

OFFICE OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

BERNARDS TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS

Basking Ridge, New Jersey

K-5 LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM EVALUATION

January 2008

Sandra Russo, Co-chair

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STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS
Co-chairs – Janet M. Ankiel and Sandra Russo

GRADE	LAST NAME	FIRST NAME	SCHOOL
K	VENA	TERRY	MP
1	JAKUBOWSKI	SHERI	MP
2	CERRA	JEN	LC
3	NODES	BONNIE	OS
4	KOVACS	JESSICA	CH
5	RUSSO	SANDY	LC
SE	CARBONARO	ADRIA	OS
IS/ RS	BOBOWICZ	KRISTIN	OS
RS	BILENKER	HELAYNE	LC
RS	CAVAGNARO	GABRIELLA	CH
RS	BORCHERT	DAWN	MP

AN OVERVIEW THE LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAM EVALUATION PROCESS

The K-5 Language Arts Program Evaluation covers a lengthy period and involves many K-5 general and special education teachers directly and all K-5 and special education teachers indirectly.

The Steering Committee began meeting on a regular basis in January of 2006. Summer Curriculum Writing monies supported several days of meetings in July of 2006. Sub-committees under the guidance of reading specialists and various Steering Committee members began to meet in October of 2006. Various K-5 Curriculum Meetings focused on Language Arts and the entire process culminated in Summer Curriculum Writing in the summer of 2007.

The first task of the Steering Committee involved assessing the existing Philosophy, the K-12 Exit Goals and the K-12 Program Goals. After discussions and input from many stake holders, some minor revisions were suggested and acted upon.

Guided by several Overarching Questions (appendix), The Steering Committee began to gather data and information to help make decisions. Examination of NJDOE Assessments attest to strong student performance in reading comprehension at the informational level. As in previous years, the scores suggest due diligence in continuing to emphasize the importance of developing higher order thinking skills in relation to reading comprehension and a deeper awareness of literature/ critical thinking skills.

Changes to both the science and social studies curricula have directly impacted on the integration of instruction through the language arts thematic units. Necessary changes have been implemented wherever possible. The examination and realignment of existing thematic units, learning, objectives, compliance to NJDOE Content Standards, and review of materials has involved all classroom teachers. Each grade level had the opportunity to reflect on the existing curriculum and suggest changes in both instruction and materials.

Several factors guided the evaluation process including but not limited to the following three factors:

1. The impact of No Child Left Behind prompted everyone to carefully examine reading instruction and place a new emphasis on the development of fluency.
2. Curriculum mapping exercises revealed some gaps in compliance with the NJDOE Core Curriculum Content Standards.
3. The District Differentiation of Instruction initiative encouraged everyone to assess all components of language arts instruction and identify areas to improve.
4. This Program Evaluation focused on fine-tuning the delivery of instruction and the review of materials in order to offer the most effective instruction.

Over the many months of this process, the teaching staff continued to examine samples of books from a variety of vendors. The decision to keep the existing literature anthology came early in the discussion. Teachers elected to focus their attention on exploring options for word study and upgrading the tradebook collection.

The reports of the various sub-committees follow this general summary.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet M. Ankiel, Chair of the Language Arts Steering Committee

Sandra Russo, Co-chair of the Language Arts Steering Committee

K-5 LANGUAGE ARTS EVALUATION SUB-COMMITTEES

WRITING COMMITTEE CHAIR – K. BOBOWICZ

Writing

- WHO?** Amy Giamarino, Bonnie Nodes, Kristin Bobowicz, Glen Denys, Christine Chiravalle, Rhonda Battenfelder, Adria Carbonaro
- WHAT?** Focus: add writing objectives for all thematic units, all elementary grades; generate writing mini-lesson list, update writing portfolio procedures
- WHERE?** Oak Street Computer Lab (during school year) and William Annin Media Center (summer curriculum writing)
- WHEN?** Jan. 2007, Feb. 2007, March 2007
- WHY?** Our primary goal was to add writing objectives for all of the thematic units for all grades. We also generated a comprehensive list of writing mini-lessons for a variety of purposes (mechanics, process, management, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, other) for the teachers to reference during writing instruction. The writing portfolio was also re-examined and updated. A new writing portfolio “tracking sheet” was developed for the students to keep track of the required writing pieces throughout the school year.
- HOW?** The entire elementary staff developed the mini-lessons list collaboratively during the district curriculum meetings. The writing objectives and portfolio assessment piece were updated during summer curriculum writing.

MATERIALS SUB-COMMITTEE

DAWN BORCHERT, CHAIR

WHO?

Connie Semler	Kristine Lier
Kathy McCarthy	Alex Fahner-Vihtelic
Jessica DeRose	Cindy Cicchino
Mary Ann Guggenheim	Antonia Papoutsis
Debbie Len	Sheri Jakubowski

WHAT?

- Establish expectations for core books/ supplemental titles
- Evaluate levels of books/ materials – (Differentiation-meeting the needs of all students)
- Evaluate material needs – (keep / eliminate /change)
- Initiate grade-level discussions and cross grade-level discussions
- Research and order new core supplemental titles

WHERE?

Mount Prospect School
Oak Street School

WHEN?

January – March 2007 – once a month

WHY?

Language Arts Curriculum Program Evaluation process identified several areas where materials needed updating, replacement, improvement.

READING SUB-COMMITTEE
Co Chairs: Helayne Bilenker and Stephanie Orr

WHO?

Sara Mastroianni	Karen Finazzo
Heather Ray	Elizabeth Reeves
Jaclyn Ryan	Rosemary Testa
Beth Bierbower	

WHAT? Based on district teacher input, our committee created a “Reading Mini-Lesson Chart” for Grades K-5 for quick reference.

