

Lowell Elementary Curriculum Delivery

The purpose of this information is to explain the curriculum and its delivery at Lowell Elementary and how we place students in classrooms to deliver the curriculum. The first part focuses on the specifics of what curriculum is and how teachers differentiate and deliver the curriculum in the classroom. The second part explains how students will be placed in classrooms at the beginning of each school year in those grades where Highly Capable Learners and General Education students will be integrated to create balanced classrooms.

School Vision and Mission:

At Lowell Elementary, we are developing habits and skills that enable us to be compassionate leaders and life-long learners.

L: Listen to Understand

E: Express Kindness

A: Achieve Goals

D: Demonstrate Responsibility

I. Curriculum and Its Delivery

A. What Is Curriculum?

Curriculum is a course of study, mandated by state standards, which prescribes the skills that students at each grade level are expected to master by the end of their current academic year. At Lowell Elementary, as in all schools in the state, the curriculum is dependent upon on the Washington State standards (EAL1Rs/GLEs). Note that the current standards will be changing soon, becoming more rigorous as a result of an adoption of the new Common Core Standards. Districts use standards to adopt practices and materials they feel will provide teachers the best means by which to deliver curriculum. For example, we are piloting Math Expressions which aligns to state standards. We also use district science kits which have been adapted from science kits originally developed by the National Science Foundation.

¹ <http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx>

² <http://www.corestandards.org/> ²

B. What Is Curriculum Delivery?

Curriculum delivery is a complex synthesis of teacher behaviors that impact student learning and, ultimately, student achievement. For example, at Lowell Elementary we deliver literacy curriculum using *Benchmark Literacy* which is based on research and training received from our school district's ongoing professional development. In writing we utilize *Write from the Beginning and Thinking Maps*. Our youngest learners also benefit from teachers using the *David Matteson* rubric and benchmarks.

C. What Does Curriculum Delivery Look Like in the Classroom?

In the classroom, teachers employ various strategies to differentiate instruction for students as they deliver curriculum. With respect to math and other subjects such as science and social studies, these strategies can be put into two categories: whole group instruction with differentiated expectations, and small group or individual instruction. In addition, the workshop model for reading and writing provides opportunities for additional strategies in the delivery of literacy curriculum. Below are some examples of these strategies and their application.

1. Whole Group Instruction with Differentiated Expectations

Strategies to implement instruction with differentiated expectations may include:

Tiered Assignments

- **Definition:** A process of adjusting the degree of difficulty of a question, task or product to match a student's current readiness level.
- **Example:** In a Kindergarten classroom, all students are working on a surveying and graphing assignment. Some students ask yes or no questions, some have multiple category questions, and some are open ended questions.

Open Questions

- **Definition:** A question that is framed in such a way that a variety of responses or approaches are possible.
- **Example:** Our science curriculum encourages the use of inquiry as an instructional strategy. In fifth grade students are asked to predict the number of swings a pendulum will make in 30 seconds. The teacher may ask what will happen if the length of the string were changed. Would the pendulum swing more or less times in 30 seconds?

Targeted Questioning

- **Definition:** Teacher is intentional about depth of questions asked of various students. All students are asked questions that require critical thinking at a level that is challenging for them and all students benefit from hearing their peers thinking.
- **Example:** In a fifth grade class, students are asked questions about what the author's goal is and who the intended audience is when reading non-fiction.

2. Small Group / Individual Instruction

Small group or individual instruction based on the readiness of students is another way teachers differentiate curriculum delivery in the classroom. Strategies for group or individual instruction may include:

3. Parallel Tasks

- **Definition:** All students will work on the same core content with tasks of different complexity.
- **Example:** All students are working on addition and subtraction at differing grade level expectations. Some might be adding and subtracting single digit numbers, whole numbers or decimals.

Flexible Groups

- **Definition:** To group students together by interest, achievement level, activity preference, or special needs.
- **Example:** Third grade students can be placed in groups to work on telling time. One group works on telling time to the hour, another to the quarter hour, and another on elapsed time.

Math Centers and Games

- **Definition:** Students work on math activities in small groups. This can be based on student choice or teacher design.
- **Example:** Students play games from the Math Expressions Curriculum.

Small Group Instruction

- **Definition:** Teacher works with a small group of students on a targeted learning goal.
- **Example:** Teacher works with one group on single digit divisors, and another small group on dividing decimals.

