

## REPORT TO THE BOARD

<b>Item:</b>	Literacy Plan Update
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<b>Board Meeting Date:</b>	01/19/2022

Prepared as of January 6, 2022

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with information on the planning and development of the NUSD PK-12 Literacy Plan. In this report, there is information on the following:

- Current work being done to develop our NUSD multi-year literacy plan
- Discussion of next steps

**Context**

In a Board Presentation from April 14, 2021, and prior communications it has been communicated that a significant focus of the work of the CAO’s Office has been to support development of a districtwide literacy plan from Preschool (PreK) - 12th grade to increase student outcomes for all students as well as address the needs of students identified as experiencing significant learning disruption. This focus on literacy is being addressed specifically through an intentional and sustained focus on writing.

This work is in alignment with BP/AR 0100, Theory of Action for Student Success, which calls for Systematic Professional Development, Support and Collaboration, including continued work to support a strong literacy plan that addresses student needs.

**Board-Approved Literacy Plan and Rationale for Our Focus**

A key component of the NUSD Literacy Plan is a focus on writing across content areas: in English, math, social science, and science. Research shows that reading and writing are connected and, consequently Carol “by”, improving students’ writing skills will result in improved reading skills. For example, teaching students to respond to literature through writing can improve students’ reading comprehension for two reasons:

1. Reading and writing both require that students make meaning of text. For NUSD students to express their opinions and interpret their reading through writing, they must organize their thoughts about text.
2. Writing gives our students insight into critical tools that are necessary for literacy such as style, word choice, precision, and organization. When our students better understand these tools as writers, they improve as readers. This writing-reading connection supports and improves students' reading fluency and comprehension.

In addition, while we heard recommendations in the past for reading specialists to return, the reality (as we previously shared) is that district-wide, we only have 2 staff members with the appropriate credentials. In fact,

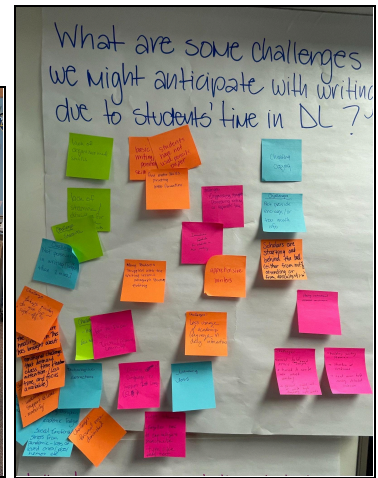
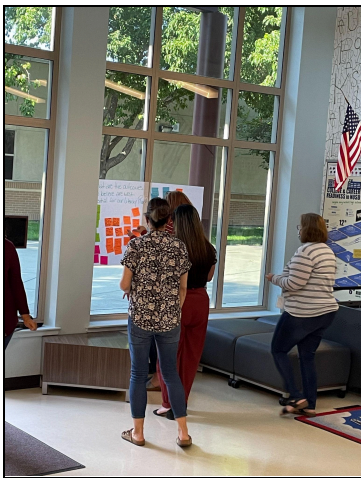
many credential programs, including our regional universities, have removed this specialization, recognizing that other strategic supports and strategies can intentionally grow students' literacy.

Work to date includes assembling a Literacy Plan Steering Group that began meeting weekly in August 2021, which includes site administrators and Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs), the CAO's Office, and Student Services and Supports.

Trustees may recall that the work to frame the Literacy Plan really began this summer where staff piloted a focus on informational writing for 4 weeks at K-5/K-8 sites. The data from summer that the team has analyzed includes: pre- and post-assessment writing data, student work samples, and teacher and student interviews from the K-5/K-8 summer learning and enrichment programs. Using this data, CAO Staff then worked with all site principals to inventory current writing tools, programs, and practices used at our school sites and seek recommendations for a Literacy Plan Work Group of site admin and teacher leaders.

### **Teacher Input and Literacy Plan Work Group**

Since September 2021, the Literacy Plan Work Group meets bi-monthly and includes ongoing oversight from the Literacy Plan Steering Group that now meets monthly.






*(Literacy Plan Work Group Members Providing Input and Direction)*

The Work Group is made up of 25 teachers and 9 leaders across sites, content areas, and grade levels. The team began by benchmarking other districts' writing programs and setting priorities for NUSD's writing.

