



THIS ISSUE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

Discover what students are learning in ELA at every grade level at BCS.

CONVERGING FOR SUCCESS

Find out the three important factors that determine a student's success.

I AM BOLTON

Remarks from three randomly selected BCS students.

"Literacy is not a luxury, it is a right and a responsibility. If our world is to meet the challenges of the 21st century we must harness the energy and creativity of all our citizens."

- President Clinton on International Literacy Day, September 8, 1994

How Do You Learn to Read?

Reading and English Language Arts at Bolton Central School

The pre-kindergartener at Bolton Central School walked up to the SMART Board and touched the uppercase letter E in the barn under the hen and dragged it to the appropriate uppercase E nest below. The next young student moved the lowercase letter e to the lowercase e nest. When the interactive lesson was completed with all the upper and lowercase e's in their correct nests, the eggs hatched into little peeping chicks.



A young student practices recognizing the upper and lowercase of the letter E in an interactive lesson on the SMART Board in Ms. Schoder's pre-kindergarten classroom.

Happy to have correctly completed the task, the young students giggled, totally unaware of the literacy journey they had just begun.

You probably take for granted the skills you are using right now as you read and comprehend this article, or when you write in complete sentences using correctly spelled words. At some point in your education, you took the necessary steps to develop those skills that are now second nature.

If you have mastered those skills, then you are among the 86 percent of U.S. adults who have basic literacy skills.

According to a January 2009 article in *USA TODAY*, "A long-awaited federal study finds that an estimated 32 million adults in the USA – about one in seven – are saddled with such low literacy skills that it would be tough for them to read anything more challenging than a children's picture book or to understand a medication's side effects listed on a pill bottle."

The study is from the U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Statistics (IES). Their website <<http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/index.aspx>> provides 2003 figures, the latest year available. The statistics indicate that 10 percent of Warren County's 52,600 people lack basic literacy skills.

At Bolton Central School, English Language Arts (ELA) is in everything a student does from pre-kindergarten to 12th grade. Teachers weave in technology and make reading fun to capture a young mind's interest. For if you capture them at an early age, it will help them be successful

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down the road.

Principal Damian Switzer said, "Reading, writing, speaking and listening skills are the key components of any balanced literacy framework. The BCS ELA program focuses on literacy across all grade levels, and alignment to a standards-based curriculum. Our programs are unique in that instruction is targeted, at every level, to ensure the success of our students as they progress toward commencement levels of performance. Our students continue to perform very well on New York State assessments (see chart on back page), and we are always looking to increase our numbers of mastery level achievement."

BCS's English language arts program begins with the nine youngest students in the school district; the 4-year-olds in pre-kindergarten.

"The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." - Dr. Seuss, "I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!"

Pre-Kindergarten

In its first year at BCS, the pre-kindergarten class propels this year's Class of 2022 members into the world of literacy with the recognition of upper and lower case letters, beginning of letter sounds, and the understanding that those letters make words, and words make sentences.

"The kids come in with all different ability levels," said Pre-K teacher Ms. Tamara Schoder. She does screenings three times a year and her own assessments on a quarterly basis to find out just how well her students are doing.

In addition to offering learning centers for reading, writing, and math along with social literacy, vocabulary, and dramatic play activities, there's a Pre-K component to the new reading series teachers are using at Bolton.

Last year, BCS invested in a new literacy series for Pre-K to Grade 5 called, "Reading Street" by Pearson and Scott Foresman. This comprehensive series offers content that is aligned with the NYS standards and encompasses all the skills needed at each grade level.

"Getting kids excited about reading and enjoying what they're reading is our goal," said Ms. Schoder. One fun activity to motivate young readers was celebrating Dr. Seuss's birthday on Read Across America Day in March. Bolton's young readers were in good company across the nation that day as more than 45 million readers were reading a good book, according to the National Education Association's website.

Parents As Reading Partners (PARP) month held in March is another good motivator for reading.

