

## **Responses to Questions about Literacy Priority #1**

Question: Are all grades leveled to their reading ability?

Answer: All students' instructional reading levels are determined in K-2 by the TRC assessment and in 3-8 by the MAP assessment. This is used to find optimal reading material for each student and to determine their growth.

Question: Define Tier 2/Tier 3 literacy.

Answer: In reference to Tier 2 and 3 vocabulary mentioned in my presentation, according to Thaashida L. Hutton, M.S., CCC-SLP from Three Tiers of Vocabulary and Education, "Tier 2 consists of high frequency words that occur across a variety of domains. That is, these words occur often in mature language situations such as adult conversations and literature, and therefore strongly influence speaking and reading... Tier three consists of low-frequency words that occur in specific domains."

Question: What is a vocabulary notebook?

Answer: A vocabulary notebook is a binder or folder that Waters students in grades 1-8 began to use during the 2012-2013 school year to record and revise their understanding of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary. Divided into content area sections, a template for each word allows the students to rate their knowledge of a term, define the term in their own words, and create a picture or other nonlinguistic representation of the word. Based on the research by Robert Marzano, these are some of the steps that help students internalize new terms and see the connections between words taught throughout the curriculum.

Question: Any plans to build a library of references kids can use for research papers?

Trying to find these outside is a burden for families.

Answer: Per the CIWP, we plan to add reference material to classroom libraries across all content areas especially in the intermediate and upper grades. We also believe it is beneficial for students to investigate quality online resources and visit the public library,

Question: How much choice in projects?

Answer: That depends on a number of factors. At times teachers present options regarding the content, process or product. In other instances, students can propose a topic of interest which would need to be approved by the teacher. There are also times when choice is not offered; for example, if the teacher is looking for specific steps to show mastery of a strategy or if students are working on certain group projects. The CIWP calls for increased opportunity for choice.

Question: Would you consider 'Battle of the Books' for intermediate grades?

Answer: Literacy Coach will look into the benefits of entering the competition this coming year.

Question: What do you hope to acquire to enhance literacy in 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade?

Answer: We will investigate writing curriculum, CCSS aligned guides for instruction or a student program for the development of writing skills. We are considering supplementary materials to help with the instruction of the use of conventions (grammar, word choice, etc.).

Suggestion: September community class about leveling, Daily 5 & Café and Lucy Calkins; Response to intervention public meetings/train parent mentors.

Answer: We agree that training parents in the basics of curricular programs is beneficial as long as we have several parents in attendance. Literacy coach is planning to send out a survey to determine the time and day that the majority of respondents can attend. Not sure what is meant about a public RTI meeting. If the purpose is to educate parents about the process, this could be a topic for a workshop. Interventions, however, need to be provided by certified teachers.

Question: RTI seems to be focused on slower learners. Can you focus also on higher learners?

Answer: We are committed to meet the needs of all students at Waters and spend a great deal of time addressing differentiation beneficial to students at all levels. RTI by definition is focused on students who need extra support.

Question: Will there be any “pull-out” groups for instruction of students at higher levels?

Answer: At this time, we do not have this type of program. Students are challenged through differentiation in the classroom.

Question: Would we consider a leveled reading program such as the one implemented in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade as well?

Answer: This is an ongoing topic for discussion for staff and administration.

Question: How can we use student performances and drama class to increase literacy?

Answer: Fine Arts teachers are continually collaborating with teachers of all subjects and align their activities to support those subjects, including literacy.

Question: You mentioned open classroom. What is it?

Answer: By ‘open classroom’ Ms. Nissim was referring to a model in which teachers share strategies with colleagues, such as through peer observations and feedback.

Question: Could retakes or pretests be used to reinforce what students are learning in reading similar to the practice used in 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade math?

Answer: This is a decision that would be up to our reading teachers. Coach will bring it to the table for discussion.

Question: How will literature circles be supported for SEL competencies?

Answer: This instructional practice fosters collaboration, personal responsibility and perseverance.

Question: Waters citation standards posted on web so parents can help (Is this in reference to citing references?)

Comment: Too much emphasis on APA style and citing sources takes away from learning to write well.

Answer to question: We will discuss posting directions for citing sources.