WHERE? We met at William Annin, Liberty Corner and at Cedar Hill.

WHEN? We had 4 meetings after school from 3:40-4:40:
November 29, 2006
January 10, 2007
February 13, 2007
March 14, 2007

Why? To share, discuss and organize information gathered across the district and across the grade levels (K-5) concerning “reading” mini-lessons.

HOW? Created a list of “Reading Mini-Lessons” and constructed a chart to show at which grades the mini-lessons are applicable.

REVIEW OF CURRENT PROGRAM

EXIT GOALS:

The self-assessment of the current program began with each grade level examining the Exit Goals for various components of the curriculum: reading strategies, reacting/ responding/ thinking, writing process, writing content, writing style, writing mechanics, and attitude toward language arts. After completing this exercise, it was agreed that providing Exit Goals for the Word Study strand of the curriculum would be helpful. A draft document was prepared and feedback solicited from all grade levels resulting in Exit Goals for Word Study.

CURRICULUM MAPPING

At K-5 Curriculum Meetings, each grade mapped their curricula to check for compliance to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards. Areas needing attention and missing elements were noted so that summer work could address any shortcomings.

THEMATIC UNITS

Each grade level reviewed the existing thematic units that frame the Language Arts Curriculum. Teachers focused attention on the Unit Overview charts which summarize major teaching concepts for each unit. Teachers reviewed various grade level samples in order to expand their vision for the best design of this component. Duplications were identified, gaps were recorded and revisions planned for Curriculum Writing projects. After the grade levels completed their reviews and offered suggestions, the Steering Committee reviewed all the themes to guarantee appropriate vertical articulation.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

READING:

After discussions with various stakeholders and in response to ongoing growth, the Reading Sub-committee decided to prepare a more explicit document focusing on Reading Mini-lessons. Main categories include the following topics: comprehension strategies, word solving, literary elements, and fluency.

The Balanced Reading section of the curriculum is currently being updated and revised in order to reflect current practice, additional research and needs of the student population. This segment of the curriculum details and describes expectations for each of the following: shared reading, guided reading, literature circles, and several forms of independent reading.

WRITING:

Similar to the reading mini-lessons document, the Writing Sub-committee prepared a new, expanded chart of writing mini-lessons.

After several discussions, the teachers have revised various components of the Writing Portfolio procedures.

WRITING SAMPLES:

All District Writing Samples and In-house Writing sample prompts have been reviewed. Directions have been standardized and in some instance new materials selected.

Each reading specialist has a notebook containing all prompts, teacher/ student directions, and rubric. The process has eliminated prompts which produced too many off-topic responses and those which were too similar to other grade level prompts. The staff is considering a poem prompt as preparation for the NJASK 4.

MATERIALS:

Each grade level examined existing materials and identified areas of the curricula that suggested updated texts, literature, and instructional materials. For example kindergarten selected new “big books” and titles to support the Health Habits unit; grade one selected titles that reflect the changes in the food pyramid; grade 2 completed a general revision of its reading materials, grade 3 selected books about inventors/ inventions to replace out of print materials as well as additional titles for the Cinderella unit; grade 4 will include *Rules* as a literature circle option. Grade 4 is still previewing 7 additional titles; grade 5 has added a Spinnelli literature circle to incorporate humorous reading.

See the list in the appendix.

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND WORD STUDY:

In response to continuing parent concern and teacher advocacy, a sub-committee charged with assessing the existing word study of the curriculum reached a consensus about implementation of Words Their Way. The three-year plan begins with teachers facilitating various whole class word sort this year in order to familiar students with the procedures and scope of the various sorts. Some initial training in assessment of the sorts has already occurred. More individualized and student specific instruction will begin as the process continues.

TECHNOLOGY

With the infusion of more technology at the elementary level, teachers were directed to specifically identify learning objectives in the thematic units. As teachers gain new proficiencies in using SmartBoard technology and have more time to explore the United

Data Streaming site, the presence of technology will continue to increase as an integrated aspect of instruction.

