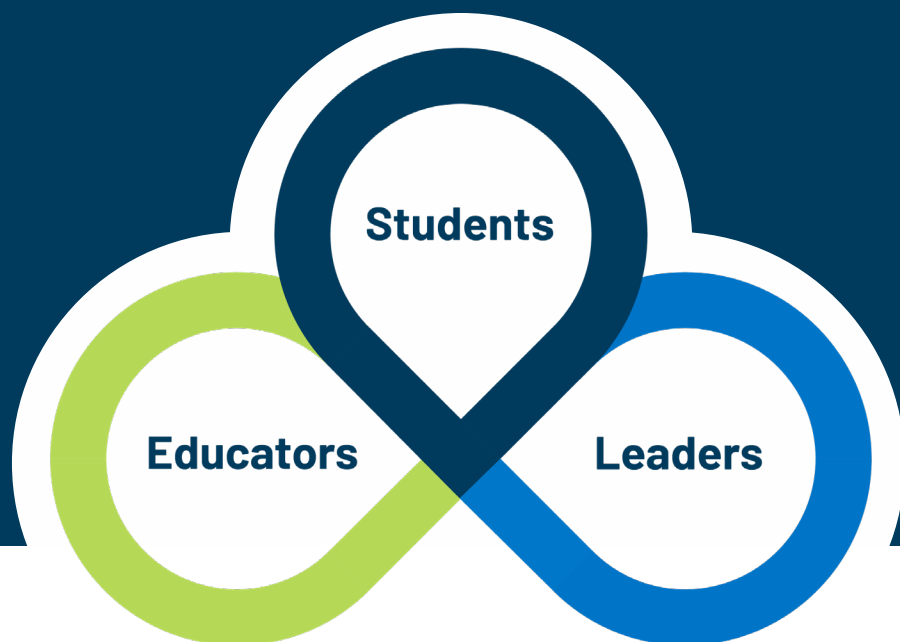


# 2024

# ILLINOIS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN

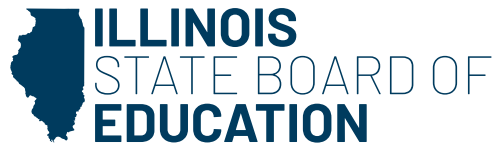




# **Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan**

Illinois State Board of Education  
January 2024





**Illinois State Board of Education**

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ISBE appreciates notification where errors occur so they may be corrected in subsequent printings.

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## Acknowledgements

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) extends its deepest gratitude to the dedicated Illinois educators and literacy advocates, who, with their unwavering commitment to literacy, drove the creation of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan. The journey began with a Statewide Literacy Summit convened by ISBE in October 2022 and continued as the initial drafting team laid the foundation of the plan on the strength of their combined knowledge, enthusiasm, and dedication to Illinois students and educators.

ISBE offers its utmost appreciation to the educators who actively participated in the statewide listening tours, contributing valuable insights that enriched the plan's development. This engagement exemplified the collaborative spirit that is essential for addressing the diverse literacy needs across Illinois. The written virtual comments that poured in further refined the plan by highlighting a wide array of perspectives, unique challenges, and strengths of the varied educational landscape in Illinois.

ISBE extends special recognition to those who generously devoted time and expertise to participate in focus groups, increasing depth and adding nuance to our understanding of teaching and learning for literacy in diverse educational contexts. The thoughtful collaboration with ISBE staff has been instrumental in aligning the plan with state educational goals and policies.

To all educators, leaders, and literacy advocates who were involved: Your dedication demonstrates the profound importance of literacy in shaping our students' futures and their communities. As the completion of this complex work is celebrated, it is done so with the sincere hope that this plan serves as a catalyst and resource for the continued efforts to positively impact literacy in local districts. ISBE looks forward to supporting these efforts, collectively seeking to elevate student learning by fostering a culture where literacy is not just a skill, but a transformative force empowering individuals and their communities.

Together, ISBE and all those engaged in education across the state embark on the journey ahead, united in the commitment to providing every student in Illinois with the literacy skills vital for success.

