

La Crescent Montessori & STEM School Literacy Plan 2023-2024

At La Crescent Montessori & STEM School (LMSS), literacy is integrated into everything that we do. Reading is not considered a separate subject, but a tool to be used to help students learn more about the world.

La Crescent Montessori & STEM School is committed to ensuring reading proficiency for all students at each level, kindergarten through third grade. A multitude of research is available to show the correlation between student reading proficiency at third grade and high school graduation rates. It is also well documented that students who read well by third grade perform consistently better in school than those students who are not proficient readers by third grade. We recognize the importance and significance of early literacy and practices in place to monitor progress and define how reading proficiency will be ensured for all of our kindergarten through third-grade students.

The Montessori curriculum utilizes strategies that engage students in the five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Emphasis is placed on literature at all levels and each classroom has its own library. We also encourage students to read and build their personal libraries at home.

At La Crescent Montessori & STEM School, we believe that literacy skills are vital and have a direct impact on the quality of our students' lives. Our goal is that all students read at grade level by third grade and curriculum and interventions are in place to help us achieve that goal.

Introduction

The Minnesota State Legislature has adopted statutes that require schools to adopt a local literacy plan to have every child reading at or above grade level no later than the end of third grade. The 2011 Education Bill (Minnesota Statute 120B.12) requires that all students are provided with comprehensive scientifically based reading instruction as outlined in a local literacy plan.

Comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction includes strategies to develop skills in the following areas:

1. Phonemic awareness: ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.
2. Phonics: understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words. Phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that

stresses learning how letters correspond to sounds and how to apply this knowledge in reading and spelling.

3. Fluency: the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression
4. Vocabulary development: the process of teaching vocabulary both directly and indirectly, with repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items.
5. Comprehension: an active process that requires intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly by demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and implementing specific cognitive strategies to help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solving thinking processes.

The statute also requires each school district to identify before the end of kindergarten, first grade, and second-grade students who are not reading at grade level and to identify students in third grade or higher who demonstrate a reading difficulty to a classroom teacher.

For each student identified, the district shall provide reading intervention to accelerate student growth and reach the goal of reading at or above grade level by the end of the current grade and school year. If a student does not read at or above grade level by the end of third grade, the district must continue to provide reading intervention until the student reads at grade level. District intervention methods shall encourage family engagement and, where possible, collaboration with appropriate school and community programs. Intervention methods may include but are not limited to, requiring attendance in summer school, intensified reading instruction that may require that the student be removed from the regular classroom for part of the school day, extended-day programs, or programs that strengthen students' cultural connections.

The La Crescent Montessori & STEM School Read Well by Grade 3 Literacy Plan provides information on the following:

- A description of the processes the school uses to ensure proficiency by third grade, including assessments and data collection
- Methods used to assess student levels of reading proficiency
- Methods used to screen for dyslexia and convergence insufficiency disorder
- How the school notifies parents about reading proficiency or need for intervention and parental involvement opportunities
- The system of interventions utilized at LMSS
- A description of professional development opportunities specific to literacy

This plan is updated yearly.

Scientifically-based Reading instruction

At La Crescent Montessori & STEM School, the Montessori Philosophy guides our reading instruction implementation. In our Montessori program, most students begin in the Children's House (preschool/kindergarten) where, from the beginning, they are immersed in a rich literacy environment. Montessori curriculum focuses on phonics early, often at age three. Most students enter Kindergarten reading and with strong phonemic awareness skills. Because of this, the elements of literacy are easily integrated across the curriculum. Students who enroll in kindergarten who were not part of our preschool program are immediately assessed and an individualized learning plan is created for that student. Our goal is that all kindergarten students will begin reading fluently at grade level or above by the end of the school year.

Our K-3 reading program includes:

- A 2.5-hour work period consisting of one-on-one, small group, and whole group instruction that includes integrated cross-curricular literacy instruction.
- Direct instruction in phonics
- A minimum of 20 minutes of sustained, silent reading a day. Kindergarten students are read to for a sustained period at least once daily.
- Writing for 30 minutes a day.
- Classroom libraries containing fiction and non-fiction books are designed to appeal to students of all reading levels.