Response to comment: A simplified APA style has been required for certain research assignments; however, there has not been a great emphasis on this aspect of writing. Our writing program is a comprehensive, year round endeavor which focuses far more on expression, organization, content and conventions supported by Common Core State Standards than it does on citations.

We would need more clarification in order to address the following questions and suggestions:

- Literary program-multi-sensory reading program-integration with body movement
- Reading milestone and RTI-Whole word program
- Please provide websites for parent/community research.
- Opportunity for public speaking-tour ambassadors
- How to get a mobile library

## **Responses to Questions about Math – Priority #2**

Question: How do Math talks work for kids who are “more shy” or socially reticent?

Answer: The purpose of Math talks is to give all the students reaction time to answer a question in a variety of ways. “Wait time” is given and students that have the least amount of ways are the ones that have to be called on first! This will give them the opportunity to “claim” their method! Their name is written on the board but they don’t necessarily present their method. They just explain how they came up with their answer and the teacher makes the notes on the board of their method.

Question: Is the Math Enrichment Curriculum Research Based?

Answer: Yes! What the Math Enrichment Curriculum entails is more of an intervention based and or tiered lesson learning. This means that there aren’t lessons, units, plans, exams, etc...Each student receives one to one instruction on the more difficult lessons they have.

The lessons delivered are research based and so are the progress monitoring, graphing, and checklists. It's not a curriculum but more of a supplementary math course on the fundamentals.

Question: How does every teacher build the respectful environment that Mr. Leatherwood speaks of?

Answer: The environment is promoted by the teachers but it has been built by the administration, parents, and the surrounding community. All of the stake holders of the school reinforce the respectful environment of the school by investing in it. This is evident to the students and they in turn notice the school as a center of the community and begin to behave respectfully towards one another and the staff. The staff carries out this behavior by being a part of all the extra-curricular activities that are offered by the school.

Question: How do we challenge the average and advanced students?

Answer: Within each curriculum that is offered here, there are lessons that are considered: Enrichment, Extensions, Advanced, and Strategic Intervention. These lessons are delivered within the curriculum that challenges each student at their level. It will not mean that the student just receives more work!

Question: It seems like the math enrichment could be more game based. More worksheets? 2 hour tests? I get the urgency and the importance, but it seems like the lessons of urgency could cause unnecessary stress.

Answer: Indeed! However, the method that is being utilized gives each teacher with background information, provides students with basic practice, and individualizes each student's mastery level. This could not be done with games. We will try to incorporate some more activities that are not just paper and pencil to alleviate the stress.

Question: Differentiated Learning in math enrichment results in kids being put into groups labeled "smartest". Kids are humiliated by this. How can we do this better?

Answer: First we could eliminate the announcement of groups and students can be placed discreetly in their levels that wouldn't seem so obvious to each other. Second, groups can have varying names that will not have anything to do with levels. Ex. Harvard, Princeton, and Yale math groups! Each group can be a different level without any discernible labels. Lastly, students can have the opportunity to move from groups as they progress.

### **Responses to Questions about Science - Priority # 3**

Question: “We have a good science program. I hope we don’t lose some of the better aspects because of a huge focus on assessment. Seems like it’s about PERFORMANCE, which sounds great. Can’t the language in the CIWP reflect this rather than having a focus on assessment.”

Answer: We completely understand your concern, and “assessment” has become a loaded word, particularly in the CPS. We will definitely tweak that milestone as to make it more clear that the shift in assessment inside the science classrooms is to help shift what science instruction and assessment will look like in a classroom that is more aligned with the newly adopted Next Generation Science Standards.

Question: “Glad to hear ecology is still an important part of the plan”

Answer: We agree!

Question: “If teachers are looking to integrate the science curriculum map more closely with what is happening at the school in ecology, will such plans be available to parents in the form of a syllabus?”

Answer: We absolutely wish to share this “blueprint”, or document, with the community. We wish to address this in the wording of the milestone, by listing general timeframes that we hope to complete various stages of the document (for example, a general outline of K-2 by the middle of the 2014/2015 school year, etc)

Question: “Will we get a second science lab as planned anytime soon?”

Answer: This is still a topic amongst discussion, and is still being worked on by the administration. It is not, as of now, a milestone we are currently placing in the Strategic Priority #3 (Science).

Comment: “What are we doing to support growth/transition of ecology department.”

