



Reading in PPS

A Personalized and Balanced Approach

At Pittsburgh Public, we believe that reading is one of the most important skills we teach our students. It's a responsibility we take very seriously. Our instruction begins in Kindergarten and continues through high school, with a personalized and balanced approach to reading. Not every student learns to read at the same time or in the same manner. A one-size-fits-all approach to reading instruction will not work—in fact, it only widens the achievement gap.

That is why our English Language Arts (ELA) instructional format includes a balance of reading, speaking, listening and writing activities. It meets all the core standards set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Education and includes a variety of instructional strategies to help our teachers meet the needs of all learners, including ESL and special needs students.

It's not just about phonics.

Some people think learning to read is all about phonics. While phonics is important, it is just the beginning. In order to become proficient readers, students must not only learn phonics, they must be able to build vocabulary and achieve fluency. They must also be able to comprehend what they're reading and write clearly and thoughtfully at every grade level.

Students at PPS participate in ELA Reading blocks as part of their daily curriculum. The blocks support fundamental skills appropriate for each grade level, from building phonemic awareness and vocabulary to reading aloud, sharing texts, listening and collaborating. It allows time for whole group instruction as well as small group instruction where teachers can differentiate learning and independent reading and writing for all levels of readers. Our goal is to have all students proficient in reading so they will be well-equipped to communicate in today's world.



Our philosophy of instruction aligns with the recommendations of the National Reading Panel, which addresses not just the teaching of reading, but supports literacy at all grade levels.

Supporting the needs of all students.

Regular assessments and keen observations allow teachers pinpoint the specific needs of each student. Perhaps one child has difficulty decoding words but has excellent comprehension skills. Another may have trouble with fluency, which erodes his or her confidence in reading aloud. PPS teachers are equipped to address these needs and help struggling readers overcome whatever roadblocks are in their way.

Reading experts tell us:

“A passion for reading leads to reading achievement no matter the student's socio-economic status.”

—Phyllis Hunter,
Literacy Consultant

“There is nothing sacrosanct about reading by the third-grade level. Not being able to read and write well by third grade does not cement failure...It's not the reading score that is determinative, but how we interact or fail to interact with struggling readers.”

—Alfred Tatum,
Associate Professor and
Director of the Reading Clinic at the
University of Illinois at Chicago


**Expect
great
things.**

 Pittsburgh
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Here are just a few resources that are available to our teachers:

- Literacy Coaches: There is a literacy coach in every PPS building, working with teachers in their classrooms and in collaborative environments.
- Literacy Coordinators: Two literacy experts assist our literacy coaches with strategies to improve reading proficiency in both struggling and non-struggling readers.
- Digital Support: Programs such as iRead, iLit, Edmentum and others support teacher instruction in the classroom.
- Literacy Handbook: This guide shows the PPS balanced approach to literacy.
- Curricula Consultants: Teachers have access to experts from the providers of our reading curricula, including Pearson, Reading Horizons, Houghton Mifflin and Harcourt.

PPS students learn to read and write across multiple texts, including fiction and non-fiction. By including texts from a variety of sources, including literature, social studies, the sciences and informational materials, we see more students engaged in reading, including those who may be struggling.

In 2017–2018, PPS adopted a new reading curriculum called ReadyGen for grades K–5. During the first two years of use, the percentage of PPS students scoring in the lowest performance category, Below Basic, has decreased at every grade level.

This means that struggling students are improving and moving out of this category.

Need more information?

Contact Minika Jenkins at mjenkins1@pghschools.org.

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What can you do at home?

Parents and guardians play an important role in helping children develop a love for reading. There are many easy ways to improve your child's reading skills at home and have fun in the process. Here are a few examples:

- Be a reader yourself! When children see you reading, they will model your behavior.
- Take advantage of teachable moments. If your child picks up an item in the grocery store, help him or her sound out the name of the product or read the directions.
- Make television a learning tool. Turn on the Closed-Caption option when they watch their favorite shows and ask them to read along for part of the show.
- Encourage your child to write a letter to a friend or family member. Or allow them text using your phone.
- Download educational video games that promote reading. There are many available online.
- Participate in activities such as cooking or a project that requires following written instructions to engage in authentic reading with your child.

Para asistencia con este documento en español, por favor llame a la línea nueve al 412-529-6463 y seleccione la opción #1.

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