D. Literacy Strategies

Students are explicitly taught skills which help them to learn to read and write and to develop good reading and writing habits. Teachers employ various strategies for curriculum delivery, including selecting appropriate text, high interest reading materials and student choice, and differentiated learning for literacy. Below are some examples of these strategies.

1. Appropriate Text - Reading Materials at Instructional Level

Strategies to implement appropriate text might include:

Flexible Leveled Reading Groups (K-3)

- **Definition:** Students are placed in groups by reading ability to ensure appropriate just-right instruction and reading materials. These groups will change by reading skill and students' growth.

Literature Groups (2-5)

- **Definition:** A group of students reading the same book—student choice and teacher guidance both factor into book selection.

Support for Students in Selecting Appropriate Books

- **Definition:** Teacher will guide students in choosing appropriate books for independent reading. Teachers refer to these books as “just right” and teach students that language as well.

2. High Interest Reading Materials and Student Choice

Strategies to implement high interest reading materials and student choice include:

Just-Right Books

- **Definition:** A book that is at an appropriate level for the student to read and understand (Students should be able to read and understand 96% – 97% of all the vocabulary in the book).

Reading Logs

- **Definition:** Students keep a record of their independent reading which allows the student and teacher to monitor reading choices.

Classroom and School Libraries

- **Definition:** Each classroom provides a variety of texts at a wide range of reading levels for self selected student reading. All students have regular access to the school library.

Independent Reading

- **Definition:** Each student will have an opportunity for self selected reading during the school week so that they can choose what they are reading without teacher feedback. This helps foster a love for reading and personalizes their experience with literacy.

Content Area Reading

- **Definition:** Students have regular opportunities to read, or be read to, in all curricular areas (reading books related to science and social studies units).

3. Differentiated Learning for Literacy

Strategies to implement differentiated learning for literacy include:

Independent Book Study Projects

- **Definition:** Opportunities for students to explore a topic they of interest to them at a level of complexity that is appropriate for them.

Book Reports (2-5)

- **Definition:** On book report assignments, depth of student analysis and comprehension is appropriate to student reading level.

Response to literature

- **Definition:** Opportunities for students to make text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world connections. Projects could include art, drama, writing, reports or other presentations.

D. Student Support and Enrichment Opportunities Provided at Lowell Elementary

The curriculum at Lowell Elementary is enriched by additional opportunities and programs both in and out of the classroom. Some of these include:

- Exceptional Volunteer Support
- Hosting Western Washington University Education Practicum Classes
- Financial Support from PTA
- Math enrichment support
- Literacy Support
- On-line math program for 2nd-5th grade HCL students
- On-line math program for 3rd-5th grade General Education students
- Peer Tutoring and Leadership Opportunities
- Social Skills Curriculum
- Friday Gathering (school-wide weekly meeting led by Lowell students)
- Primary Music Performance
- Annual 5th Grade Mt. School to Diablo Dam
- Science Fair
- Pacific Science Center Day
- Book Fair with Bedtime and Books
- Leadership Notebooks
- Art Literacy
- Before and After School Programs Sponsored by the PTA (such as art, choir, chess club, foreign languages, drama)

II. Grouping Students

General Education and HCL designated students will be integrated into the same classrooms. Staff devotes tremendous energy and effort in making student placements each year, and will continue to do so.

A. Classroom Placement Process for All Students:

Lowell staff emphasizes relationships and social skill building foremost in their consideration for student placement. We assign students to classrooms based on several factors which include but are not limited to:

- Teacher Input re: social and emotional concerns
- Peer relationships and sibling requests (e.g. placing twins in the same classroom, separating students who have a history of difficulty)
- Qualification for Highly Capable Learners (HCL)
- Measure of Academic Progress (MAP Test) and Benchmark Reading scores
- Parent Input

B. Classroom Placement Process for Highly Capable Learners:

- High achieving students, HCL identified and General Education students will be grouped in a way that creates balanced classrooms while allowing students with similar learning needs together.
- Assessments will include MAP results: MSP results, Benchmark Reading scores, teacher delivered assessments and their knowledge of student performance in class.
- Lowell Elementary students who have demonstrated an ability to maintain or surpass their age-equivalent peers in reading or math but have not tested into HCL will also be placed using the same process. These students, however, will not receive the pull out HCL program.

This Curriculum Delivery Framework is adapted from Wedgwood Elementary. Permission for its use was given by Chris Cronas, the principal.