Response: Mr. Leki is still in charge of the scope and sequence of the ecology department, and we continue to have collaboration (which we hope to increase even more with working on the abovementioned “blueprint” over the next couple of years)

## **Response to Questions about Fine Arts – Priority # 4**

**Rationale:** The arts are valuable for nurturing creativity, teaching that problems may have multiple solutions, teaching the multiplicity of perspectives on the world, engaging students with the idea of an audience for their ideas, and showing students that small differences may have big effects. This priority also helps achieve CCSS goals of independence, content knowledge, comprehension and critique, and understanding other perspectives and cultures.

## **Fine Arts Focus, Arts Integration, Assessment & External Partnerships**

**Comment (C):** Thanks for your continuing efforts to integrate the arts into all curriculum and to integrate our school into various community events.

**Question (Q):** In Mission Statement ---Is the word audience included?

**Response (R):** 2014 Revised School Mission Statement

We strive to provide hands-on, authentic learning in all content areas focused on the development of the whole child. The integration of the arts, environmental studies, multiculturalism and technology supports the diverse and unique learning needs of all students. Waters staff, students, parents, and community foster a nurturing and collaborative learning environment. Our external partnerships contribute to our professional staff development, networking and leadership skills.

**Q:** Where will our Art Room and Computer Room be housed with projected population (classroom) growth? How will that impact our Fine Arts designation?

**R:** As of next year's student population projections, Art Room and Computer Lab will remain in current locations. Fine arts schools across the city have a variety of creative space solutions---sharing space with community centers, sharing classroom space among disciplines and "on a cart" instruction without losing fine arts designation.

**Q:** Establish a syllabus and curriculum for fine arts program?

**C:** Publish on web syllabus

**C:** Publish notes per grade for ILT/Arts

**R:** All fine arts teachers have discipline-specific syllabi available for parents at Fall Open House (available upon request). Syllabi are skill-specific not project based. Projects vary based on arts integration themes. Visual Arts syllabus is on classroom website (accessed via school website). All syllabi can become links on fine arts page of school website. (**Milestone 1 of Priority 4 Action Plan**)

## **Arts Integration**

**Q:** No integration of fine arts program into core curriculum---reading, math, social studies?  
Why is this not a goal?

**R:** There are numerous arts integrated projects everyday across the curriculum throughout the school day. We can do better articulating what is already happening in core curriculum and will come up with new ways to showcase core curriculum arts integration. **(Milestone 1 & 2 of Priority 4 Action Plan)**

*A snapshot provided by a 5<sup>th</sup> grade parent in our CIWP Team discussions:*

*In reading: she worked on various individual and group projects (based on literature circle books) including a pop-up book, a puppet show with original rap song, and a children's book. I believe kids get a long list of potential formats but are free to choose others they invent.*

*In social studies: she helped create a "Today Show" segment about Mayans and wrote a short story based on what she learned about the Inca. (Kids choose their presentation formats, such as skits, 3-D maps, etc.)*

*In science: kids keep an "interactive journal"--on one page they summarize the information they've learned on a topic, and on the opposite page they represent it in any visual way they choose that is meaningful to themselves. (My daughter usually chooses a comic strip format, with or without the Three Stooges.) As I write this, she is creating a collage about healthy lifestyles.*

*In writing: Today she turned in a 32-page children's book she wrote and illustrated. The kids will all take a field trip to share their books with the residents of a elder care facility.*

*In math: Kids will be creating quilt squares based on math themes--drawings, formulas, whatever they choose. (I know this because I will be assembling and quilting the project when they have finished drawing.)*

## **Assessment**

**Q:** Can we “measure” qualitative work by surveying the students about their experience?

**Q:** How are kids being measured or graded? How do we know what they are learning?

**R:** Students are being evaluated by a variety of methods including checklists, rubrics, reflective responses and performance-based assessments (including exhibits, docent activities, studio and stage performances and curriculum showcases). Ongoing informal and formal progress monitoring, rubrics and checklists provide measurement for student achievement. Evidence of student learning is available through direct inquiry, digital portfolios, documentation panels, website(s), and exhibit and performance formats. **(Milestone 4 of Priority 4 Action Plan)**