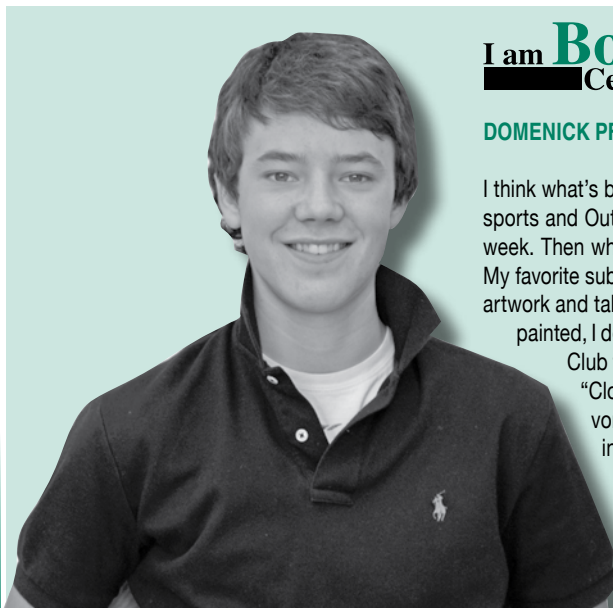
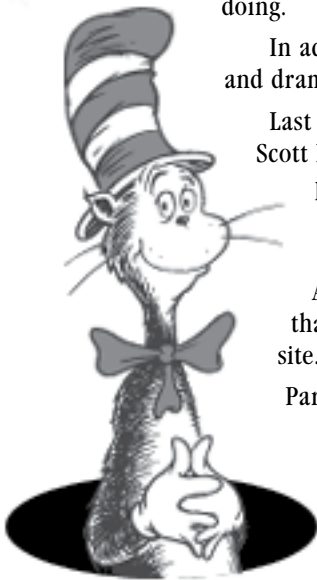
Ms. Schoder holds a master's degree in literacy for birth through sixth grade, as several other teachers do in the elementary grades.

"On a scale from one to 10, literacy is a 10. It's everywhere," said Ms. Schoder.

Kindergarten

"Kindergarteners are doing what first graders used to do," commented Ms. Schoder.

"If you can read this, thank a teacher." - Anonymous teacher



I am Bolton Central School

DOMENICK PFAUS IS AN 11TH GRADER

I think what's best about school is that we're in the Adirondacks and we get out and about a lot for sports and Outing Club trips. I came to Bolton in sixth grade. Before Bolton, I had gym one day a week. Then when I came here, we were outside on the lake canoeing. We're really active outside. My favorite subject is art. The teacher is nice and helpful. We get to express ourselves through our artwork and take home our projects. Right now I'm painting tennis shoes. Instead of ordering them painted, I decided to try and paint them myself. I play basketball and golf. I'm going on the Outing Club trip in April to the southwest.

"Clockwork Orange" is my favorite book. It's better than the movie. "Aladdin" is my favorite movie. It brings me back to my childhood. I like the TV show, "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia."

My favorite food would be stir fry that my dad makes. My mom is a nutritionist, so it's really healthy.

I text a lot. It's cool to keep in touch. Sometimes, talking on the phone feels awkward.

So what are they doing?

Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Jessica Foy, who's working for Mrs. Egloff during her maternity leave, said the students are learning beginning and ending sounds, reading a new story every week, reading little and big books, identifying main characters and settings, learning about the beginning, middle and end of the story, and getting a very basic introduction of verbs.

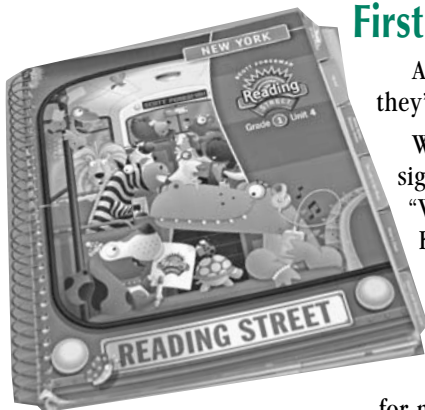
In addition to using the reading series, Mrs. Foy said kindergarteners are learning sight words and reviewing their letters with the "Letter People," a program that introduces the letter, offers sounds and motions, and has the children sound them out.