STUDENT SURVEYS

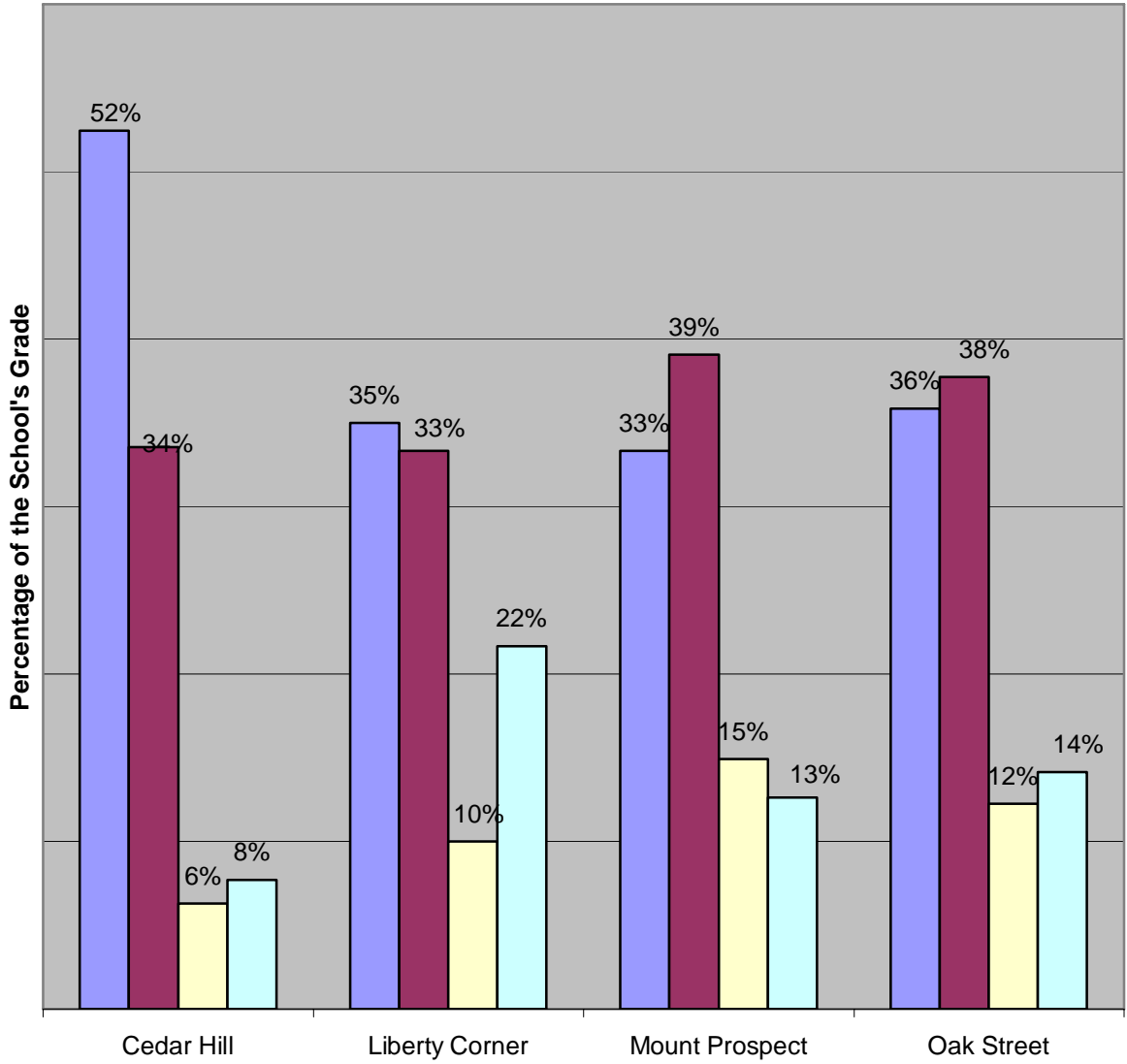
The Steering Committee surveyed grades 3-5 using an on-line survey. Results are included in this document. Two interesting pieces of information reveal that both boys and girls report that they found learning to read quite easy. Secondly, mothers read the most in the homes according to the students. Students read frequently at home although in grade 5 the students report a sharp drop in independent reading.

PARENT SURVEYS

Two hundred and thirty-eight parents responded to the on-line parent survey. Graphs are included in the report. As in past years, parents expressed a wish to see more phonics, spelling and grammar instruction. While parents generally feel positive about the Language Arts program, a large number have concerns about homework and its relevancy.

