

**WALLENSPAUPACK AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT**  
**Communications Philosophy**  
**K – 5**

Communications instruction in the Wallenpaupack Area School District is based on a comprehensive literacy approach taken from research in the area of reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

The language arts – Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening – are unique because they are processes that students use to learn and make sense of their world. Students do not read “reading”; they read about history, science, mathematics and other content areas as well as about topics for their interest and entertainment. Similarly, students do not write “writing”; they use written words to express their knowledge and ideas and to inform or entertain others (PA Standards).

By comprehensive literacy, the Wallenpaupack Area School District means a balanced approach to reading instruction, an approach that addresses the five areas of reading instruction: 1) phonemic awareness; 2) phonics; 3) fluency; 4) vocabulary; and 5) text comprehension (Newman, 2001). Classroom instruction is planned and implemented to meet the students’ needs in each of these areas, using the skills and strategies necessary for systematic instruction and early interventions.

Research on how children learn to read supports an emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics in a literature rich environment. Children do not learn to read naturally, reading is a product of decoding and comprehension (Gough et.al.1993). Research over the past 35 years has not supported the view that reading development reflects a natural process. Scientific evidence shows that many children in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades and beyond will require explicit instruction to develop the necessary phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, and reading comprehension skills (Lyon). Explicit instruction designed to provide systematic interventions in reading is provided after diagnostic testing.

Good readers are phonemically aware, understand the alphabetic principle, and apply these skills in a rapid and fluent manner, possess strong vocabularies and syntactical and grammatical skills, and relate reading to their own experience. Children who are most at risk for reading failure enter kindergarten and the elementary grades without these early experiences. Poor readers have not engaged in the language play that develops an awareness of sound structure and language patterns (Lyon).

To meet the diverse needs of students at the K-5 grade levels, the following components are included on a regular basis: Kid Writing – K-2; shared reading – K-5; guided reading – 1-5; and Rebecca Sitton – 1-5. Students are assessed on a regular basis through the use of curriculum-based assessments, such as literacy checklists, phonemic awareness inventories, running records, journal entries and teach observations.