Units of Study

Spotlight on the District Perspective

April 2016

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF

FORT·ATKINSON

Wisconsin's Vision for English Language Arts

Curriculum must assure that reading and writing are interconnected and then applied across genres and content areas.

English Language Arts is an integrated discipline

English Language Arts instruction builds an understanding of the human experience

Curriculum must provide connections to larger themes that foster personal reflection and connection to real life to develop social and emotional competencies.

Curriculum must ensure increasing levels of text complexity and growth in skill through literacy experiences.

Literacy is an evolving concept, and becoming literate is a lifelong learning process

Critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, and creativity are aspects of effective English Language Arts instruction and attributes of WI graduates

Literacy, language and meaning are socially constructed and are enhanced by multiple perspectives

Working together deepens understanding and develops interpersonal skills.

Curriculum must facilitate and provide opportunity for development of problem solving skills, collaboration and creativity.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent

Why establish K-8 Units of Study?

- Establishes alignment to the 2011 WI State Standards for English/Language Arts
- Defines core content for reading and writing instruction at each grade level
- Defines text complexity at each grade level and provides framework for mentor text selection
- Ensures focus on making meaning from reading and expressing meaning in writing - not just skill instruction - through a thematic approach
- Focuses teacher planning efforts on designing and implementing mini-lessons and planning for small group instruction rather than allocation and distribution of the standards

SDFA Approach to Units of Study

- maintain **alignment to Comprehensive Literacy Model's** Instructional Framework

- ensure a **systemic approach to curriculum** while valuing **teacher decision-making** and **responsive teaching** in implementation

- facilitate a **thematic approach** to each unit to promote deep thinking, real-world connections and cohesion of K-8 instruction

- purposeful **integration** of each CCSS strand:
  - Reading Literature, Reading Informational, Foundational Skills, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening

What is a Unit of Study?

District Defined Part = "CURRICULUM"

- Unit of Study Documents
  - Learning targets by grade level grouped into a thematic focus by quarter
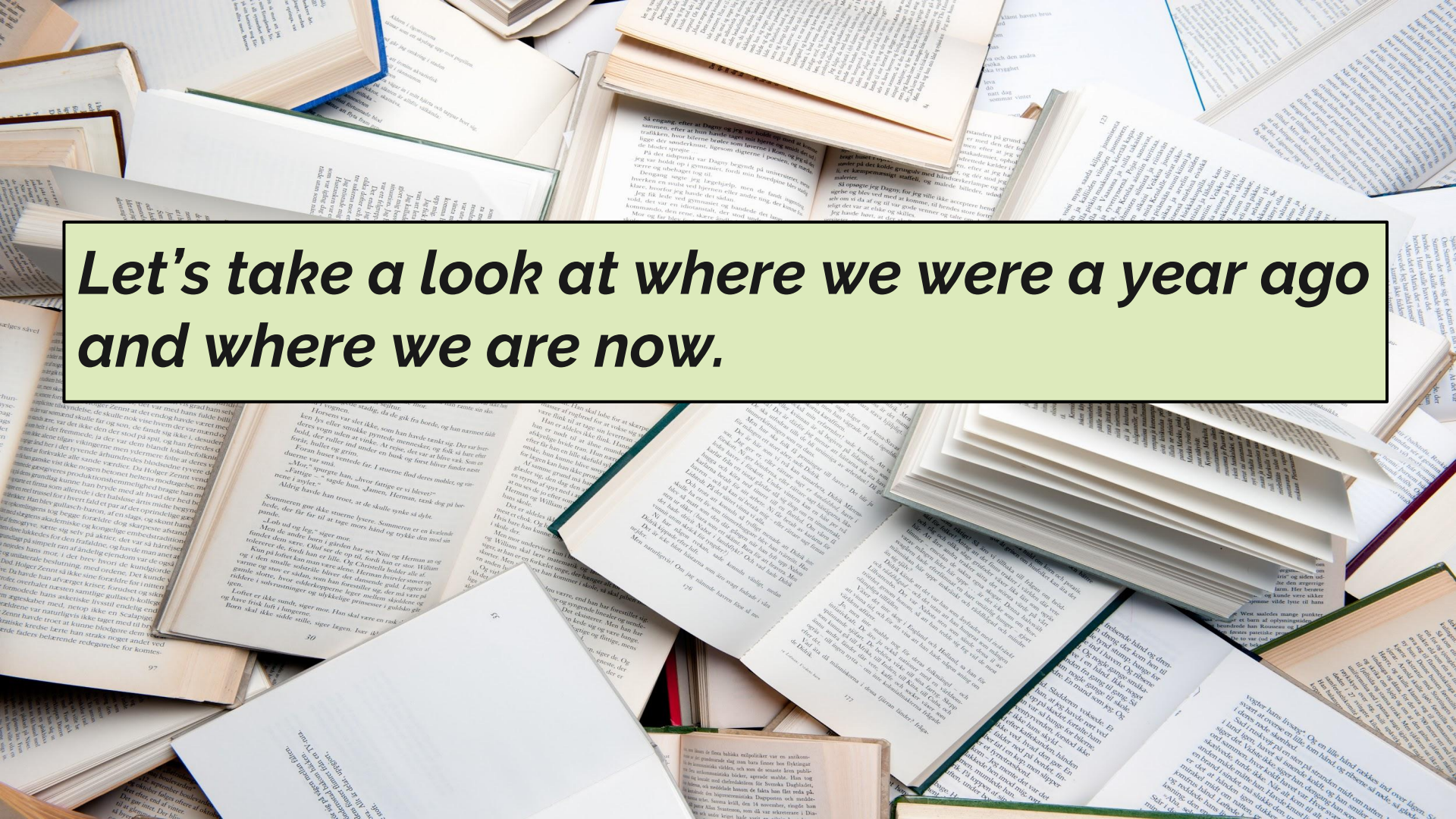 - Identifies theme, unit goals, essential questions, genres and writing formats