"Literacy is very important. You've got to read to be able to do the other subjects," Mrs. Foy said, which is why she integrates literacy into science and social studies lessons.

For those students who need extra attention, there's an early reading intervention series called "My Sidewalks" that covers initial sounds.



Kindergarteners gather 'round Mrs. Kathleen Field, the library media specialist, as she discusses a selection of picture books.



First Grade

As students move into first grade, the curriculum continues to build on what they've already learned.

When the students entered first grade, they knew letters, letter sounds and basic sight words. Now they are learning more sight words and beginning to write. "Writing is a wonderful differentiator," explained first grade teacher Mrs. Cynthia Kaveny. "Their writing reveals what they are and are not understanding."

The reading series for this grade includes word study, vocabulary, phonemics, fluency, comprehension, and writing. Half of the stories the students read are non-fiction. "It's more real world," said Mrs Kaveny, "and that's really important. As a child gets older they don't just read stories, they read for meaning."

As a teacher in first and second grades and literacy specialist, Mrs. Margot Hens added that the reading series also offers different levels of reading. She said they continually assess students using DIBELS. (DIBELS stands for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills. It offers standardized, individually administered measures of early literacy.) "It makes assessment a lot easier and we have instant information," Mrs. Hens said.

"The SMART board is a great tool for capturing the children's interests and motivating them. It's like a video game, but it's all about learning," said Mrs. Kaveny. "It's revolutionized our teaching,"

"All Bolton students can read by the time they leave first grade," said Mrs. Hens, a seven-year veteran teacher. "It's such a small school. We continually analyze to avoid students slipping through the cracks."

Mrs. Hens continued, "We also want to be a model for our students and show them we are lifelong learners and learning is fun."

Mrs. Kaveny said they spend at least 90 minutes on literacy skills each day. However, literacy is a part of everything they do. "It's the glue that holds everything together," said Mrs. Kaveny. Over her 18 years of teaching, she said the basics of teaching literacy have remained the same. Some trends have come and gone, but she feels every child is unique and learns in a unique way. That's why they offer a little of all teaching methods so they're assured everyone will understand.



Mrs. Margot Hens works with a group of first grade readers.

Second Grade

Teaching for 28 years, second grade teacher Mrs. Gail DePace explained that her students go one step further with phonics, learning words with two vowels, enriching vocabulary, expanding the list of sight words, and learning

"A book is the most effective weapon against intolerance and ignorance." - Lyndon Baines Johnson

the irregular spelling of words. They learn more about grammar, parts of speech, how to write a complete sentence and learn how to correctly spell words. They focus on reading comprehension and fluency, and reading for understanding.

“Literacy is everything,” she smiled.

Third Grade

Another 28-year veteran teacher, Mrs. Deborah Andersen, who teaches third grade, said her students continue to build on what they’ve done in the previous grades.

What’s new for third graders is taking the New York State ELA Assessment test.

“We review and review. The students get so much practice that by the time they take the test it just seems like another practice to them,” said Mrs. Andersen.

Fourth Grade

Mrs. Anne Greene, who will be retiring this year after teaching 36 years, said in addition to continuing to build on what students learned last year, fourth graders read fantasy and non-fiction and concentrate on writing as much as reading. She said her students learn persuasive letter writing and write poems.



Fifth graders start their day by reading the newspaper.

Fifth Grade



Mrs. Humiston’s students work on a song lyric project on the computer creating a graphical representation of the lyrics.

Having taught for nine years, Mr. Mark Andrejkovics said he’s always looking for ways to spark the interest of his students. He stressed the enjoyment of reading and said he assists his 20 students in finding novels that they connect with.

Mr. “A” strives to prepare his students for middle school so that they are not overwhelmed in sixth grade. Students do a lot of essay writing, paragraphing, and learn about the main idea and supporting details.