What materials are we currently using for scientifically based Reading instruction?

Resource, Strategy or Program	Grade Levels	Skills it teaches and assesses
Montessori Language Curriculum and Materials	PK-3	Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension
Functions of Words	PK-3	Sentence Structure
All-School Research and Report Writing Curriculum	PK-3	Sentence Structure, Paragraph Writing, Research Skills
Level Phonics Based Readers	PK-3	Phonics, Sight Words, Reading, Fluency

Assessment Plan

La Crescent Montessori & STEM School uses a variety of data to assess reading proficiency. Utilizing these assessments, we are able to identify students who are not reading at grade level and use data to create individualized plans to meet the needs of our students.

Literacy screening takes place three times a year to identify students who may be at risk for reading difficulties. Norm-referenced target scores have been established for each measure at each administration that reflects the expected grade-level performance.

Assessments are used for five purposes:

1. To screen students for reading problems
2. To systematically monitor progress over time
3. To determine students' level of reading proficiency and whether they have met grade-level reading goals,
4. To determine or diagnose potential sources of reading difficulty for students not making adequate progress despite the use of the intense intervention.
5. To obtain data that, along with other indicators, may identify students with dyslexia or convergence insufficiency.

Assessment

What reading assessments are we currently using?

Assessment Name	Grade Levels	What it assesses?
FastBridge Early Reading	K	Concepts of print, Phonemic awareness, Letter Names, Letter-Sound Correspondence, Phonics/Decoding
FastBridge CBMreading	1-3	Fluency
FastBridge CBMcomp	1-3	Comprehension
FastBridge Early Reading	1	Word Segmenting, Nonsense words, Sight Words Sentence Reading
FastBridge AReading	2-3	Concepts of print, phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, and vocabulary
Spelling Assessments	1-6	Phonics, Sight Words, Grade Level Words
Albanesi Grade Achievement Tests	K-3	Reading, Language

Classroom teachers, special education teachers and administration meet to review results from screening assessments and place students into interventions as needed and appropriate. Where data isn't clear, additional diagnostic assessments may be administered.

Core Instruction

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program, approved and funded by the United States Department of Education, names Montessori as a research-based program that is supported by reliable research and effective practices. The Montessori Public School Consortium includes reading research statistics. In reference to the Montessori reading program and gifted students, the state, “The methods used in Montessori reading programs are highly effective with both learning-disabled and gifted learners; the reason for their effectiveness, however, is that the environments have been designed to ensure success for all children.”

The school’s core classroom instruction utilizes Montessori as a framework and Minnesota state standards guide reading instruction. All the essential components of reading are presented in a Montessori reading program: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Reading serves as a common element for the entire curriculum and is interwoven throughout all areas, making reading a primary focus of learner activities. The depth and breadth, in addition to the individualized nature of instruction, ensure that the needs of children are met. Students are active participants in the learning process and are intrinsically motivated to achieve higher levels of reading; they read because they want to, not because they have to.

Multi-aged learning environments facilitate differentiated instruction and multiple resources are available for kindergarten through third-grade students in the five areas of reading. Instruction is provided in varied formats; to the whole group, in small reading groups, and to individual students. Many forms of read-aloud and silent reading happen on a daily basis. Our core curriculum provides balanced literacy instruction that enables a smooth transition between levels.

Interventions

Our teachers are trained on interventions and continually refine their skills as they work to deliver the most effective interventions. We expect (and train) our teachers to be knowledgeable in assessing learning gaps, instituting effective and appropriate interventions, tracking the data for a specified amount of time, and revising the intervention if the student is not making progress.

RtI at LMSS includes the following steps:

- 1) Identify any learning gaps through universal screening and/or diagnostic assessments.
- 2) Develop a personal learning plan in collaboration with parents, teachers, and other appropriate professionals. The personal learning plan will address knowledge gaps and skill deficiencies through strategies such as specific exercises and practices during and outside of the regular school day, periodic assessments, and reasonable timelines. LMSS will maintain and regularly update and modify the personal learning plan until the student reads at grade level. (This does not apply to a student under an individualized education program.)
- 3) Classroom teachers and/or the interventionist implement interventions with fidelity.
- 4) After the designated interval for intervention, the teacher shares progress data with the child's team to determine if the intervention should be continued; if an increase in intensity or frequency is necessary; or if another intervention should be implemented.
- 5) Students not making adequate progress after several interventions may be referred to the child study team or for a referral for special education services.