Now, the Work Group is currently working on the tools based on teacher input gathered from 406 teachers (approximately 70% of NUSD classroom teachers) who responded to a survey on writing during the October 11, 2021 professional development day. In addition to the survey, multiple measures of data points have highlighted the need for common rubrics and terminology across sites and grade levels. From the October 11, 2021 professional development day slightly less than 50% of teachers thought their sites were currently aligned with writing language and practices. However, survey responses indicate 96% of teachers believe or strongly believe our district should have common language, tools, and practices for writing.

In fact, 101 of those teachers surveyed ranked common rubrics as the top needed support district wide. In the Literacy Plan Work Group, common rubrics PK-12 and common terminology (a NUSD writer's glossary) were specified as the starting point to ensure alignment within and across school sites.

## Summary of Data from Teacher Input October 11, 2021

	<b>Common Language</b>	Teachers want shared writing terms across grade levels and content areas, E.G., thesis statement vs. controlling sentence
	<b>District Wide Rubrics &amp; Tools</b>	Teachers want district adopted rubrics, prompts, anchor papers, writer's checklists, and other tools
	<b>Professional Learning &amp; Supports</b>	Teachers want PD, model lessons, shared prompts, graphic organizers for genres, and dedicated PLC time for writing <sup>17</sup>

### **A rubric is a tool that:**

- Explains, in writing, what is expected of a student on a particular assignment at each grade level across all available score points. For example, what is expected of a 3rd grade student to earn a standards based score of 3 (Meeting Grade Level Expectations) or a 4 (Exceeding Grade Level Standards)
- Provides specific success criteria for a piece of work or product
- Helps students and families see the areas of their work students were strong in and should replicate
- Helps students and families see the areas of their work students can improve in and specific ways to improve

### **Current Actions**

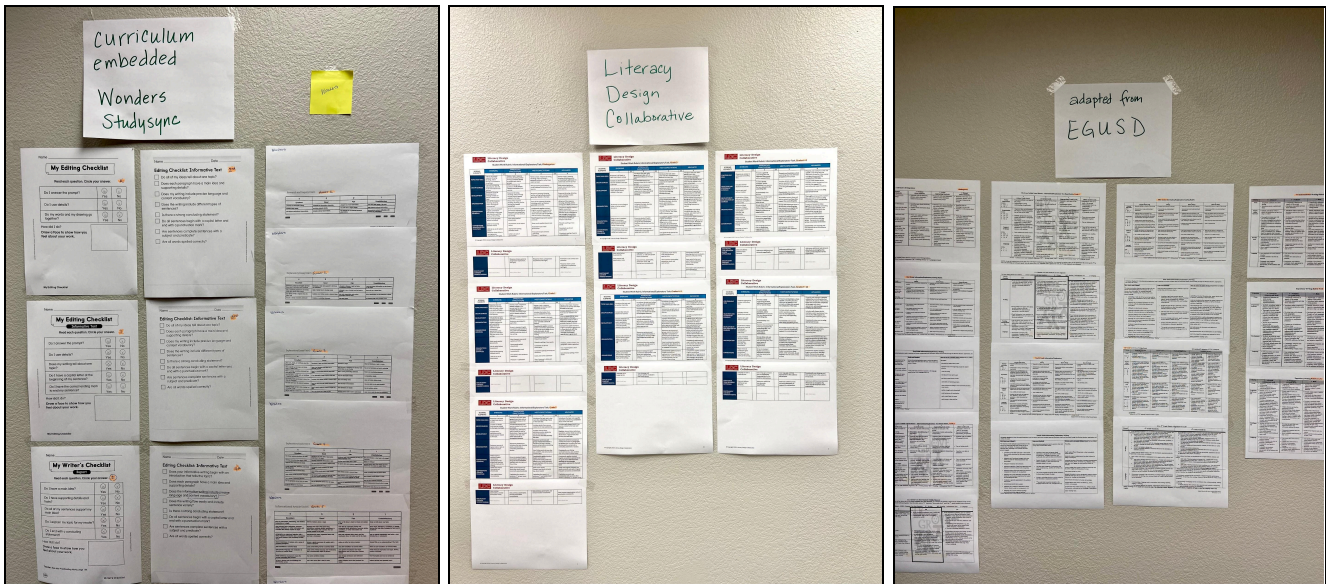
From teacher feedback shared above, NUSD staff held a Literacy Work Group session with rubric samples from: AP, IB, and AVID rubrics, Smarter Balanced rubrics, StudySync/Wonders Rubrics, Elk Grove Unified open-source rubrics, and Literacy Design Collaborative Rubrics. The Work Group conducted a review based on the following criteria to determine the best alignment for all NUSD grade levels:

- Connection to California State Standards
- Clarity of language for students, staff, and families
- Useability or ease of use for students and families
- Provides options for modifications for students with IEPs and English Learners
- NUSD district goals and needs

From the review, staff in the Work Group selected two rubrics to pilot K-12 across sites:

1. Elk Grove Unified Open-Source Rubric and
2. Literacy Design Collaborative Rubrics

To initiate the pilot, Literacy Work Group members and Co-Teaching TOSAs are working with teachers from various grade spans at their sites to use these rubrics with samples of student informational writing to evaluate how effective they are in meeting the above-listed criteria. Participating pilot teachers have been asked to evaluate the rubrics utilizing a Google Form, providing feedback on adaptations the rubrics might need to strengthen them or better fit the NUSD context. We plan to complete this initial pilot the end of January 2022 with the goal of all grade levels across sites using the recommended rubric in 2022-2023.



*(Rubric criteria review with Literacy Plan Work Group)*

Next steps in the rubric pilot include Co-Teaching TOSAs leading PD on the selected rubric at sites February 1 or February 2 (principals may select to offer the PD on either the Staff Development Early Release Day on February 1 or their Staff Meeting on February 2). They will focus on the selected rubric as a site staff to gain additional input on the current language from the rubrics to guide development of a NUSD Writer’s Glossary to ensure common, student and family friendly, language used PK-12 district wide. For example, from a teacher survey it was learned that across NUSD sites teachers interchangeably use the terms topic sentence, hook, controlling idea, and thesis statement. This leads to confusion across grade levels and negatively impacts students’ understanding of what is being asked of them.

**Gathering Input from Families and Students**

It is important to note that a key motivation to our writing focus comes from family voice. In fact, both our teachers and families support our focus on writing. In surveys to staff and families in May 2020 on ‘what posed the greatest challenges during distance learning’, writing was a frequent response across both surveys. In the year end survey from May 2021, a focus on writing, again, was a frequent request from responding families.

To date, family input from the Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council was collected in October 2021. The parents who attended in person and virtually, had overwhelmingly positive support for common tools and language PK-12 as they believed it would allow families to more effectively partner with schools in supporting writing at home. In January 2022, family input will be sought during six meetings with diverse parent groups: African American, Latino/X, and Asian parent groups, with the support of CAFE. Following the rubric pilot, TOSAs will help gather feedback from students on writing.

**Next Steps**

Once the rubric is selected and writer’s glossary is drafted, professional learning on using both tools will begin to roll out. A pilot of on demand informational writing in Spring 2022 will give the CAO’s Office and Work Group real time data to sequence professional development offerings. The CAO Staff will have the opportunity to develop 3 years of professional development offerings in support of the NUSD Literacy Plan with use of Educator Effectiveness Grant funds. We anticipate meeting the following target: NUSD PD catalogue for 2022-2023 will be drafted Spring 2022.

### Three Genres of Writing

Type of Writing	Description
Informational/Explanatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonfiction</li> <li>• E.G., biographies, reports, articles, labs, summaries, and communications</li> <li>• Purpose is to inform, provide an explanation, or answer questions</li> <li>• Will be a focus in NUSD because informational text allows <b>students to develop sophisticated comprehension skills, build critical content knowledge and vocabulary, and apply higher-order thinking skills as both writers and readers.</b> College and career ready students must be able to organize their thoughts, follow a plan, and conduct research to support their theses</li> </ul>
Argumentative/Opinion/Persuasive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiction or nonfiction</li> <li>• E.G, debate, speech,</li> <li>• Purpose is to take a position on an issue or topic and support your position</li> </ul>
Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiction or nonfiction</li> <li>• E.G., personal narrative, story, character analysis</li> <li>• Purpose is broadly defined as story writing, contains elements of a story</li> </ul>

### Timeline of Literacy Plan Development/Implementation: 2021-2022

Work Group Input	Actions	Pilot Tools	Implementation
September 2021	October/November 2021	December/January 2022	Spring 2022
✓Foundational Work	✓Identify key areas	✓Evaluate rubrics	NUSD district-wide writing glossary
✓Goals	✓Review teacher feedback at sites	✓Identify top two rubrics	On demand writing pilot with adopted rubric
✓Review outcomes	✓Sequence actionable steps for implementation	✓Pilot rubrics and recommend	Professional development norming/calibration on NUSD writing rubrics
✓Create Timeline		District rubric selection	Professional Development Offerings 22-23
		Site/teacher communication	