Fifth graders also read the newspaper every day for current events.

Sixth and Seventh Grade

Now in her fifth year of teaching, Mrs. Lori Humiston thinks having a grasp of the English language is the cornerstone for education. “Think about how successful students will be if they are able to communicate effectively. If they are able to produce creative sentences and manipulate language to get their point across,” said Mrs. Humiston.

Mrs. Humiston teaches ELA to sixth and seventh graders. At that level, students are reading short stories, poetry and novels in and out of class. She said the students read 26 to 27 books in the school year. Sixth graders read a different genre every month; seventh graders venture into new genres.

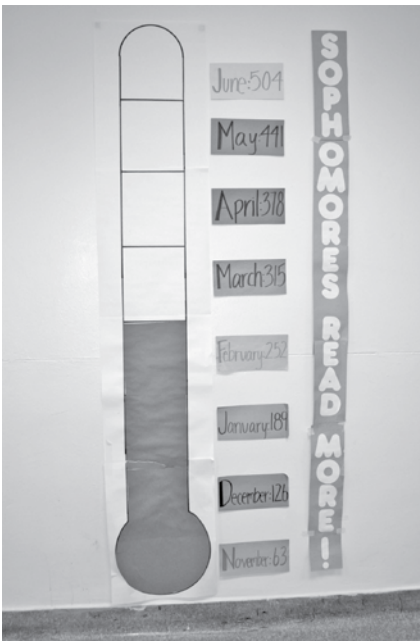
Sixth graders focus on understanding the concept and recognizing symbolism in what they’ve read; whereas seventh graders approach reading on a higher level analyzing what they’ve read. Mrs. Humiston assigned a project using song as a literary device. The students were to find a song that was meaningful to them. Then analyze what the author intended, paying special attention to any symbolisms and metaphors, and recreate its intended meaning visually.

“It’s more writing-based for seventh graders,” explained Mrs. Humiston. “We integrate more of what’s expected on the Regents test for eleventh graders. The sooner they get used to the standards, the better they’ll do.”

Eighth, Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh Grades

In English 8, the ELA curriculum focuses on the transition from middle school to high school. Mr. Mike Leone, who teaches English 8, 9 and 12, said the groundwork is laid that will give the students needed vocabulary and understanding to further their knowledge of the Language Arts. Genres of literature are studied including poetry, short stories and the novel, as well as drama and essays. Preparation is extensive for the NYS ELA exam, given in January of each year. Presentations, both oral and written, will progress throughout the year rounding out the teaching of the state standards in ELA.

“Freshman entering this year of ELA study are capable of much higher understanding than in their previous



Tenth graders created a thermometer to chart their reading progress.

years,” according to Mr. Leone. “Because of this, ninth grade ELA represents a major jump in the level of literature covered in class. Epic poetry and Shakespearean drama are both studied, as well as novels. Essay structure and the logical presentation of information both in writing and speaking will also receive a great deal of attention. Particular focus is given to the short story genre and the writing process. The students will demonstrate their knowledge and proficiency of this form of literature by producing creative writing portfolios of their own, incorporating all aspects of what they have learned. Not only will the students gain a more intimate understanding of the required literary elements by actually using them in their stories, but grammar and punctuation will also receive great attention, especially in the writing of dialog.”

“Bolton’s got it going on,” said Mrs. Laura Beuerman, who’s in her fifth year of teaching at Bolton. She said since she’s been in Bolton there’s been an immense push on academic breadth and depth. She teaches English 10 and 11, plus Junior and Senior Electives.

The 15-year veteran teacher, Mrs. Beuerman said since she attended a conference last year on The

100 Best Books for Teens, she discovered the importance of the lifetime perception of reading that happens in school. “The onus is on us, as English teachers, to provide an opportunity for fun,” she said. “School is critical at shaping their attitude toward reading.”

By fostering free choice, Mrs. Beuerman said the sophomores, who were not readers, have been completely transformed. They share what they’ve read and they now view themselves as readers.