All K-3 students are assessed in the fall using Fastbridge reading assessments. Students who score below the norm targets will be identified by classroom teachers and receive additional instruction in identified areas of need (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) using the Montessori philosophy and materials. Other research-based reading curricula may also be used to address areas of identified need. These students will be assessed weekly using Fastbridge probes.

What are we doing now for interventions?

Intervention	Grade Level Used	Skills it teaches
Montessori Language Curriculum and Materials	PK-3	Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension
Peer Assisted Learning (PALS)	1-3	Fluency, comprehension
Repeated Oral Assisted Reading	K-3	Fluency
Six Minute Solutions	1-6	Comprehension, fluency
UFLI Foundations	K-6	Phonemic awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension

Parent Notification and Involvement

Teachers at LMSS work hard to maintain consistent parent contact and offer families numerous opportunities to get involved at school. LMSS uses a variety of ways to notify and involve parents.

Teachers provide information to parents regarding student reading progress at conferences in the fall and the spring. The majority of LMSS parents attend conferences, however, if a parent is not able to attend, teachers make every attempt to meet at another time or communicate by phone or email. Parents are also provided with written progress reports at the end of each semester.

The school communicates clearly with parents about their child's proficiency on grade-level assessments. At each conference, teachers provide parents with reports from screening assessments and explain the results. Parents with students at risk for difficulty are provided additional information including a description of areas where a student struggles, the support offered at school, and suggestions for home.

Our goal of accelerating literacy development for all students requires consistent communication between parents and school. Teachers have frequent communication with parents via email and Montessori Compass. Parents with students in interventions receive regular progress updates from teachers and are available for conferencing by phone, email, or in-person upon request.

When student assessment data indicates that a child is reading below grade level, LMSS will provide the following information to parents.

- The student's reading proficiency as measured by assessment(s)
- Reading-related services currently being provided to the student and the student's progress
- Strategies that parents can use at home to help their child succeed in reaching grade-level reading proficiency in English and in their native language

La Crescent Montessori & STEM School supports parent partnerships and invites engagement in many ways. Opportunities for parents to partner in their child's education specific to literacy development include:

- Parent education evenings focused on literacy
- School communications including reading assessment information explained for better understanding by parents
- Summer learning ideas
- Strategies to support reading growth via blog or newsletter at least 3 times per year

- Curriculum explanations on Montessori Compass

Professional Development

LMSS strives to continually improve teacher knowledge and skills in high-quality literacy instruction. Professional development is provided in the five components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension during staff meetings and staff workshop days.

Our staff continues to focus on understanding ways to utilize data in an ongoing manner to impact classroom literacy instruction. A data retreat is scheduled each fall to review achievement results from the previous year and set goals for the upcoming school year.

Professional development on recognizing the diverse needs of students in cross-cultural settings has not been a focus at LMSS due to the demographics of our area and school. We do not have any English language learners at the school. However, we do believe that culturally responsive instruction is important and will identify resources for staff to recognize and respond to students with oral language and linguistic needs when the need arises at our school.

The following are areas of focus at LMSS:

All teachers

- Integration of the five primary components of reading instruction across disciplines
- Understanding and utilizing data to inform instruction
- Examining data and effectively disseminating that information to families

Teachers providing interventions

- Benchmark assessments
- Intervention strategies/curriculum
- Use of assessments for diagnostic purposes
- Record keeping progress data
- Fastbridge/AimsWeb training on progress monitoring tools and reports

English Language Learners

Students who are English Language Learners, will be identified through the home language questionnaire and will receive services following LMSS's English Learner Plan of Service to achieve grade-level literacy.

Efforts to Identify Students with Dyslexia

Scores from benchmark assessments do not identify students with dyslexia and LMSS does not diagnose students with dyslexia. However, teachers are aware of common indicators of dyslexia and provide supplemental evidence-based reading interventions to all students identified as at-risk readers. Students who have indicators of dyslexia need more explicit, systematic, phonemic, phonetic, multi-sensory, and intensive evidence-based practice with word sounds and word recognition to make progress in meeting proficiency.