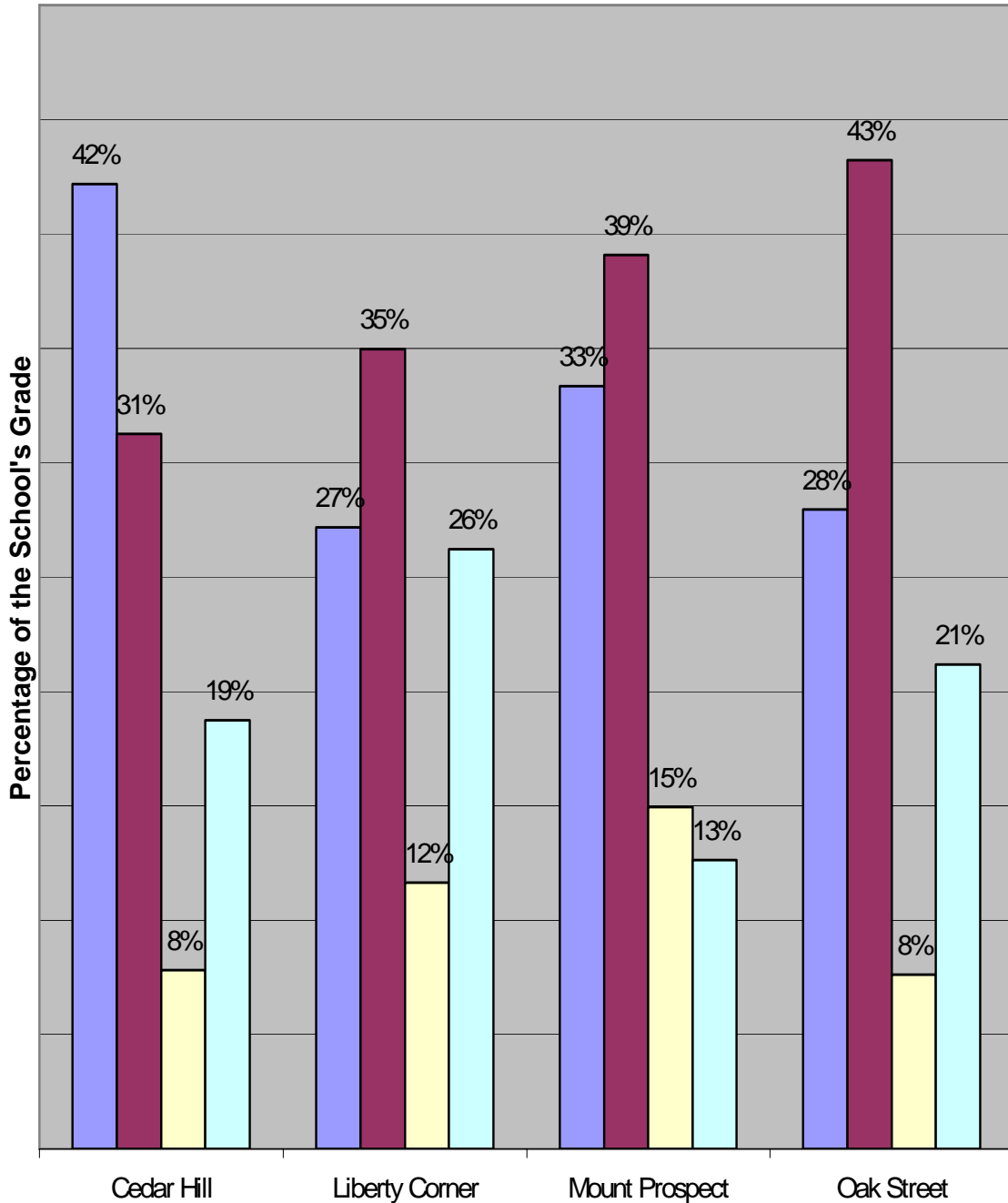
Grade 3: Learning How to Read

Very Easy Easy Hard Very Hard

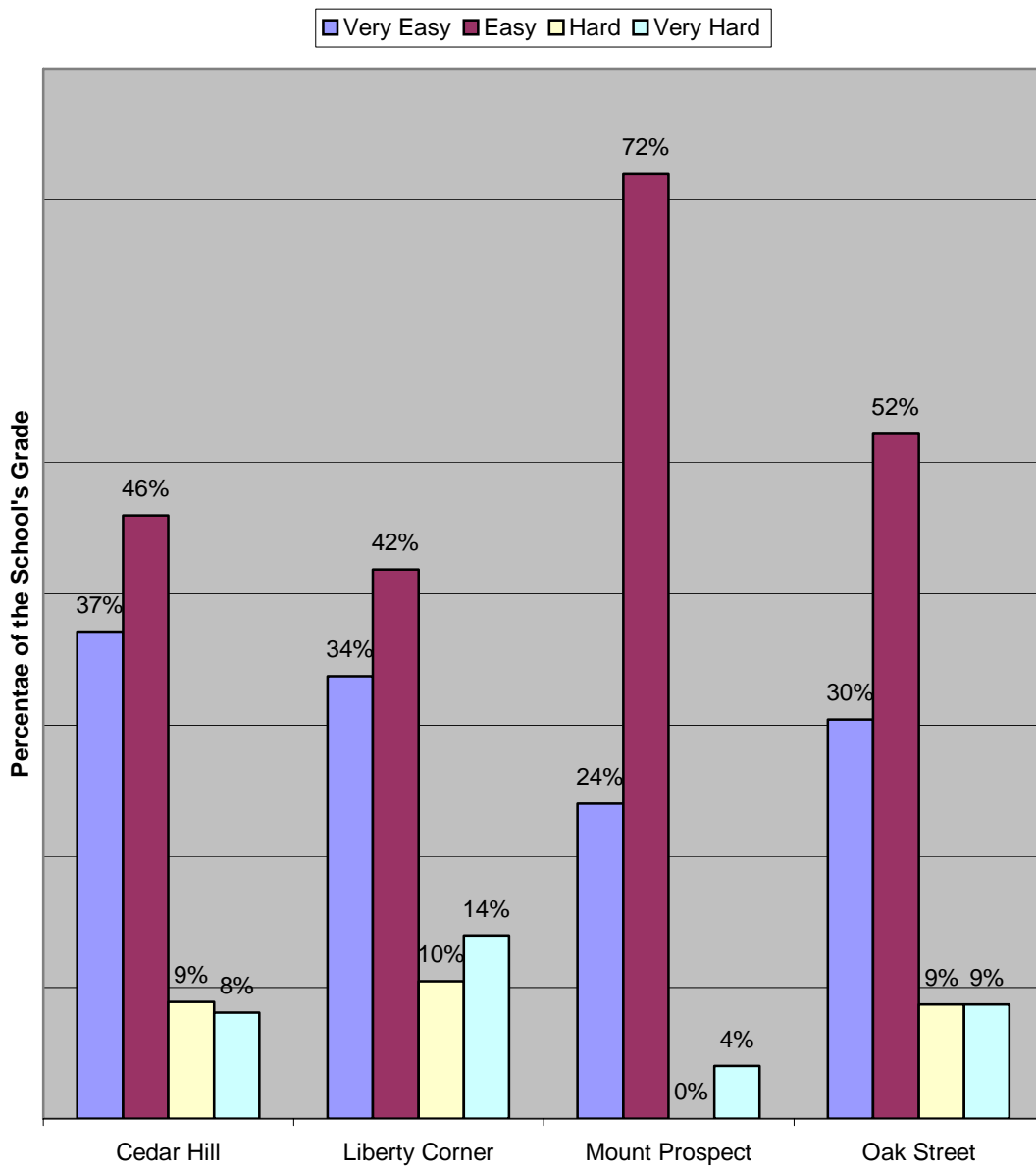