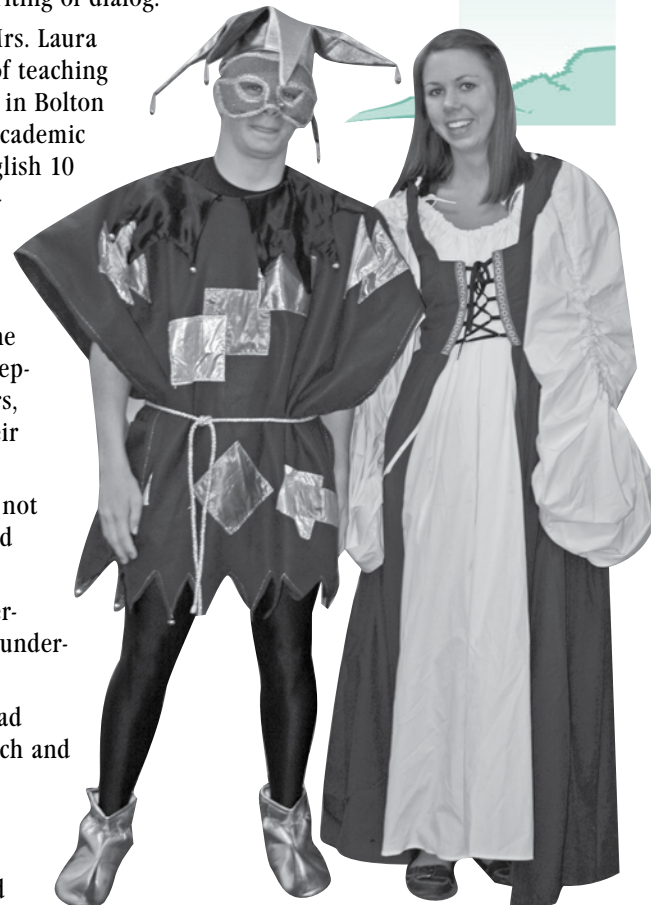
“What I try to do is give the students an attitude for life,” said Mrs. Beuerman. “Literature is but a reflection of life addressing the basic philosophy of understanding life itself.”

In the classes she teaches, there’s a long list of literature the students read from “The Color Purple,” to “The Iliad.” Vocabulary words, composition, speech and research writing, grammar, and poetry are all part of the curriculum.

Twelfth Grade

Grade 12 ELA prepares students for the various challenges of college and later life. Mr Leone said, “The students are required by the Board of Educa-

“Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.” - Frederick Douglass



High school students celebrated the birth and death of Shakespeare last year.



I am Bolton Central School

MADELYN “MADDIE” PRATT IS IN MRS. ANDERSEN’S 3RD GRADE.

I get to make new friends is what I like best about school. My favorite subject is handwriting. I like to learn how to do cursive. Sometimes, after school I ride my bike. On the weekend, I go skiing at Gore Mountain. I play baseball and soccer at the Dome. I like to collect shells and rocks. I see pretty ones when I walk the dog. I have one dog, one cat and two fish. My favorite foods are a corn dog and pizza. I want to be a couple of things when I grow up. I’d like to be a chef. My dad’s one at the Cherry Tomato. I’d like to volunteer for the rescue squad, too. I love to read. The Harry Potter series is my favorite series. My favorite movie is “The Princess Bride.” “Hannah Montana” and “i Carly TV Show” are my favorite TV shows. I like to play “Game Sheep” and “Webkins” online.

tion, to submit research papers with full Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation. They learn to research effectively, budget their time and cite references properly to avoid the pitfalls of plagiarism. College essays will then be discussed. The history of our language is studied from its origins to present day and students will read literature from these various periods.

“Written and oral expression will be extensive throughout the year, discussing themes and concepts relevant to our modern world. Literary works such as: “1984,” by George Orwell, ‘Fahrenheit 451,’ by Ray Bradbury and ‘Frankenstein,’ by Mary Shelley, will all be used as springboards for discussion of modern issues relevant to students’ lives. These issues range from government control, privacy issues, and media bias, to cloning, stem cell research and genetic manipulation. The goal is to open the students’ minds by challenging their views and preconceived notions hopefully allowing them to be more understanding and respectful of others’ views.”