The ISBE Literacy Team

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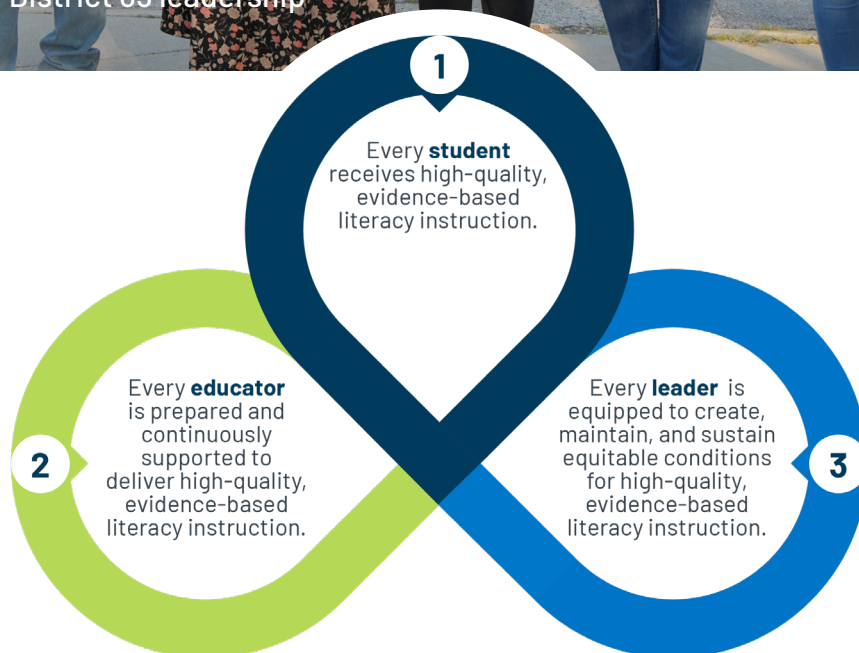
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# INTRODUCTION

\*Photo from School District 65 leadership



## Vision and Purpose

The Illinois State Board of Education believes literacy is an urgent priority necessary to improve student achievement of lifelong literacy skills for successful civic, educational, occupational, and personal engagement. The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan acts as a roadmap to enhance and unify core literacy instruction efforts statewide. It is designed to outline necessary supports and resources for literacy reform, ensuring all students receive developmentally appropriate and evidence-based literacy instruction.

This plan focuses on **three key goals**:

**GOAL 1:** Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**GOAL 2:** Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**GOAL 3:** Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan represents a foundational step in promoting literacy success for all students, guiding ISBE's future literacy initiatives, and enabling educational leaders to effectively prioritize and coordinate such efforts.

As mandated by [Public Act 103-0402](#), The plan was formulated in consultation with educational professionals, aiming to build districts' capacity to ensure that every child has access to accessible, high-quality, evidence-based reading instruction.

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan identifies Seven Components of Literacy as the foundational elements to literacy instruction: Oracy, Phonological Awareness, Word Recognition, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Writing. Detailed discussions on each of these components provided in the following sections of the plan, offer an in-depth understanding of their essential roles in literacy instruction.

**The Plan's Key Components include:**

- Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction;
- Educator Professional Learning, Development, and Support;
- Effective Literacy Leadership;
- Support and Implementation Considerations; and
- Tools and Resources.

**Flexibility and Local Autonomy**

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan offers a flexible approach, aligning with state standards while allowing district-specific adaptations. It avoids prescribing specific materials or assessments, while instead promoting data-informed choices by districts. This plan cannot address all district-specific contexts and challenges, and, therefore, ISBE encourages each district to carefully consider district and school-level data as it makes decisions related to literacy instruction.

It is imperative within the context of local control that districts design local assessment strategies and allocate resources based on their unique demographics and context supported by data and current evidence-based instructional practices.

As outlined in the School Code ([105 ILCS 5/27-1](#)):

*Each school district shall give priority in the allocation of resources, including funds, time allocation, personnel, and facilities, to fulfilling the primary purpose of schooling.*

*The State Board of Education shall establish goals and learning standards consistent with the above purposes and define the knowledge and skills which the State expects students to master and apply as a consequence of their education.*

*Each school district shall establish learning objectives consistent with the State Board of Education's goals and learning standards for the areas referred to in this Section, shall develop appropriate testing and assessment systems for determining the degree to which students are achieving the objectives, and shall develop reporting systems to apprise the community and State of the assessment results.*

## Why Is This Plan Necessary?

The Illinois State Board of Education acknowledges the critical importance of literacy, which is closely linked to various social and life outcomes. Literacy skills are essential and highly correlated with many social and life outcomes (e.g., salary as adults, incarceration rates, dependence on government assistance, and health).<sup>1</sup> Recognizing the current literacy instruction landscape and its existing challenges is vital to ensuring that every student in Illinois has access to high-quality literacy instruction.