Teacher Created Part = "LEARNING PLAN"

- Instructional Learning Plan - "Lesson Planning"
  - Mini Lesson Sequence
  - Anchor Charts
  - Mentor Texts
  - Thoughtful Log Prompts/Connections
  - Common Language/Vocabulary

District Themes

	Q1 Sense of Self	Q2 Relationships	Q3 Interdependence	Q4 Inspiration
K	Feelings	Kindness	Change Over Time	Friendship
1	Independence	Compassion	Development	Imagination
2	Uniqueness	Cooperation	Survival	Adventure
3	Courage	Acceptance	Sustainability	Creativity
4	Responsibility	Conflict Resolution	Adaptability	Innovation
5	Change	Collaboration	Resources	Generosity
6	Empowerment	Connections	Discovery	Triumph
7	Identity	Loyalty	Conservation/Preservation	Perseverance
8	Resiliency	Alliances	Globalization	Perspective

Let's take a look at where we were a year ago and where we are now.

Then

Instruction not systematically aligned to State of Wisconsin English/Language Arts standards or mapped into a cohesive curriculum.

Now

Systemic alignment to State of Wisconsin Standards for English/Language Arts established in a cohesive curriculum design

Then

Lack of curricular connection between K-5 and middle school literacy programming

Now
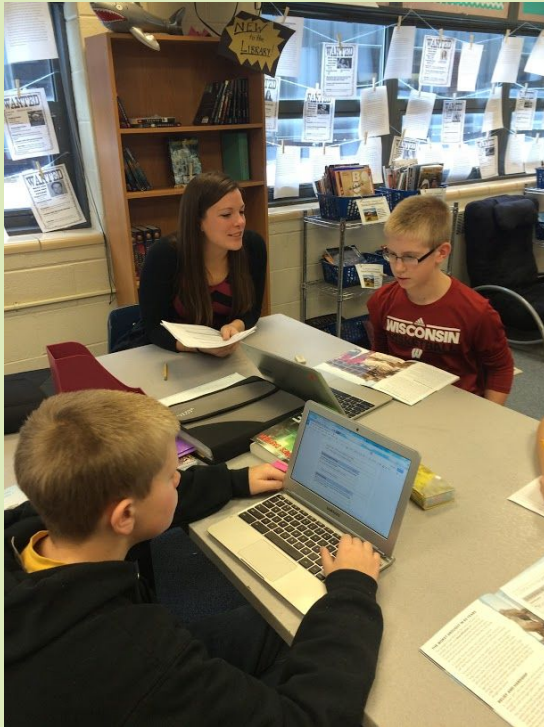
Seamless curricular progression established in grades K through 8

Then

Reading and writing not integrated within a defined District curriculum structure

Now

Instruction in reading and writing blocks are integrated for task, purpose and meaning within the Unit of Study

Then

Mini-lesson topics selected by individual teachers

Now

Mini-lesson teaching points/learning targets identified by District curriculum and sequenced cohesively to support a larger Unit of Study that is consistent across buildings and classrooms

Then
Mentor texts selected by the teacher largely by genre or topic

Now
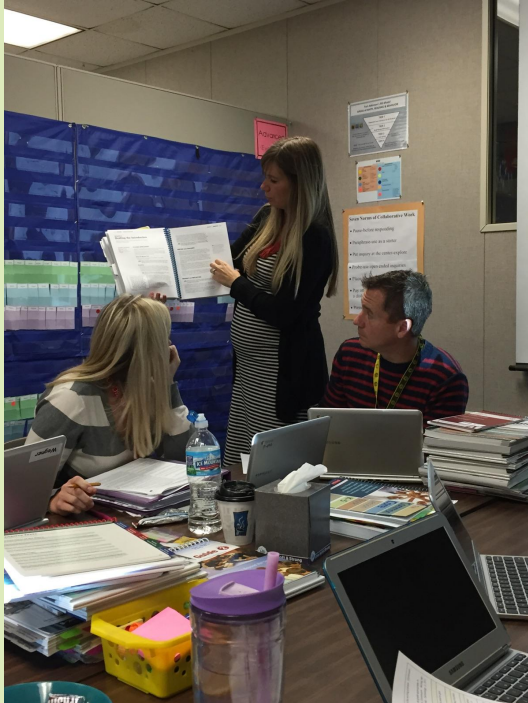Mentor texts selected to assure all students have experience reading rich, diverse text that is at State-defined grade-level text complexity

Then

Lots of professional and instructional resources available to support reading and writing ... uncertainty on how they all best fit together

Now

Reference and connection to professional and instructional resources cited specifically in District curriculum documents

District Next Steps

- Utilize staff feedback to drive system improvements of the K-8 Units of Study
- Increase our K-8 selection of mentor texts and topic choices within each grade level's Units of Study framework and theme
- Provide professional collaboration opportunities for K-8 teachers to work together to continue to hone our pacing and lesson development as well as deepen our understanding of the unit themes
- Establish alignment from K-8 Units of Study to the High School English courses
- Identify cross-curricular connections to strengthen literacy in the content areas
- Utilize technology to strengthen students' digital literacy skills
- Analyze literacy achievement on local and State assessments moving forward

In Appreciation ...

Thank you to our hard-working, dedicated staff for taking on this new learning and new approach ensuring all SDFA students are receiving instruction on all State-required standards in a highly engaging, research-based format.

Thank you for working together with the District to continuously strengthen this system moving forward.