Support Services

“Literacy is a particular focus in this room,” said library media specialist Mrs. Kathleen Field. She said she’s always promoting literacy from a picture book for the youngest reader to teaching about using the reliable online resources for research papers to the older students.

Mrs. Michelle Borgh, K-7 guidance counselor, said she coordinates the state tests and Academic Intervention Services (AIS) for those students who need extra assistance. In the elementary grades, students get an extra 45 minutes one to two days a week. High schoolers get extra help one day a week.

Ms. Kandi Kelley, ELA Teaching Assistant, works with students in grades 7 and 11 offering a differen-



Mrs. Laurie Blanchard works with a group of first graders on their language skills.

tiated program. She supports all content areas and develops individual programs to a child’s strengths. In grade 11, she supports the ELA class by working on vocabulary. She teaches ways to remember the definition of words. She also parallels the content in the classroom by offering the same story in a different format. For example, if the students are reading “To Kill a Mockingbird,” her students will read the screenplay.

Other ELA support for students in grades K-12, comes from Mrs. Cindy Ackerle in Study Support Services. She works with those students who have been classified as having a handicapped condition, who need modifications to the program and accommodations for testing. She assists students and teachers to promote students succeeding and graduating. “Our goal is 100% graduation rate and employability,” added Mrs. Ackerle.

Complementing the ELA skills presented in the classroom, Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP) Mrs. Laurie Blanchard teaches cocurricular language lessons in her speech classes.

Having worked at BCS for nine years, Mrs. Blanchard works with pre-kindergarteners to fifth graders on their language skills in their classrooms on a weekly basis. In addition, she has a caseload of students she works with in her therapy room.

The SLP plays an important and collaborative role

Continued on back page.

“Never discourage anyone... who continually makes progress, no matter how slow.”
- Plato



I am Bolton Central School

OLIVIA SEAMANS IS IN 6TH GRADE

What I like best about school, is seeing my friends every day. I don’t really like missing school. It’s boring how people skip school. They’re missing out on work. My favorite subject is English. Mrs. Humiston makes it easy and fun.

I play a lot of soccer. I’m usually a mid fielder or forward. Mr. Roca says I can put the ball in the net. I play varsity soccer in the summer and basketball in the winter. One of the things I want to be when I grow up is a crime scene investigator. Or maybe a photographer. I like taking pictures of my family, friends, and pets. I have two cats and a dog. I like to read. My most recent favorite book is “The Year We Disappeared.” I like the movie, “Knowing.” I watch “American Idol.” Right now, I like Danny. I spend time talking to my friends either on my computer or texting them on my cell phone.

How Are We Doing?

Bolton Central School Data Is Being Compiled

Recently lots of data has been gathered about the Bolton Central School District. This data has been compiled from interviews with community members and students and is being coupled with data from the Converging for Success team.

Superintendent Ray Ciccarelli requested Bolton's shared public information specialist to interview community members about what they felt was good and what needed improvement. That data is still being collected. Mr. Ciccarelli also invited the Converging for Success team to Bolton to assess how the district is doing and provide recommendations for school improvement.

Mr. Anthony Muller, Director of School Support Services at the Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex Board of Cooperative Educational Services (WSWHE BOCES) explained that Converging for Success is a result of the superintendents in the WSWHE BOCES gathering together in January and March of 2007 to discuss the issue of school improvement. Their discussions revealed there were three important factors in determining student success: connections, engagement, and literacy.