Grade 4: Learning How to Read

Very Easy Easy Hard Very Hard

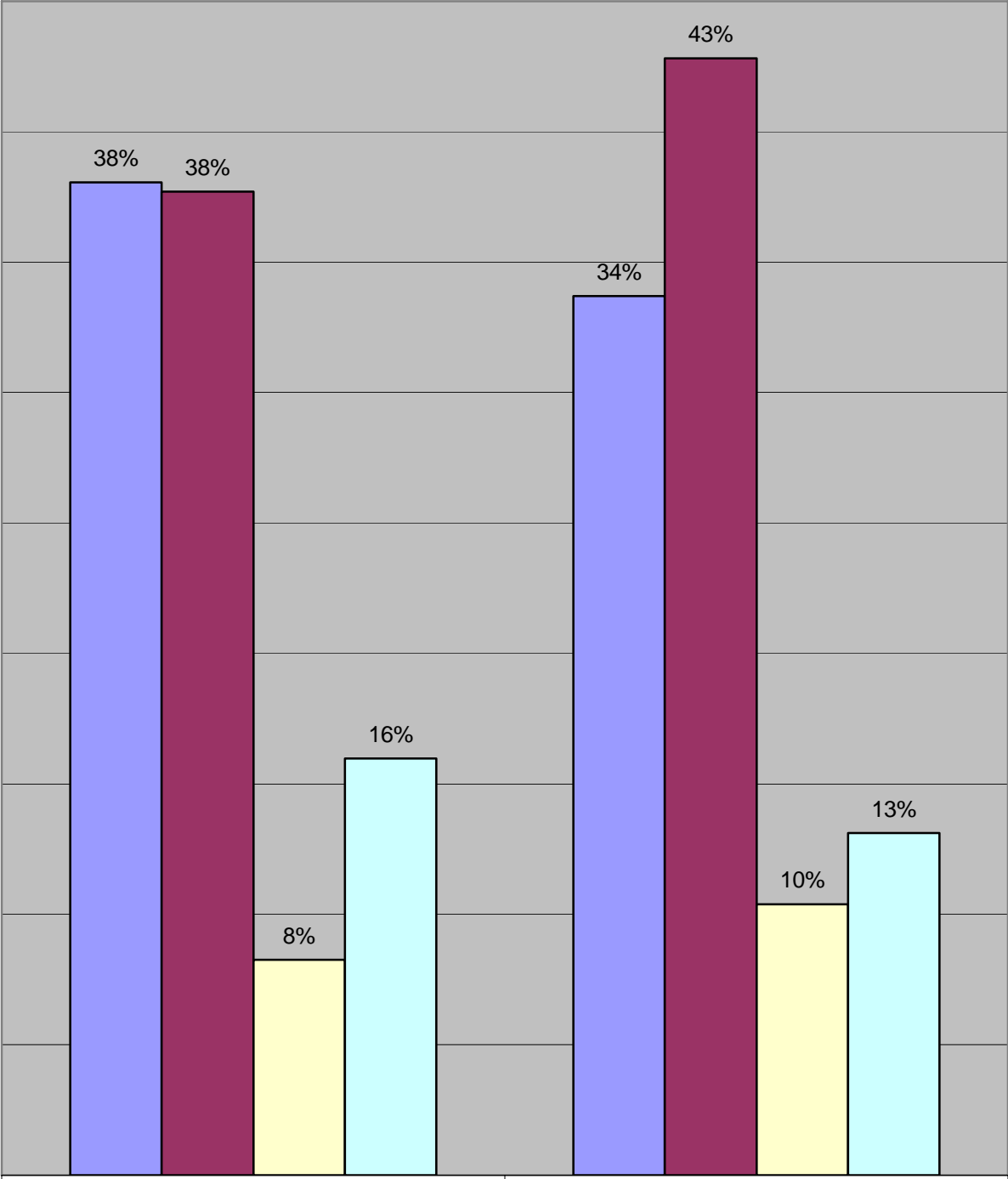


Grade 5: Learning How to Read



