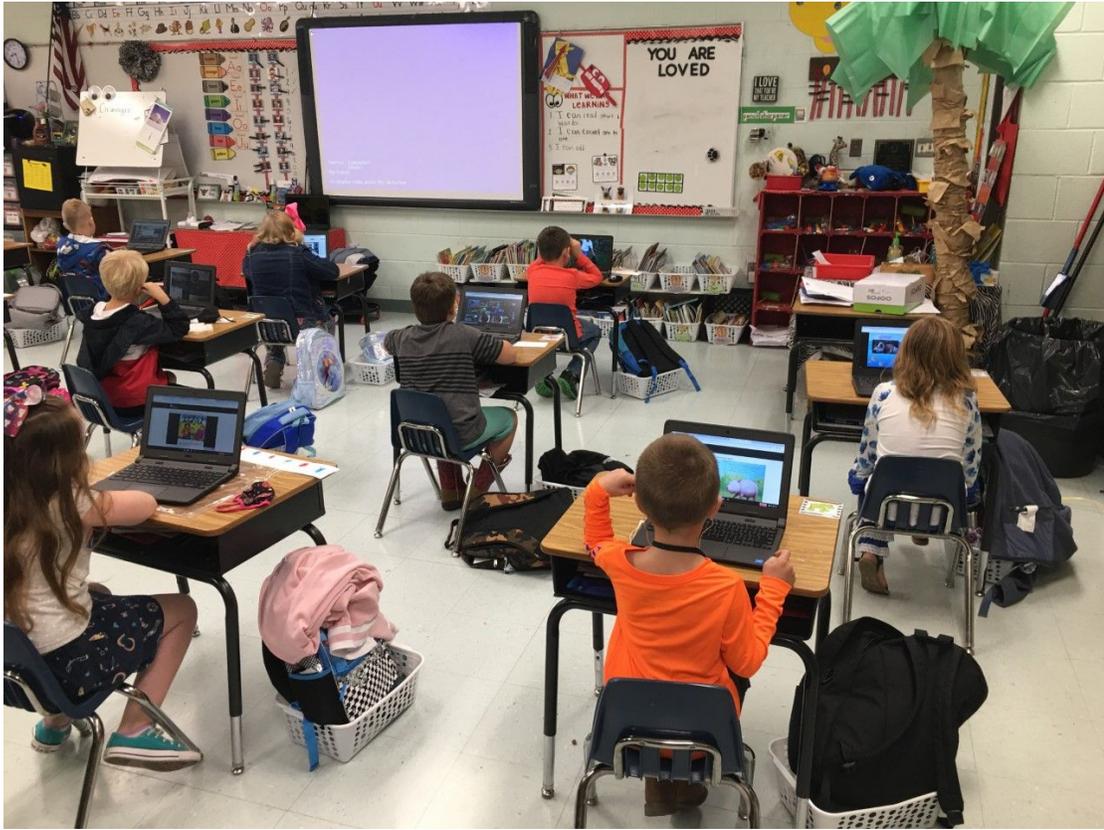


# Grainger County Schools Implements New ELA Curriculum



Samantha Lawson's first grade class working on IREAD, an HMH foundational skills program. "I love this game, makes reading fun," commented Sutton Shoemaker, a student in the class.



Julie Larmer's Class engaging in HMH text.



“The new ELA curriculum Wit and Wisdom is a challenging reading and writing program that has peaked the interest of my students and enabled them to think about their community and the world around them in new and interesting ways.” Jennifer Gowan, 5th ELA, Joppa School

The GCS English Language Arts (ELA) Textbook Committee met throughout the year last year to review Curriculum options and work together to choose a new ELA curriculum to implement during the 2020-21 school year. All programs chosen met the high standards set by the Tennessee Department of Education and were on the state’s approved list for ELA Curriculum adoption. “Teachers have worked diligently to prepare lessons and implement new curriculum. It is impressive how creative and resourceful teachers have been in developing new ELA lessons to deliver to virtual students or traditional students attending school,” said Kristi Savage, ELA District Interventionist.

Grades K-2 adopted Houghton Mifflin Harcourt *Into Reading*. Texts included in the program are high quality, engaging, and organized to support knowledge building. The materials include questions, tasks, lessons, and practice that support students' development of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and beginning to think critically. HMH features online and consumable books for K-2 students. IREAD and AMIRA are two online components that supplement the K-2 curriculum that teachers are finding very beneficial in helping with online learning. K-2 Teachers are working together in their buildings to implement the new curriculum. Two teachers from Washburn had positive comments to make about the new 2nd grade curriculum. “HMH provides students with a deep understanding of reading skills through engaging texts,”

Julie Larmer, commented. Kristy Helms added, "In particular, I like the variety of reading material and resources included in the HMH program."

*Wit and Wisdom*, the new GCS curriculum for grades 3-8, focuses on a different topic each module to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and writing skills. Essential topics strategically reoccur to deepen understanding as students move across grades 3-8. Authentic texts are at the center of the *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum. Students use complex texts to learn essential reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary. GCS also purchased *In Sync*, a digital learning site that will provide teachers and students with access to video lessons and slides that correspond with *Wit and Wisdom*. Teachers in grades 3-8 have been meeting collaboratively for the past few years to work on curriculum, pacing, and assessments, and continue to meet this year via Google Meets to work together to learn more about the new curriculum. Teachers at Rutledge Elementary have positive things to say about the new curriculum *Wit and Wisdom* curriculum.

