

08.19.2017 Literacy Video Script M. Haag

Literacy.....More Important than Ever, Lenawee making great strides.

Hello, my name is Mark Haag, Superintendent of the Lenawee Intermediate School District. I would like to share some personal thoughts with you regarding the importance of Literacy and some updates of what is going on in Lenawee County in that area.

Despite living in an ever-changing world that sometimes seems to be dominated by technology, the skill of reading remains vital and some would argue more important than ever to thrive on an academic, social, and civic level. The Lenawee Cradle to Career (C2C) Partnership remains focused on building literacy skills in our young people and is having success through some new initiatives.

We would love every young person to develop a true passion for reading a variety of genres: fiction, nonfiction, fantasy, technical manuals, online content, and others; at minimum, literacy skills (reading, writing and speaking) remain essential skills for success in today's world.

Reading, like other skills, can be improved drastically through exposure, practice, and building into daily routines, especially if done in family and other social settings.

Sullivan and Brown (2013) found that reading for pleasure was a greater influence on a child's vocabulary, math, and spelling scores than their parent's educational background. Literacy expert John Guthrie (2004) found that low-income students with high reading engagement routinely excelled over their peers with higher-income and better-educated parents.

The research is overwhelming, engaged reading translates into high achievement. Lenawee C2C is working to ensure high literacy skills for all students in Lenawee County.

Some strategies that are being implemented currently in Lenawee County as part of the Lenawee C2C work include:

- Increasing student access to reading materials and experiences during the summer months, when school is not in session.
- Implementation of the Essential Literacy Practices developed by the General Education Leadership Network through Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators. These research-based practices were developed in a collaborative effort between practicing educators and literacy experts in Michigan.

Summer reading opportunities have expanded in Lenawee County to include integration with existing Boys and Girls Club and YMCA summer activities (continuation of previous year) and new weekly Literacy “Pop Up” activities at Addison, Britton, and Hudson Schools in concert with their Summer Free Lunch programs. These programs have been a true community collaboration as the LISD has partnered with Foster Grandparents of Lenawee, Goodwill Industries of Southeast Michigan, Adrian Morning Rotary, Lenawee Community Foundation, Siena Heights University, and Dollar General for resources, planning, and implementation. Students who attend the Pop Up activities have an opportunity for some hands-on Science and Math learning, reading activity, and leave with a book to keep each week. These opportunities are open to all students across Lenawee County, but those locations were selected due to less accessible resources in those communities. We hope that this program can be expanded for the next summer to all of our school communities in the county. The intent of these programs is to eliminate learning loss in the summer months and promote learning year-round. Our data from the past summer indicates this has already had a positive impact locally in a short time of existence.

The Implementation of the Essential Literacy Practices was a much needed and requested way for children to experience consistent, research based practices for success at the classroom, building, and district level. Each district has a Literacy Coach that will be trained in working with both children and adult educators to ensure a consistent and deep implementation of these practices that lead to success. Building and District Administrators are also trained for what to “look for” and promote in their classrooms and buildings, again ensuring all children access to the practices that have proven to be successful.

Though Michigan has a mandated emphasis on all students reading “at grade level” by third grade, the importance of building not only reading skills, but a lifelong passion for reading cannot be overstated. There are a variety of ways people can get involved as an individual, service group, or business; as we need many volunteers and donations to get reading materials in children’s hands. Though we have a strong public library system, research supports the value of children selecting and having books of their own to keep, re-read, and share with others.

In summary, we invite all in the community to join us in promoting reading with our young people. One of the best ways is through modeling the behavior yourself and/or championing literacy at any chance you get. I would love to see our community promote and celebrate literacy the same way we do athletics and the arts, as all are

important and have a lasting impact on shaping the adult citizens we are building together.

If you would like more information or would like to assist in some way, please do not hesitate to contact me. Many hands make light work.

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