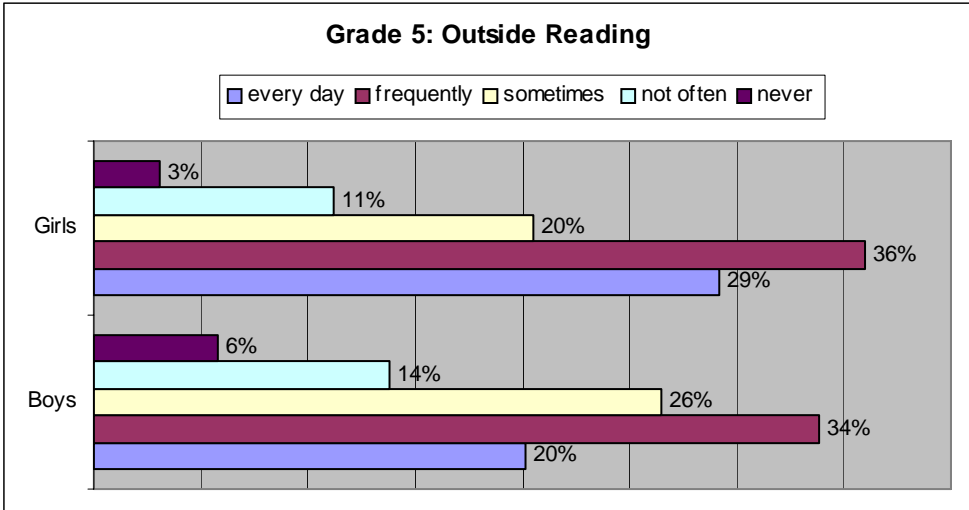
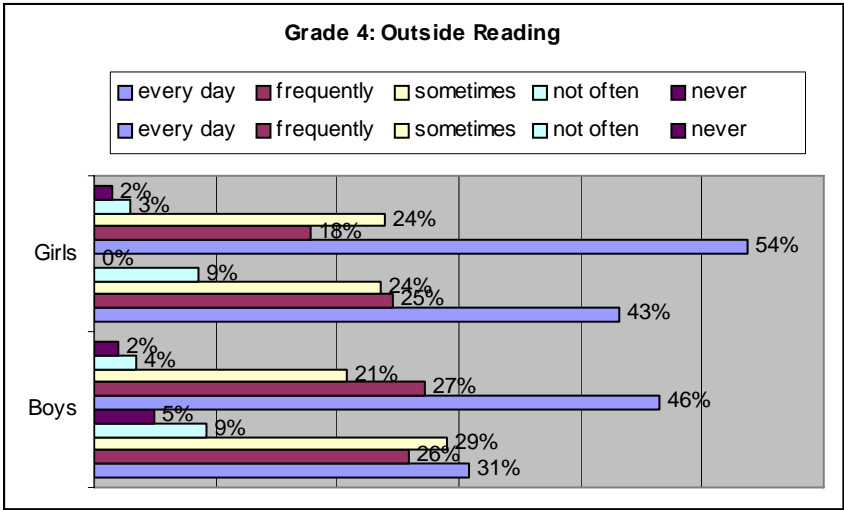
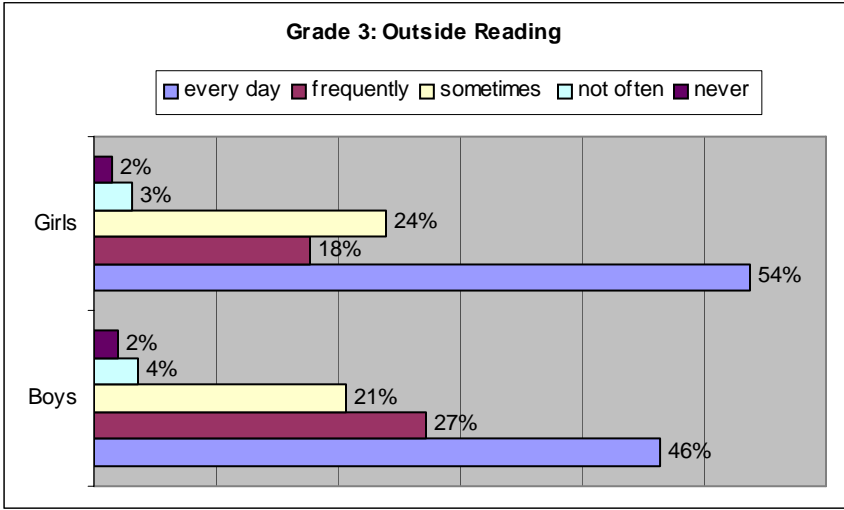
Learning How to Read: Female vs. Male