Therefore, the school will utilize the following steps to identify learners likely to have dyslexia.

- Identify ALL students at-risk (Fall, Winter, Spring)
- Provide interventions in addition to effective core instruction (matched to indicators and needs)
- Document results of interventions by progress monitoring growth and skill level over time
- Complete dyslexia screener for students with dyslexic tendencies.

The dyslexia screener on the following pages is for teachers to use with parents when assessments show reading difficulties and observations indicate tendencies of dyslexia.

In addition, a parent can always make a referral and present outside evaluations in which the data would be considered by the school evaluation team. Depending on the results of the evaluation, a 504 plan or IEP may be written. The student would then receive accommodations and/or special education services as deemed appropriate.

The school will utilize a data system where teachers record both screening results and additional data for problem-solving. Staff designing IEPs or 504 plans will have access to screening and progress monitor data as well as the indicators of dyslexia.

Convergence Insufficiency Disorder

LMSS does routine school vision screeners for visual acuity issues. Diagnosis of convergence

insufficiency can only be made by an eye care professional skilled in binocular vision dysfunctions to rule out any organic disease. This type of testing is not conducted in our school because we do not have staff with these credentials. If a child states they get headaches or eye strain while reading for extended periods, this information will be shared with parents for possible further screening by the family's eye health professional. However, LMSS does provide supplemental evidence-based reading interventions to students who are identified as at-risk readers based on universal reading assessments.

La Crescent Montessori & STEM School Dyslexia Screener

Unlike students who are learning English or who have had limited exposure to literacy instruction, students with dyslexia will not respond to the same evidence-based instruction delivered within core instruction. Students who are presenting with indicators of dyslexia will need more explicit, systematic, phonemic, phonetic, multi-sensory, intensive evidence-based practice with word sounds and word recognition to make progress in meeting proficiency.

Use this screener as a tool to help determine a student's individual intervention needs. Information from this tool must be used in conjunction with other reading screening and diagnostic assessment data.

Instructionally Meaningful Observations and Interview Data	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Phonemic Awareness			
Mishears letters or sounds.			
Difficulty with rhyming.			
Difficulty with manipulating phonemes, sequencing, and/or holding letter sounds in mind long enough to decode or spell words.			
Decoding			
Student complains of physical illness or presents with behavioral issues during reading time; either task avoidance or signs of stress.			
Deletes or mixes up or misses extremely common high-frequency and sight words (was/saw, left/felt) skips words like is, the, a, on, etc. inconsistently omits suffix endings (-s, -ed, or -ly).			
Decodes a word on one page but not on the next; one day it is there, next it is not.			
Relies on contextual clues to read, and guesses at words based on the first few letters. The accuracy of decoding improves but the rate remains persistently			

lower than the benchmark.			
Encoding			
Difficulty reproducing letter forms (not a motor coordination problem).			
Difficulty recalling the correct sequence of letters in words and/or matching letters, words, and objects in different sequences as they get more complex.			
	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
Student complains of physical illness or present with behavioral issues during writing time; either task avoidance or signs of stress.			
Error analysis shows: Not all sounds are represented within a word.			
Error analysis shows: Misspellings of words are inconsistent within the same document.			
Error analysis shows: Oral stories have greater depth and detail than print, students self-limits to words that can be spelled correctly.			
Orthographic Memory and Recall			
Student has difficulty following 2-3 step directions. Needs directions repeated or written down.			
Difficulty naming classmates weeks and months into the school year.			
Difficulty calling up the right word despite describing its meaning.			
Student descriptions indicate they know it one moment but not the next.			
Difficulty simultaneously decoding and retrieving word meanings.			
Poor recall of sound-symbol associations.			
Family History (For parent/guardian use only)			
Shows a lack of interest in reading simple books or talking about books.			
Reports or comments that close family or relatives struggled with learning to read or in school.			
Records indicate student repeated pre-school or earlier grades.			
Parent/guardian says that the student was recommended to repeat a grade.			

Parent/guardian has sent the student to summer school, interventions, or clinic for additional tutoring.

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