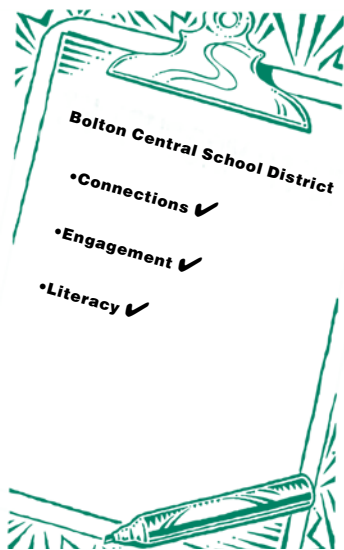
A 10-person Converging for Success team comprised of the area's instructional leaders was then created to research and synthesize school improvement data and develop a process to assist the school districts in improving student learning.

Mr. Muller reported that the team's research confirmed that successful schools and districts rated strongly in the areas of connections, engagement, and literacy. He said, "Students who have a strong connection to faculty, staff, the school community, and other students are more likely to be successful. Students who are engaged in learning will more likely be successful. Lastly, students who have a strong literacy background have the skills necessary to be successful in all areas."

The process of assessing a school district in these areas includes visiting a school for about a week. The process includes visiting every classroom, holding focus groups of a variety of stakeholders, and reviewing key district documents.

"We visit every classroom teacher to get a snapshot of what's going on," said Mr. Muller. "We look for those three common qualities: connections, engagement, and literacy."

In addition, the team holds a series of focus group discussions with various stakeholders, people who have a stake or interest in the school. Wikipedia describes a focus group as a form of qualitative research in which a group of people is asked about their attitude towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members.



Stakeholders interviewed include parents, students, teachers, support staff and administrators.

The third leg of the process involves reviewing documents for relevancy. Documents, such as student and faculty handbooks, regulations, school report cards, and attendance data are evaluated.

After the data has been compiled and studied, the administration receives a summary of the team's findings and recommendations.

"This is a regional effort," said Mr. Muller, "between BOCES and the school districts. Though BOCES is the organizer, the initiative belongs to the region. By the end of this school year we will have visited nearly one-third of the school districts in the 31 district region. Our goal is to compile a list of best practices in our region and create a "resource bank" for districts. Therefore, when a district is in need of assistance in a certain area, we'll be able to share knowledge by tapping into our own area school districts' expertise."

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- Mr. Anthony Muller, Director of School Support Services, WSWHE BOCES

Bolton's ELA Program Continued from Page 6

in literacy development. She brings knowledge of communication processes and disorders and language acquisition.

Children with difficulties in spoken language frequently have problems learning to read and write, and children with reading and writing problems often have difficulty with spoken language.

"Language provides the foundation for reading and writing. They build on each other resulting in language competence," commented Mrs. Blanchard. "We work on series of sounds, processing sounds and the sound symbol relationship."

"Reading to kids is important because it helps them with their vocabulary and with reading and speaking later in life."

BCS ELA Results from the New York State School Report Card

Grade Level	Progressing in NYS Standards	Exceeding NYS Standards
Grade 3	100%	90%
Grade 4	100%	100%
Grade 5	100%	86%
Grade 6	100%	77%
Grade 7	100%	95%
Grade 8	100%	60%
Grade 11	100%	84%

Test scores are represented by a Performance Level ranging from 1 to 4. The assessment specifically describes the skills a student has learned for his/her performance level.

On The Inside...

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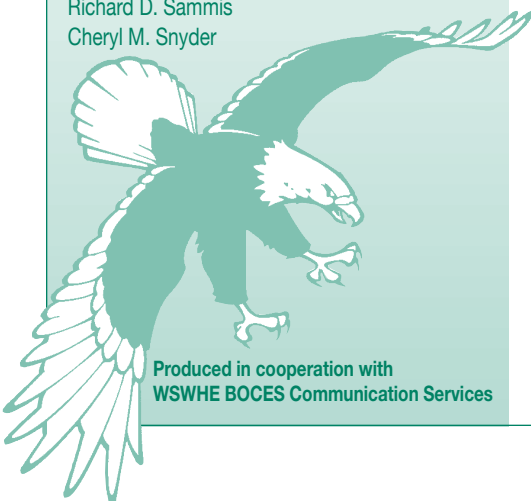
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