Very Easy Easy Hard Very Hard

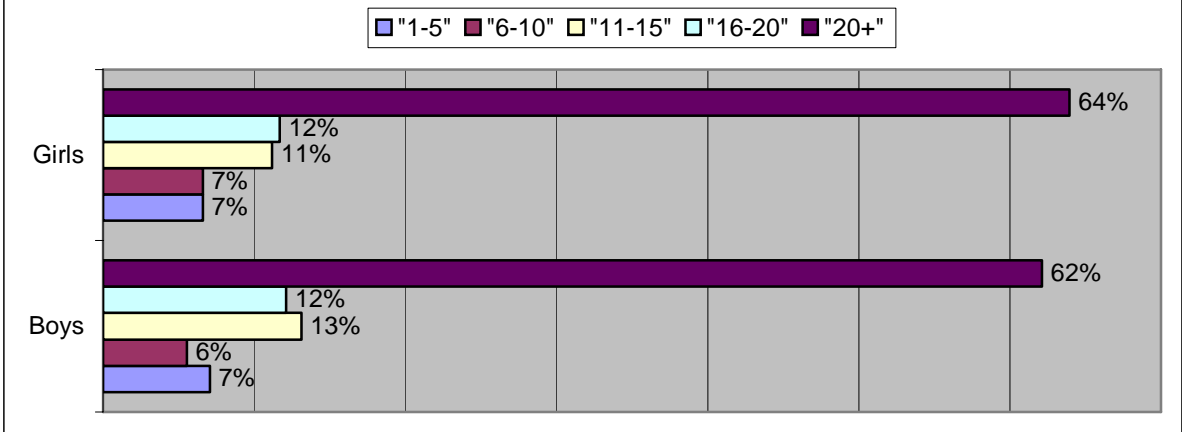


Female

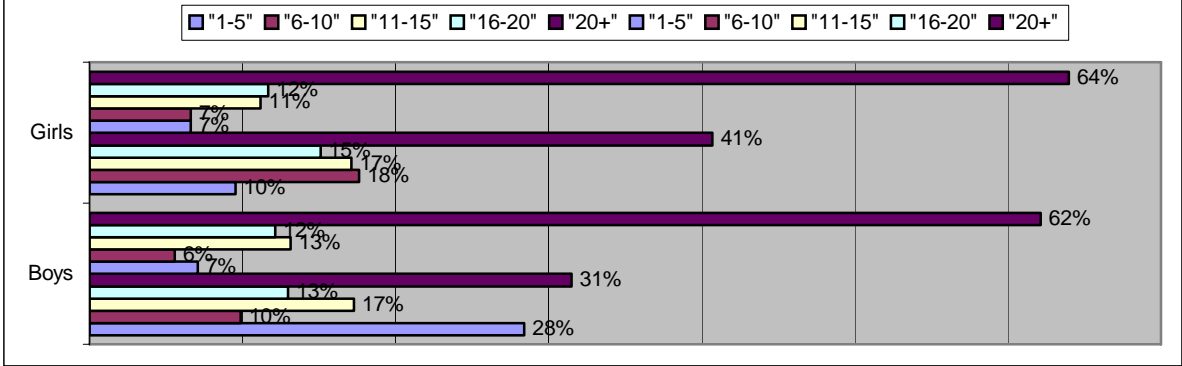
Male



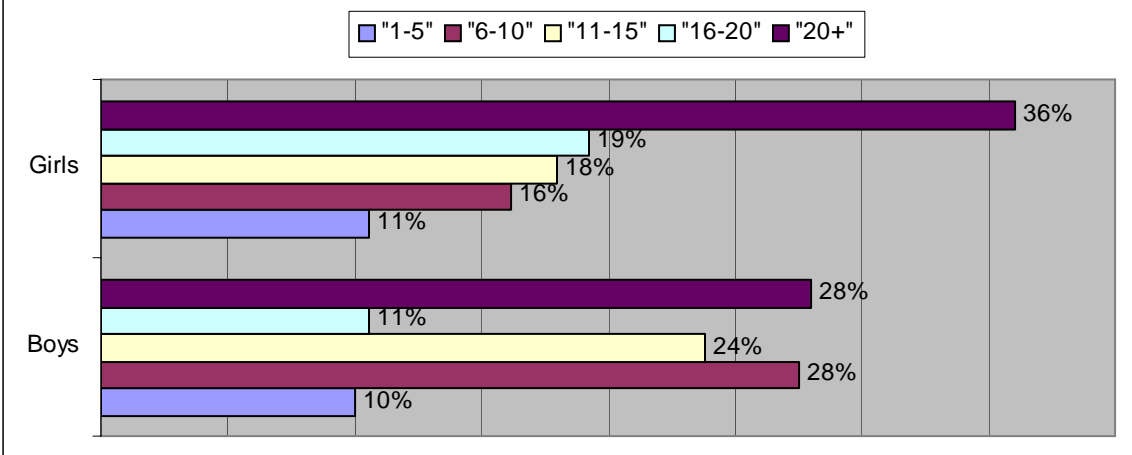
Grade 3: Number of Books Read



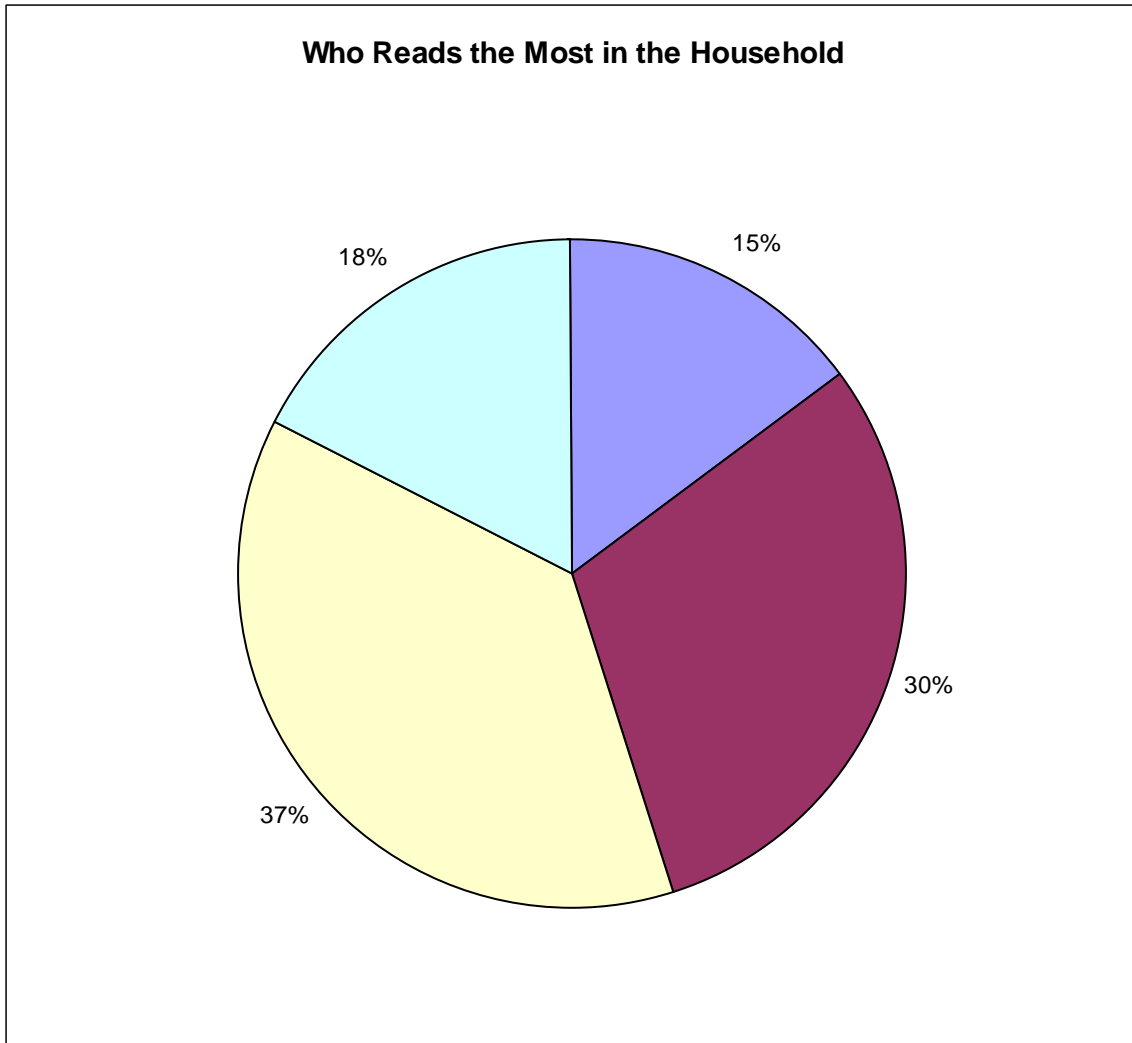
Grade 4: Number of Books Read



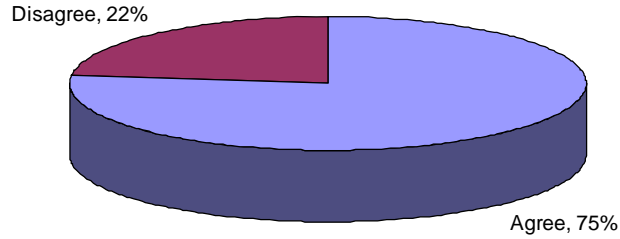
Grade 5: Number of Books Read



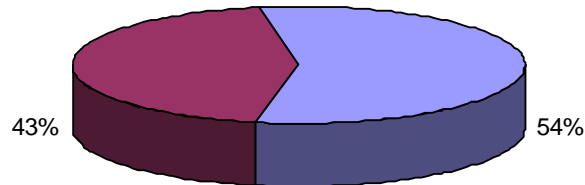
Father	15%
Mother	30%
Sibling	18%
Other	37%



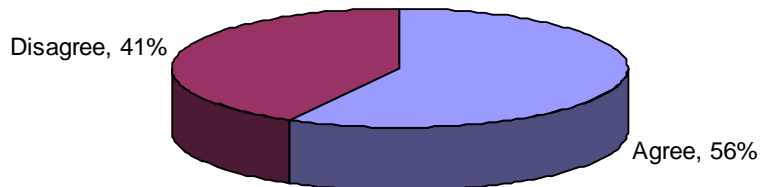
Parents Feel That Reading Selections and Other Language Arts Materials Are Current and Meets the Needs of Their Child



Parents Feel That Their Child Has Opportunities to Refine Reading and Writing Strategies Through Meaningful Homework Activities



Parents Feel That the Curriculum Content Satisfies the Needs of Their Child, Including Vocabulary, Phonics (K-2), and Spelling



APPENDIX

OVERARCHING QUESTIONS FOR K-5 PROGRAM EVALUATION

IN LANGUAGE ARTS

THEMATIC UNITS AND CORE BOOKS

1. How do the thematic units provide a broad spectrum of language arts experiences (reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing) that align with the NJCCCS and the program goals?
2. How do the related core books/texts, core book activities and core book assessments provide relevant and rigorous instruction and represent the best available for reading experiences? Do selections represent a blend of modern, contemporary and post-modern offerings in all genre including poetry?

TEXTS AND MATERIALS

3. How do existing language arts supplemental materials (professional books for teachers, dictionaries/thesaurus, spellcheckers, supplemental texts), support rigorous and relevant language arts instruction?
4. Is the current trade book collection, guided reading materials, and anthology still relevant and rigorous? Are all needs being met? Have teachers leveled classroom libraries? How can we level all materials?

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

5. How does the K-5 Language Arts program establish support for developing effective reading comprehension and competent writing strategies? How does technology assist/ expand these activities.
6. How does the K-5 Language Arts program meet the varying needs of our students?
7. How does the K-5 language arts program articulate between grades and transfer to other content areas? How does the program articulate with WAMS?
8. Do strategies exist that are relevant, rigorous and currently not in use? Should they be in use?

ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION

9. What influence does the curriculum and instruction have on the district's standardized test scores?
10. Do all core titles/ themes have significant assessments? How do the various themes provide a spectrum of assessment/evaluation procedures?

TECHNOLOGY

12. How do language arts courses/ various schools provide students with access to technology?

GRADE	NEW TITLES
Kindergarten	<p style="text-align: center;"> Moonlight and Shadow Tooth Trouble Plenty of Penguins Miss Bindergarten First Kwanza Thanksgiving Thank You Seasons Funny Photo Alphabet </p>
1st	<p style="text-align: center;"> Around the World: Clothing Around the World: Homes Symbols of Freedom: The White House Symbols of Freedom The Bald Eagle Symbols of Freedom the Pledge of Allegiance Symbols of Freedom: the American Flag Symbols of Freedom The Lincoln Memorial Symbols of Freedom: The Washington Memorial Symbols of Freedom: Mount Rushmore Symbols of Freedom: The Liberty Bell Bread Around the World Make Mine Ice Cream Pasta Please Healthy Eating Thunder Cake From Plant to Blue Jeans The Relatives Came My Teacher for President Woodrow the Whitehouse Mouse Red, White, Blue </p> <p style="text-align: center;">WORD SORTS</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Letter name Within-word Syllables-affixes </p>
2nd	<p style="text-align: center;"> A Picture Book of Sacagawea Solar System The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses Chester’s Way Midnight on the Moon You Read to Me I’ll Read to You: Fairy Tales One Giant Leap Jack and the Beanstalk Adelita </p>

	<p>WORDS SORTS Within-words Syllables-Affixes Derivational Relations</p>
3 rd	<p>What is Technology Alexander Graham Bell Thomas Edison Henry Ford Orville and Wilbur Wright In the Rain forest A Picture Book: T.A. Edison Incredible Inventions Ella's Big Chance Cinder Edna WORDS SORTS Within-words Syllables-Affixes Derivational Relations</p>
4 th	<p>Rules (Under Review) American Revolution Arrow Over the Door George VS. George: The Amer. George Washington, Spymaster George Washington's Socks (now that is an intriguing title!) Guns for General Washington Victory or Death!: Stories WORDS SORTS Syllables-Affixes Derivational Relations</p>
5 th	<p>Crash Maniac Magee Loser Wringer Stargirl Eggs Milkweed Library Card Knots in My Yo-Yo String Iron Will DVD Rudy DVD WORDS SORTS Syllables-Affixes Derivational Relations</p>

