



MASSACHUSETTS  
READING ASSOCIATION

## EXEMPLARY READING PROGRAM AWARD

### Application Guidelines

#### Overview

The Exemplary Reading Program Award is sponsored by the Massachusetts Reading Association (MRA) to recognize outstanding reading and language arts programs at all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Its purpose is to call the public's attention to outstanding programs in schools throughout Massachusetts.

Each council participating in the program is encouraged to nominate one or more schools for the Exemplary Reading Program Award. The MRA Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee will contact each nominated school to inform them of the nomination and the steps required in applying for the award. All applications are due by December 20th, 2024. The MRA Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee will review applications and apply the criteria and guidelines listed below using a standardized scoring procedure. Selected schools will be visited by representatives of the Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee. The name of the winning school and a description of the qualifying program will be sent to MRA by February 12th.

#### Objectives

The program has five objectives: (1) to improve literacy in our society, (2) to recognize schools that demonstrate excellence in reading and literacy programs, (3) to encourage the development and refinement of exemplary reading/language arts programs, (4) to report to the public noteworthy efforts to improve reading/language arts, and (5) to disseminate specific information about high-quality programs so that other professionals can use it to improve their own instructional efforts.

#### Criteria

1. All public, private, and charter schools are eligible for the award if the school has at least one MRA member or is sponsored by an MRA member.
2. The school must apply with its school-wide reading program, not just one segment (i.e., Title I, special education, English learners program, library/media, one classroom/grade, etc.).
3. The fully completed application form must be signed by the building principal and the chief district officer (e.g., superintendent).

4. The recognized program should serve as a model for other schools and educators.
5. A school receiving the award cannot apply again within a period of five years.
6. A school is not eligible to apply if a current member of the MRA Executive Committee or Exemplary Reading Committee directs or is directly involved with the nominated program.

## Timeline:

**December 20th** Applications must be emailed and received by 12/20.

**February 7th** Validated visits by MRA Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee members will be completed.

**February EB Meeting** Exemplary Reading Program Award Committee chair will notify MRA Executive Committee of the candidates. **By the conclusion of the February Board Meeting** MRA will notify the winner of the Exemplary Reading Award.

## How to Participate

To participate in the program, schools will complete the attached [application form](#). In addition to the application, they will prepare a description of their program, applying specifically the 8 guidelines listed below.

## Instructions for Participating Schools

Please limit the description to five pages. As part of the descriptions, please list the names and professional assignments of all those who were involved in completing the application. NOTE: *The application form and description, along with additional materials including photos and supplemental resources, must be emailed in a PDF format to Robin Pratt at prattrobin33@gmail.com.* Please note that materials submitted in hard copy will not be accepted.

## Guidelines to Follow

For consideration as an Exemplary Reading Program your school should demonstrate that:

1. The reading program is consistent with sound theory, research, and practice.
  - Instruction is based on current research.
  - The design of the program is based on a needs assessment and includes recommendations of all stakeholders including students, teachers, administrators, and parents as an ongoing process.
  - Teachers are provided time for research, planning, executing, and reporting new ideas.
  - Staff is routinely provided with information regarding valid research and current practice. Teaching strategies such as student collaboration

- discussions, self assessment and goal setting, and descriptive and actionable feedback are used.
  - Evidence of changes that have occurred in the program as a result of recent research is apparent.
2. Students have access to a wide variety of literacy and multimedia formats.
- Time is provided daily for independent reading.
  - There is evidence of open access to culturally responsive books that depict diverse cultures, languages, and ethnicities and are free from stereotypes and bias.
  - Student motivation and engagement are evident.
  - Read alouds are integrated throughout the school day where applicable.
  - Time is allowed for students to access books from a diverse collection within the school.
  - Reading is valued and celebrated within the culture of the school.
  - There are opportunities for teachers, administrators, and students to share reading interests.
3. Students demonstrate success in reading.
- The program is based on what we know about children and how they learn.
  - Students have multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning in reading.
  - Data are used to promote continuous improvement in reading.
  - Students are administered a screening assessment with additional individual diagnostic testing as needed.
  - Progress is monitored regularly using formative and summative assessments.
  - The data reflects an ongoing relationship between stakeholders such as faculty, families, community and students in an effort to provide a literacy rich environment for all.
  - There is evidence to support teacher collaboration and decision making surrounding the reading achievement of all students.
4. There is sufficient evidence indicating that comprehension strategies are taught and applied across the curriculum.
- Students employ strategies for close reading including annotation, vocabulary analysis and determining importance.
  - Students show progress toward proficiency in comprehension of both literary and informational text.
  - Students show progress toward proficiency in comprehension in all four domains of reading: reading, writing, listening and speaking.
5. All literacies are integrated into and support the reading program.
- The reading program reflects traditional areas of literacy (listening, speaking, reading and writing) as well as 21st Century skills (digital, visual, and disciplinary).

- Students have opportunities to express their thinking using multiple modalities.
  - Extended activities that integrate content-area subjects and literacy is apparent.
6. Administrators and teachers/coaches provide leadership and vision for the building and/or district reading program, specifically to
- analyze and use evaluation data;
  - provide job-embedded professional development;
  - survey teachers to determine needs; and
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- provide time, encouragement, and resources for teachers to participate in professional learning communities.
7. The school and/or district provides an effective structure for a Multi-Tiered System of Support.
- Intervention services are provided for students experiencing difficulties in reading.
  - Opportunities for extension/enrichment are available.
  - The reading staff members are certified and trained in reading instruction and development.
8. The community is involved in the reading program.
- The community (businesses, public libraries, police/fire, etc.) and families are engaged in a variety of literacy activities.
  - The community is kept informed through various means of communication with translations as necessary.
  - Special outreach initiatives are designed to include diverse populations within the district/school.
  - A variety of methods are used to inform parents of their child's progress.
  - The school provides opportunities to engage parents in building their child's literacy skills.