**Guiding Principles**

The following principles are philosophical statements that underpin the standards and resources of this literacy blueprint. They should guide the construction and evaluation of English language arts and literacy programs in GCR2 Schools.

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1**  ***Common Core State Standards…”*** | The ELA Common Core State Standards (CCSS) articulate what to teach so that educators can focus on how to instruct and the pathway that can best meet the needs of each student. Attending to these rigorous academic standards, provides the content for high quality curriculum and instruction and for a balanced assessment system aligned to those standards. When woven into a cohesive curriculum, reading, writing, listening, speaking, language, and foundation standards provide the optimal learning experience for students. The transition from previous state standards to the Common Core requires educators to increase (1) building knowledge through content rich non-fiction and informational texts, (2) reading and writing grounded in evidence from the text, and (3) regular practice with complex texts and embedded academic vocabulary. When implemented within a multi-level system of support, the Common Core standards and these instructional shifts help to ensure that every child will graduate prepared for college, career, and a productive life. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2**  ***background, interests and needs of the students.”*** | Students bring strengths and experiences to learning. ELA curriculum, instruction, and assessment that are grounded in the culturally responsive practices of relevance, identity, belonging, and community serve to best engage all students. High-quality ELA curriculum and instruction should be culturally relevant to the students being served and prepare all students for a multicultural world. Although no two students come to school with the same culture, learning strengths, background knowledge, or experiences, and no two students learn in exactly the same way, every student’s unique personal history enriches classrooms, schools, and the community. This diversity is our greatest educational asset. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3**  ***…ensure all students can learn and be successful through differentiated experiences.”*** | Recognizing that learners are different, teachers use flexible and fluid instructional designs as they support students to become increasingly independent readers and writers of complex text as well as strong communicators. Effective teachers realize that instruction needs to be modified for students capable of more advanced work, as well as for struggling students. Ongoing assessment and analysis drive these instructional decisions.  All teachers believe, and their practices reflect, high expectations for all students through developmentally appropriate high quality instruction. As educators, we need to responsively diagnose and deliver what it takes to support each child in meeting their academic potential. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 4**  ***ongoing formative and summative assessments yielding valuable actionable information to support student growth.*** | Meaningful assessment drives instruction, affects learning, and is an integral part of teaching. Purposeful assessment practices help teachers and students understand where they have been, where they are now, and where they might go next. A single assessment cannot provide sufficient information to plan teaching and learning. Using different types of assessments as part of instruction, results in useful information about student understanding and progress. GCR2 educators use this information to guide their own practice and in partnership with students and their families, to reflect on learning and set future goals. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 5**  ***between foundational skills and meaningful reading, writing, speaking and listening experiences.*** | From the beginning, it is essential for success in reading to converse with, co-write with, and provide opportunities for children to engage with print in engaging and meaningful ways. This plays an especially critical role in developing children’s vocabulary, their familiarity with how texts work, their knowledge of the natural world, and their appreciation for the power of the written word. In the primary grades, foundational skills are emphasized while at the same time addressing the meaningful elements of rich informational and narrative texts. Explicit skill instruction in reading and writing are necessary to create the building blocks for later acceleration. Intermediate students continue to learn about and practice foundational skills in increasingly more complex texts, continuing the balanced literacy format. Daily application and practice of these skills in meaningful, authentic literacy experiences--with timely, relevant, and specific feedback--is critical to solidify the learning. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 6**  ***…Place oral language and interaction as a core component.*** | The Common Core provides a powerful opportunity to build diversity into instruction and encourage powerful dialogue. The words we read, write and speak carry perspective, context, and origin. No text is neutral. There is always voice. When planning literacy instruction, teachers place students into a dialogue with the authors and texts as well as with their peers. The more text-to-self and text-to-world connections a student can make the more equitable and powerful the dialogue will be. (Adapted from Chiariello, 2012)  “Oral language development includes critical skills that let children:   * Communicate—listen and respond when other people are talking * Understand the meaning of a large number of words and concepts that they hear or read * Obtain new information about things they want to learn about * Express their own ideas and thoughts using specific language   Oral language development is a critical foundation for reading, writing, and spelling, and it is the “engine” of learning and thinking.” (*Learning to Talk and Listen, 2009).* |
| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 7**  ***as an extension to*** | Effective use of language both requires and extends thinking. As learners listen to a provocative narrative, view a video clip of a famous speech, analyze a poem, or write an essay, they engage in thinking. Students develop their ability to remember, understand, analyze, evaluate, and apply the ideas they encounter in English language arts and in all the other disciplines, when they read increasingly complex texts and undertake increasingly challenging assignments that require them to write or speak in response to what they are learning. Grounding their thoughts, using evidence from sources is an integral aspect of the work. Teachers recognize the importance of being able to respond effectively to the challenges of linguistic and cultural differences in their classrooms. They draw on these different ways of talking and thinking as potential bridges to speaking and writing in Standard English. Interactions with peers allow prime opportunities to foster respectful dialog when presenting opposing arguments. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 8**  ***informational texts and multimedia in order to build academic vocabulary and strong*** | Students should encounter many examples of informational and media texts (including non-print texts such as dance, visual arts, video, music, theatre, etc.) aligned to the grade level complexity. This kind of reading, listening, and viewing is the key to building an abundant academic vocabulary bank and increasing knowledge about the world. Each kind of print or media text has unique characteristics; proficient students apply the critical techniques learned in the study of exposition to the evaluation of multimedia, television, radio, film/video, and websites. Research-based vocabulary acquisition strategies are evident in all classrooms, to support the learning. An approach that integrates the components of ELA (reading, writing, listening, speaking and language) with the required content from social studies and science is optimal. Integrated Social Studies and Science units developed by the district can support this integration. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 9**  ***…Use writing to propel students’ intellectual growth, and develop their ability to think, to communicate, defend ideas, and to create worlds unseen.”*** | At all levels, students’ writing records their imagination, exploration, and responses to the texts they read. As students attempt to write clearly and coherently about increasingly complex ideas, their writing serves to propel intellectual growth. A student’s writing and speaking voice is an expression of self. Students’ voices tell us who they are, how they think, and what unique perspectives they bring to their learning. Students’ voices develop when teachers provide opportunities for interaction, exploration, and communication. When students discuss ideas and read one another’s writing, they learn to distinguish between formal and informal communication. They also learn about their classmates as unique individuals who can contribute their distinctive ideas, aspirations, and talents to the class, the school, the community, and the nation.  In addition to writing across the curriculum, a writer’s workshop format emphasizing writing arguments, explanatory/informative texts, and narratives is part of the balanced literacy model. |

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| **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 10**  ***and communities in order to sustain.*** | Families and communities play a crucial role in developing students’ speaking, listening, language, reading, and writing skills. Effective literacy frameworks help parents and caregivers understand how vital their role is and emphasize that all of the components of literacy—close and critical reading, coherent writing, articulate speaking, and attentive listening—are essential in a democratic society. |

*\* The preceding guiding principles are adapted from the English Language Arts Frameworks of The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the article “Building Diversity into the Common Core,*” by Emily Chiariello (2012) *and Learning to Talk and Listen, An oral language resource for early childhood caregivers, by the National Institute for Literacy (2009).*