

Dear Stephenson Families,

September 30, 2026

In accordance with Section 164k(e) of the Michigan State School Aid Act, which was signed into law in October 2025 as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 State School Aid Act, Stephenson Area Public Schools is providing this notice regarding the literacy curriculum currently used in grades K–5.

The law requires school districts to notify parents and families if the district is not using a curriculum included on the Michigan Department of Education’s (MDE) evidence-based literacy curriculum list identified under MCL 380.1280f. Currently, Stephenson Area Public Schools uses **Bookworms**, which is not included on the current MDE Recommended Literacy Materials List. Under Section 164k(e), curricula not included on this list are not designated by MDE as “evidence-based or aligned to state standards” through the recommended list process, “which could negatively impact student academic outcomes.”

It is important to clarify, however, that Michigan law and MDE guidance **do not require school districts to select a curriculum from the MDE Recommended Literacy Materials List**. The list is not intended to be exhaustive and represents one way in which a curriculum may demonstrate alignment with evidence-based literacy practices and state standards.

Bookworms is a research-based literacy program designed around evidence-based reading practices and instruction in the key components of reading development. Stephenson Area Public Schools has also invested significant time, effort, and financial resources in researching, selecting, and implementing our current literacy curriculum.

Additionally, MDE is expected to release an updated list of approved literacy materials in December 2026. It is possible that Bookworms may be included in that updated list. As a result, the district is closely monitoring MDE guidance and student achievement data as part of our ongoing curriculum review process. We believe it is important to carefully evaluate all available information before making a significant curriculum change that would require substantial financial and instructional resources.

Once the updated MDE list is released in December, Stephenson Area Public Schools will review the available options and determine whether to continue using Bookworms or consider a different K–5 literacy curriculum.

Our commitment remains to providing Stephenson students with high-quality, research-based instruction that supports their academic growth and success. **Any future changes to the district’s literacy curriculum will be communicated to families in a timely manner.**

Thank you for your continued partnership and support of Stephenson Area Public Schools.

Jerry Sardina



Superintendent