### **External Fine Arts Partnerships**

**Q:** Increase fine arts options before and after school---drama club, chorus, band or orchestra?

**C:** Integrate with Old Town

**C:** Still don't understand dance in gym

**Q:** Can we use external partnerships to bolster performances?

**R:** We have a variety of fine arts options after school including two partnerships with Chicago Arts Partners In Education (CAPE) and visual art, music and dance opportunities with Right At School (RAS). Grant writing and networking have built numerous partnerships in the past and will continue to do so in the future. We are currently utilizing our in-school partnership with The Creative Schools Fund, Ingenuity and CAPE to provide 10 week dance instruction and process-based performances (5/29-6/1) for all of our students in K-8. This partnership was possible through a \$15,000 grant that was secured this school year. Our dance instruction is taking place in physical education class in order to increase fine arts opportunities for students (rather than reduce instructional time in another fine arts discipline) and as a way to meet physical education standards and goals through movement/dance. We have had partnerships with community neighbors such as Old Town School of Folk Music, Ravenswood Artwalk, The Cambodian Society and Killing Fields Memorial Museum and Oppenheimer Family Foundation in the past. We will continue to pursue new fine arts partnerships and strengthen current external partner relationships. We are currently a *Category 5---Excelling* (our Creative Schools Distinction) on our School Report Card. A large part of this top rank is due to our evidence of external fine arts partnerships and before/after school fine arts programming. **(Milestone 3 of Priority 4 Action Plan)**

## **Responses to Questions about Fine Arts (Music) – Priority #4**

**Question: How can music be integrated into the common core curriculum?**

**Response: Music is its own ideology. It has its own language which includes notation, history, ear training and theory. A basic formal understanding of music is essential so that the relationships between itself and other general subject matter can be understood. Music is integrated into the core curriculum as much as possible at varying levels and degrees. It's relationship to areas such as history, psychics, math, writing and geography are constantly expressed. Although these relationships are important, having a basic understanding of music is vital! We will continue to use music as its own subject but constantly strive to integrate it to teach, writing, basic math, fractions, history, geography, etc.**

**Question: The music program is a shadow of its former self. How will we address this?**

**Response: The music program is not a shadow of its former self. Rather, it has taken on a different philosophical view. The music program has changed because the needs of the school community have changed. There is less space this year due to the implementation of more classes. The music "room" no longer exists for that same reason. Because of the large population of Water's student and the limited time given for music and art integration the program has evolved and will continue its evolution based on the needs of the students which continuously changes. Our program provides our students with history of music, theory, visual instrument identification, class choral singing, ear training, song writing and much more. Our program is an invaluable resource for our students based on our school community's needs and the resource that are available.**

**Question: More hands on music exercises!**

**Response: Depending on your ideology of what music is, if its singing, playing an instrument, performing. learning theory & ear training or musicology it all falls under being music exercises! Music is a continuous exercise in practice and learning new methods & theories. "Hands on music exercises" are what our classes are all about. Our student see instruments, interact with them, they learn about instruments and singing, they research composers and artist and they perform. These musical exercise are based on college level components of learning where there is a broader focus that is more conducive to the student acquiring usable skills and learning through an integrated method and not by a limited view of basic music lessons or simply singing. The idea is to keep the students senses constantly viewing and using the material in different**

approaches. Certain things are valuable, they become more valuable when they have a wider approach and objective.

**Question:.** Too many coloring sheets in music. More instruments. More singing. Old Town school of music.

**Response:** -Coloring sheets are used for multiple reasons in music class. Students get to see various instruments that they may never see in general through this activity. Students get an opportunity to create their own concepts of what these instruments would look, feel and sound like through this activity, class discussions and research. There is also a behavioral aspect to these activities. Our young students love these activities so it is often used as a tool to rein in misbehavior and as a method of refocusing students. Another benefit of this activity is motor skill development. Students get to practice not only their creativity but their ability to draw and write. The coloring activities are a great way to integrate history and writing into an activity when used as such.

