



Bedford Central School District
Inspiring and Challenging Our Students



Amy Fishkin
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction
afishkin4396@bcsdny.org
Phone: (914) 241-6016

January 11, 2024

Dear BCSD Community,

As you may be aware, we are at a pivotal moment in literacy education as all school districts around the country are taking stock of the current state of literacy instruction and ensuring that our curriculum and instruction are aligned with the Science of Reading.

On January 3, 2024, Governor Kathy Hochul made an [announcement](#) about New York State's "Back to Basics" literacy plan and intends to introduce legislation that will ensure evidence-based instructional practices across the State to improve reading proficiency.

Yesterday, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) hosted a full-day, state-wide Science of Reading webinar for district leaders across the State. BCSD was in attendance. The goal of the day was to engage with literacy leaders across New York State to discuss the NYSED Literacy Initiative Brief series just released and their impact on our literacy work at the local level. We anticipate that these seven research-based briefs will be posted on the NYSED website in the coming days. These briefs will be the foundational documents that will guide NYSED and should guide district literacy work. The State conveyed that it has no intention of mandating any particular curriculum resource, and will continue to support local control regarding literacy curriculum decisions.

We are delighted that Bedford Central School District is already making great strides toward ensuring a cohesive, coherent literacy program aligned with the Science of Reading research. Our District will spend the next several weeks and months unpacking these new Literacy Briefs and integrating this guidance into our ongoing literacy work. We are proud of the thoughtful, intentional steps we are already taking to improve literacy outcomes for our students:

BCSD ACTION STEPS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT during 2023-24 school year:

Cohesive, Coherent Literacy Expectations & Curriculum Review

- Development of BCSD **Literacy Guiding Principles** providing a vision for research-based literacy program aligned with Science of Reading
- Development of BCSD **Literacy Handbook** with consistent expectations
- Literacy Committee engaging in research and analysis of **new literacy curriculum materials** for adoption in Sept. 2024
- Addition of Heggerty **Phonological Awareness** program in Kindergarten & 1st grade
- Development of **cohesive curriculum for Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE)** program where students are learning in a biliteracy setting

Professional Development in the Science of Reading

- Science of the Reading Brain Training (**LETRS**: Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling)
- **Collaboration** with literacy experts in the field, such as Windward Institute and Haskins Global Literacy Hub
- Commitment to working with a **literacy consultant**, with a strong background in the Science of Reading, to provide professional development and consultation
- **Targeted professional development** to support our diverse learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners

6 Key Shifts in Literacy Instruction

- Focus on **sound-spelling patterns** to decode
- Rework **independent reading** to allow students access to high-quality, content-rich texts
- Utilize **decodable texts** to support fluency practice during independent reading
- Update practices on how **comprehension** begins, utilizing read-alouds for vocabulary and content knowledge development
- Revisit high-frequency word and **vocabulary** instruction
- Rework **classroom libraries** to incorporate content-rich topics to support vocabulary and content knowledge

We will continue to share with the larger BCSD community the progress of our literacy initiative. Thank you to our teachers on the Literacy Committee who have given countless hours to this initiative and are fully committed to moving BCSD forward in our literacy work. Thank you to the members of the Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment (CIA) Board subcommittee and the Board of Education for their support in ensuring a robust literacy program that meets the needs of all our BCSD students.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership and support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amy Felt", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction