

The use of digital tools varies by classrooms in our building. In some classrooms students are using Canva to create content and for project development. Students are also working with activities posted in Google Classrooms.

For written response to text in grades 3-5 we transition from written responses to typed responses to help students develop digital composition skills.

Section 6

Administrators and teachers at Morris Elementary provide strong leadership and a clear vision for the school and district reading program. They analyze and utilize evaluation data to inform instructional practices and improve student outcomes. Professional development is embedded into daily practice, with opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful learning experiences during PLCs and staff meetings.

Teacher needs are identified through a variety of methods, including district surveys, needs assessments conducted during PLCs, and email communications.

Administrators also prioritize creating the conditions for success by providing time, encouragement, and resources for teachers to actively participate in professional learning communities. Evidence of this commitment is reflected in the submission of PLC schedules and meeting notes, which demonstrate a structured approach to collaboration and continuous improvement. This leadership fosters a culture of shared accountability and professional growth, ensuring that the reading program aligns with the school's overarching goals for literacy achievement.

Section 7

We offer students incredible support!! In grades 1 and 2 we have literacy helpers push into classrooms to guide small group instruction. We have a literacy coach and 4 additional Title 1 interventionists who help struggling students to gain momentum in reading. We use nationally normed assessments to help us determine appropriate interventions for students. Students scoring below the 10th percentile in the early reading screening or areading assessments receive daily phonics based instruction during tier 2 intervention time..

In data teams, we identify students who may benefit from enrichment. We give pre-tests in phonics to decide if students need to sit through specific units and offer opportunities for enrichment when they don't need to practice the whole group skill.

We use data to help us determine who would benefit from tier two instruction and also to help guide us as to who should be referred for the child study process. Students with specific learning disabilities are provided instruction from 4 special educators and para professional support staff.

Section 8

The community plays an active role in supporting the reading program at Morris Elementary. Local businesses, public libraries, and first responders, such as police and fire fighters, join families in participating in a variety of literacy activities designed to foster a love of reading. Initiatives like "Books Before Bed" exemplify the school's commitment to engaging the broader community in literacy efforts. Communication with families and community members is consistent and accessible, utilizing platforms such as social media, Facebook, the local newspaper, and the school website. Translations are provided as needed to ensure inclusivity and clarity for all families.

Special outreach initiatives are also in place to connect with the school's diverse populations. Programs like those led by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and partnerships with individuals such as Gabby Sheehan highlight the school's dedication to equity and inclusion. A variety of methods are used to keep parents informed of their child's progress, including progress reports, benchmark parent reports, Title I check-ins, and newsletters. Additionally, the school provides opportunities for parents to actively engage in building their child's literacy skills, further reinforcing the essential partnership between home and school in fostering student success.