Tonya Estep- "The third grade students at RES have really enjoyed being introduced to art through *Wit and Wisdom*. This has been a new experience for our students."

Kim Combs-"The fourth grade students at RES are enjoying learning about the heart through reading the book, *The Circulatory Story*. This story has sparked a high interest level in reading non-fiction text. "

Sarah Perrin-"My fifth graders enjoy reading the myths and learning the historical background of the time period we are studying."

Cathy Poag-"The students are really enjoying the book **Bud Not Buddy**."

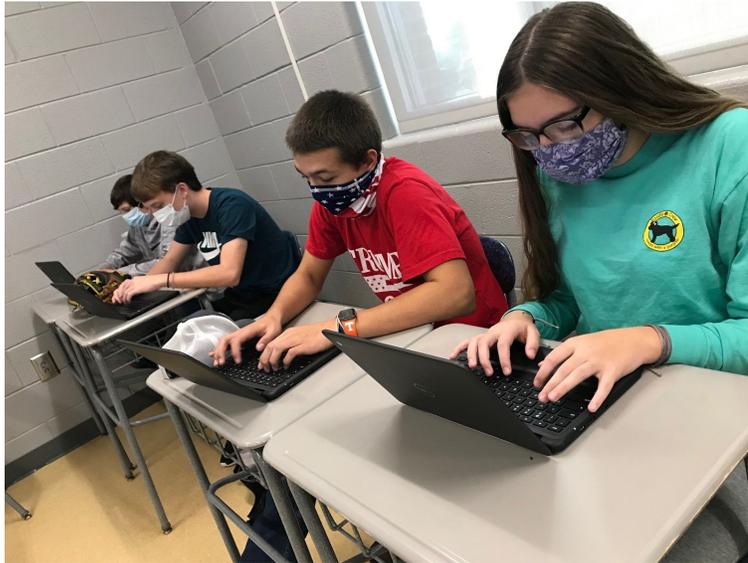
System High School English teachers are also incorporating a new curriculum this year, with Washburn High and Grainger High English teachers working together to integrate the new series, myPerspective, into a common shared curriculum for both schools. Having both schools on the same path gives consistency to county expectations and requirements across the board for all Grainger County students enrolled in high school English. myPerspectives is fully aligned with the Tennessee standards and End of Course TCAP exams. The series scores at the highest level with the Tennessee Department of Education's textbook evaluation process. The program offers students online resources that have been essential in developing the newly added virtual learning option with many distance learning opportunities including current news sessions, interactive grammar lessons, eText, interactive online readers and much more. The new curriculum is designed around Whole Group Learning where all students in the class are learning and exploring the same literature, then moves to a Small Group Learning environment where students work with a small group to explore literature they choose as a group and ends with Individual Learning where each student chooses an individual path of learning with literature they explore on their own. Content is delivered thematically allowing students to examine and explore American Freedoms, Self-generated Fears, Needed Change, and Self and Social Discovery.

Students from both Washburn High and Grainger High have embraced the new myPerspectives curriculum that has been added to the GCS ELA classroom this year. During the first quarter, the 9th-10th grade curriculum has allowed students at both schools to explore exactly what it means to be an American by reading and learning from first-hand accounts of early American immigrants, Presidential speeches from Kennedy and Roosevelt and immigrant poetry. The classes have participated in group learning where virtual students and in-house (traditional) students have joined for research and development opportunities, sharing ideas, and collaborating on final group projects. "Being a group leader has been challenging. Learning how to set up a Zoom meeting and inviting classmates in took a few tries to master, but it was kind of exciting to have group meetings with the students that are home working on the same thing we are in class," stated Braxton Longmire, GHS Sophomore. With both schools sharing files, sharing documents, and sharing a common lesson design, all 9th and 10th students in the county have the same opportunities to demonstrate learning and exposure to the same elements of literature. This group project has challenged students with not only learning and analyzing literature, but also producing a podcast, a panel discussion or a digital interactive scene.

The 11th and 12th grade curriculum has challenged students to examine facing fears with their analysis of the *Crucible* where students completed an extended writing assignment that examined character reactions to a given dilemma. They also examined the historical context behind the oldest Anglo-Saxon Epic poem known to history, *Beowulf*. They were tasked with analyzing exactly what it means to be a hero and explaining exactly what is important when winning is on the line.



Team leader, Heston King, Sophomore leads a Zoom meeting where the group was challenged to research a self (group) generated question devised from a literary selection.



Team leader, Rebekah Lane, Freshman, guides her team in completing a presentation document where all students in your group are working simultaneously on the same slides to build required materials for their final project. Rebekah has been an exceptional leader for her group. On the first day of project introduction, she required her group to participate in a practice Zoom meeting at home that evening until everyone understood how to join seamlessly. They all entered class prepared for productive meetings.