K-5 Literacy Program Review Phase 1
Fact Sheet

The first phase of a substantial Literacy Program Review for Kindergarten through Grade 5 is now complete.

We brought in an expert to study every part of the way we’re teaching the elements of literacy—reading, writing and more—and make recommendations. This is phase one of two; it focuses on perceptions among our teachers and leaders of how we’re doing.

Our district requested this study because we believe we needed a full review—one that is frank and honest—to keep us focused on making continuous improvements. This is the first time in our district's history that we've taken such a major look at how to bring everything we do up to date in the vital area of literacy. This a critical step in our larger, nonstop effort to improve outcomes for all students in Hillsborough County Public Schools.

The review confirmed many encouraging positives: our teachers and leaders are incredibly passionate, we have a district-wide commitment to excellence and never settling for “good enough” and our main work of teaching and learning is fundamentally sound. However, the review also called out several challenges: pieces that, when put together, show that we can do better.

First Five Action Steps
We are taking immediate steps in five key areas

Standards-Aligned Curriculum
Re-creating our curriculum for English/Language Arts, starting immediately.

We have a strong process for choosing new textbooks. But our process for developing curriculum—which is the bigger picture of what we teach and what we’re aiming for our students to learn—isn’t as strong.
Instruction

Creating videos and other materials to remove any inconsistencies in expectations for how we teach literacy.

We know it is important to give teachers the flexibility to teach in ways that connect best with their students. Of course, at the same time, there also needs to be a certain level of consistency we all share across our 235 schools—making sure everyone is using the most effective tools and techniques.

Assessment

Redeveloping assessments to make sure they directly connect to giving teachers valuable information on what steps to take with each student.

We are constantly working to track our students' progress and needs, without too much testing. In general, the assessments we use to understand how well our students are learning have been effective—but there are gaps.

Supports for Students

Refining how we deliver the supports our students need—from resources to strategies to personnel—to create a consistent foundation at every school.

No two students need exactly the same support when they struggle, which is why we use a structure called Multi-Tiered Systems of Support or “MTSS.” MTSS aims to problem-solve and deliver the right help. But it's not used consistently across our district.

Professional Learning

Rolling out all-new literacy training to make sure these action steps take hold and deliver results for students.

Our district is a statewide leader in ongoing training, called Professional Development—our teachers love to keep learning and improving (with 821,400 hours of training completed last year alone).

At first, a report like this Literacy Review may seem like it’s not good news—but it is good news; we’ve now pulled forward the areas we need to work on improving, and we have a plan to take on those issues. This is how our school district stays focused on always increasing students’ success and making sure we remain a state and national leader, delivering results for our community.