

THE BEACON

WWW.NORTHBELLMORESCHOOLS.ORG



READING FILLS MINDS WITH KNOWLEDGE AND HEARTS WITH JOY

Reading is the fundamental skill that sets children up for success in all aspects of their educations and their lives. In a world filled with knowledge to be gained, strong readers are poised for a lifetime of learning.

The district's balanced literacy program helps students become confident and passionate readers. This multifaceted approach to reading instruction begins on the first day of kindergarten. Over seven years, students evolve from learning their letters and sounds to comprehending and discussing complex stories. Teachers use strategic approaches to help students become better readers, including class read alouds, partner reading, small-group instruction and independent reading time.

Interests are varied, which is why the district fosters a personalized approach to reading instruction. The five elementary schools are filled with resources in school and classroom libraries that allow each child to find his or her reading identity. Students experience both fiction and nonfiction texts. This year, the district expanded its tools with the introduction of Fountas & Pinnell reading materials in host classrooms at each school.

Reading teachers provide additional



support by helping students develop targeted skills. They also work with kindergarten classes to model reading strategies and teach children how to properly care for books, while working to instill a love of reading from an early age. Instructional coaches work with teachers to implement best reading practices and infuse literacy into all aspects of the curriculum.

Children with strong reading abilities will be well prepared for the expectations of middle school and high school, where the ability to discover and analyze information is vital for research projects.

"We are creating a culture of joyful readers," Superintendent Marie Testa said. "Reading helps children learn, it helps them imagine and it opens up new worlds. There is no greater feeling as an educator than seeing a child immersed in a book."

Mission Statement

Our mission is to inspire all students to be confident, passionate learners with the courage and skills to lead their lives with integrity, while contributing to our global community with creativity and compassion.

Student Responses

Is there a favorite character that you relate to?

Jack from the "Seven Wonders." He would do anything to save his family and friends, and feels really strongly about what he's going out to do on their behalf. *Gabriella C.*

Martin Avenue Elementary School

Who is your favorite author?

Dr. Seuss, because he has tongue twisters. *Lauren C.*

Newbridge Road Elementary School

What do you love most about reading?

When I am reading, I feel like the story is happening right in front of me. I love to look at the pictures, especially all of the details in the pictures. *Mackenzie R.*

John G. Dinkelmeyer Elementary School

What is your favorite book to read?

"Harry Potter," because there is a lot of mystery. It's very interesting because it goes through the ages of Harry growing up. *Emma C.*

Park Avenue Elementary School

Is there a favorite character that you relate to?

I like Greg from "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid," because I like to be simple and he is simple, too; plus, he likes video games. *Nate P.*

Saw Mill Road Elementary School

Fostering Independent Reading

Suzanne Burnell, a fourth-grade teacher at Saw Mill Road Elementary School, said it is hard to give an exact count of how many books are in her classroom library, only that it is in the hundreds.

"It just keeps growing and growing," she said. "It's an easy way for children to access the books that they like. Children that read, and read a lot, grow the most in their reading skills."

The books are organized by genre, such as poetry and biographies. The green bins contain nonfiction books, blue have fiction and red spotlight popular authors. Ms. Burnell explained that when children find a book that they like, they typically want to read more by that author. Children are able to visit the classroom library to make selections for independent reading time, or to find books for research assignments.

John G. Dinkelmeyer Elementary School first-grade teacher Lorraine Chandler said her classroom library is always a work in progress to ensure that the book selection meets the interest levels of her students. There is a "buddy" bookshelf with two copies of each title for friends to read together.

"I believe that letting them make their own choices empowers young readers," Ms. Chandler said. "My classroom has books everywhere.

The variety is large enough for everyone to be interested in reading something."



Supporting the Youngest Readers

Through a new initiative this year, reading teachers are supporting the district's younger learners by providing push-in support for all kindergarten classes. The teachers visit each class multiple times during each six-day cycle. The reading teachers and classroom teachers work together on instructional plans that meet the needs of each specific class.

"Our overall goal is to instill a love of reading and to help our students learn strategies that will enable them to be successful and confidently stand up and shout, 'I am reading!'" Saw Mill Road School reading teacher Anastasia Panouis said.

Ms. Panouis and fellow reading teacher Jessica Schmugar began the year by reading the Todd Parr book, "Reading Makes You Feel Good," to remind students that reading on their own can make them feel wonderful. Their goal was to model good reading habits, which include reading anywhere, with anyone, about anything, for any purpose.

Each goal was presented in a lesson, first modeled by the teachers before giving the students the opportunity to practice independently or with a partner.

Students were introduced to other strategies such as reading through illustrations and looking for the patterned text. All strategies modeled and practiced while reading and discussing stories help them to grow and develop into readers and writers.



Building Resources

Several classrooms throughout the district are serving as host classrooms for Fountas & Pinnell reading resources. The materials are being used in at least two classrooms per school and at least one class per grade.

Newbridge Road kindergarten teachers Peggy Vento and Mary Yager particularly like the shared reading collection, which includes large books for class read alouds and small versions of the same books for independent and partner reading. The books are on topics of interest to kindergartners, such as animals, and help foster literacy development with words and sentences that match the vibrant pictures.

Ms. Vento said that when reading to her students, she often has them engage in turn-and-talk discussions, which build their reading comprehension skills. Ms. Yager added that the resources include both fiction and nonfiction texts, so children learn to decipher between the two types of writing.

North Bellmore's host teachers meet throughout the year to provide feedback and discuss ways to best incorporate the resources into the reading curriculum.



Teaching the Reader

Teachers serve as reading role models to encourage their students to become lifelong readers. North Bellmore's instructional coaches provide extensive support for teachers to serve as model readers and implement best practices.

The philosophy is "teach the reader, not the reading," explained instructional coach Krista Zucker. Teachers help children develop skills and strategies that can be used across all texts. They analyze each child's strengths to personalize reading instruction. Through modeled classroom lessons, co-teaching activities, one-on-one meetings and professional development workshops, the coaches empower teachers to support their young readers.

"We have the privilege of researching and honing our craft as lifelong learners and working with our colleagues to do the same," Ms. Zucker said.

Instructional coach Amanda Licci added that they provide guidance to teachers in creating schedules that allow them to spend time with every reader to understand each child's unique needs. One of the ways to accomplish this is through small-group instruction. Teachers identify students who need to work on similar skills and meet with them together.

Ms. Zucker explained the importance of showing students that reading isn't just isolated to "reading time" but is a skill they use across all content areas. The instructional coaches also work with teachers to embed high-quality literature into their instruction and develop classroom libraries full of resources that are rich and varied.

Board of Education

Melissa Cmar-Grote, *President*
Nina Lanci, *Vice President*
Rosemarie Corless, *Trustee*
JoAnn DeLauter, *Trustee*
John Ferrara, *Trustee*

Marie Testa, *Superintendent of Schools*

Postal Patron
Bellmore, NY 11710



JOHN G. DINKELMEYER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Reading teacher Cynthia Reilly modeled the various ways students can read books with the philosophy in mind that all children can read. Each kindergartner was given a bookmark with “superpowers” they were going to acquire during these lessons. They were going to acquire pointing power, picture power, sound power, word power and pattern power. She taught each of these “superpowers” through a modeled read aloud lesson. Students were each granted their “superpower” and practiced independently at their seats.

MARTIN AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

The novel “Percy Jackson and The Olympians: The Lightning Thief”

sparked a reading activity for sixth-graders. Students were given a critical thinking wheel and created questions from the higher-level thinking areas – analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Students applied these questions to the chapter they had most recently read. They then paired up to have someone else answer their questions, which led to engaging, interesting conversations that often expanded to full-class discussions.

NEWBRIDGE ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Students marked the birthday of renowned children’s author Dr. Seuss by participating in various activities for Read Across America Day. Although his books were popular choices that day, students and teachers celebrated all authors. Kindergartners picked their favorite books to read with their third- and sixth-grade buddies, and second-graders analyzed the rhymes in Dr. Seuss books.

PARK AVENUE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Sixth-graders participated in the Global Read Aloud by reading “Refugee” by Alan Gratz. Students listened to it on Epic! while reading along in their own copies. They have made connections with the characters in the book to people in history who

were refugees. Additionally, they took part in videoconferences over the SmartBoard with classes in other school districts, having dialogue about the book’s themes, which included overcoming oppression and perseverance.

SAW MILL ROAD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

To understand the importance of pictures, kindergartners read wordless picture books. After reading “Chalk” by Bill Thomson, a story in which three children stroll through the park on a rainy day and find a bag of chalk, students had the opportunity to go outside and recreate the book by drawing their own pictures on the sidewalk and pretending their images came to life. Each class then made its own “Chalk” book, and children took turns being storytellers as they shared their pages.

DISTRICTWIDE

As a fun way to emphasize the importance of literacy, North Bellmore administrators read Josh Funk’s “Lady Pancake & Sir French Toast: Mission Defrostable.” The read aloud was recorded and turned into a video, which was viewed by all students on World Read Aloud Day and also shared on the district’s website.