**-Instruments are constantly brought into class rooms for students to interact with. The students are allowed to touch, smell, play and assess. It is a very important part of our class but not a continuous part of class.**

**-Singing in music class is a constant endeavor! Upper level students are allowed to sing music that they pick in a democratic style voting fashion along with music that is assigned to them and also engages them in a different manner by introducing them to more complex and less heard material.**

**The younger students tend to focus on more age appropriate music. All the students perform multiple times a year for other classes. Assemblies are not always a viable option because of scheduling conflicts and other activities, so we utilize our best resources, our students and staff. Each class will generally do 2-3 performances once we've extensively practiced our material and the student are comfortable. Student travel to selected classes and provide a great show.**

**-Old Town school is its own entity with its own focus, which is revenue based. Old Town is a wonderful facility with a great staff! Waters school is also excellent! It is here to service our broad community and service students from a wide economic and social background. Our resources may be limited, but our students receive a broad music and academic approach to learning. One that Old Town does not provide!**

## **Responses to Questions about Diverse Learners – Priority #5**

**Q: Can you further explain the “population triggers” leading to diverse learners?**

**A: Diverse learners were targeted as a priority because they have not made the projected gains on the NWEA / MAP.**

**Q: Who are the special education teachers? How do they work with kids / classes?**

**A: For school year 2013-2014, the teachers are as follows: K-2 – Mrs. Kathy Donovan, 3-4 – Mrs. Teresa Crespo, 5-8 Resource / Pull-out – Mrs. Carla Barta (formerly Griffin) 5-8 Inclusion – Mr. Gustavo Prado**

**1. INDIRECT SUPPORT: Special education teachers consult with the general education teachers on diverse learners’ needs, including accommodations, and modifications to assignments and assessments.**

**2. INCLUSION SUPPORT: Special education teachers co-teach with the general education teacher in the general education classroom with emphasized support given to the diverse learner(s).**

**3. RESOURCE / PULL-OUT SUPPORT: Special education teachers work with the diverse learner in a resource / pull-out / small group setting in a separate classroom. (The grade level curriculum is used as a guide and modified or accommodated as needed.)**

**Q: How many diverse learners?**

**A: Currently, Waters has 56 diverse learners.**

**Q: What does “unpack” mean?**

**A: This refers to “unpacking the common core state standards.” The CCSSs are very general therefore requiring all teachers to determine what skills need to be taught in order for the students to attain the knowledge to master each CCSS.**

**Q: What, if any, multi-sensory learning programs does Waters have the ability / resources to employ? Will multi-sensory (methods) be available to all?**

**A: ALL teachers understand that students learn differently and therefore make a concerted effort to teach using multi-modalities. Teachers have access to all sorts of materials – as they see fit!**

**Q: What is TRC?**

**A: TRC stands for TEXT READING COMPREHENSION.**

**TRC is an early reading formative assessment for grades K–2. Scores help teachers to understand each student’s reading development - including fluency and comprehension.**

**Q: Does or can diverse learners include higher end learners – such as those way above the bell curve?**

**A: Certainly students with various disabilities - such as specific learning disorders or autism - can have a very high IQ; however, in order for a student to receive an IEP (and be considered a diverse learner in the school setting), it must be proven that the disability is impacting his / her education in at least one core subject area.**

#### **Reponses to Questions Regarding English Learners (EL) – Priority #6**

**Q: How many EL students?**

**A: We have 129 EL students (approximately 20% of total enrollment)**

**Q: How many different languages?**

**A: Our EL students are inclusive of many different cultures and speak 15 different languages.**

**Q: Are we forecasting a new, large number of ESL students, or is this priority to support the current ESL students? Is the number of EL learners increasing/decreasing for the 2015 school year?**

**A: It is very difficult to anticipate how many incoming EL students we will have. Every year we do have new EL students, the majority enter through our primary grades and also as transfer in students.**

**Q: Can the Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) host meetings on topics of interest for all parents? I think this is what it is being said but I am not sure.**

**A: Yes. The BAC hosts many topics that can relate to all of our families throughout the school year. Please keep in mind that the purpose and the role of the BAC is to address the needs specific to students and families who are identified as EL students/families. Since the majority of our EL families are Hispanic and are traditionally the families who attend these meetings, the meetings are usually held in Spanish. However, there is always English translation available.**

**Q: How about posting BAC meetings! Not posted this year.**

**A: The Bilingual Advisory Committee (BAC) meetings are formal meetings and are posted in the Waters Green Notes (minimum of a week in advance) as well as posted on**

**our school main entrances as is required. We can work towards posting meetings on our schools website as an additional communication measure.**