Standardized testing provides one metric of literacy achievement, but it is important to acknowledge the enduring issues of inclusivity and equity associated with these tests. Educators at all levels need to examine the limitations of these assessments and the challenges in accurately measuring every student's achievement. In Illinois, standardized test scores significantly affect educators. They are crucial for state and local accountability and greatly impact teacher evaluations. This positions this type of assessment as key in educational decision-making and policy development. The provided data aims to enrich the understanding of student literacy achievement within the state.

Illinois' most recent data from the 2022 [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) shows that 38% of fourth grade students have below-basic reading skills, with 67% falling below the proficient level. These concerning trends persist through eighth and 12th grades and have only minimally improved over several decades. The 2023 Illinois School Report Card data included in Exhibit 1 illustrates similar student performance in third through eighth grades on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) in English Language Arts (ELA).

Figure 1: Percentage of Students Achieving Performance Levels on the 2023 Illinois Assessment of Readiness in English Language Arts by Grade Level.

Percentage of Students Achieving Performance Level (2023)					
	Did Not Meet	Partially Met	Approached	Met	Exceeded
<b>Grade 3</b>	31.2	19.4	20.5	27.1	1.7
<b>Grade 4</b>	18.5	21.2	25	28.1	7.3
<b>Grade 5</b>	16.8	21.3	26.7	32.1	3.1
<b>Grade 6</b>	16.3	21.8	27.8	30.3	3.9
<b>Grade 7</b>	18.5	19	24.6	28.5	9.4
<b>Grade 8</b>	15.3	19	25.2	33.9	6.6

This data highlights the need for increased concentrated efforts to improve students' literacy through grade-level, evidence-based instruction. Furthermore, 2023 IAR learning outcomes for ELA confirm the persistence of disparities among various student groups, as shown in Table 2. These measures demonstrate the ongoing impact of the pandemic on literacy skills, despite indications of recovery in district and state data. Considering the substantial educational disruptions caused by the worldwide pandemic, the subsequent data underscores the critical nature of attending to the literacy education requirements of all students.

Figure 2: Percentage of Third Grade Students Not Proficient in ELA on the IAR by Demographic Category

Percentage of Third Grade Students Not Proficient in ELA on the IAR by Demographic Category							
		2019 IL Report Card		2023 IL Report Card		Change 2019 - 2023	
		% Below Basic	% Not Proficient	% Below Basic	% Not Proficient	% Below Basic	% Not Proficient
DEMOGRAPHIC	All	22.5	64.7	31.2	71.1	-8.7	-6.4
	White	13.8	55.9	19.7	62.2	-5.7	-6.3
	Black	37.0	77.8	50.3	86.8	-13.3	-9
	Hispanic	31.4	73.4	43.6	82.9	-12.2	-9.5
	Asian	9.0	38.9	14.0	46.1	-5.0	-7.2
	American Indian	26.9	66.1	48.3	83.4	-21.4	-17.3
	Pacific Islander	18.7	53.9	20.0	66.0	-1.3	-12.1
	Two or More	21.1	61.5	27.7	66.8	-6.6	-5.3
	Low Income	32.8	76.2	44.7	84.5	-11.9	-8.3
	Multilingual Learners	38.9	82.7	50.3	88.1	-11.4	-5.4
	Youth in Care	40.9	82.6	55.5	91.7	-14.6	-9.1
	Homeless	44.8	85.2	58.9	99.8	-14.1	-14.6

For the figure above, “Below Basic” consists of Level 1 and Level 2 scores in ELA on the IAR. “Not Proficient” consists of Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 scores in ELA on the IAR.

As *Mindset* author, Carol Dweck, writes, **“Test scores and measure of achievement reveal a student’s current position but not their full potential.”**<sup>2</sup> ISBE recognizes the inherent language skills and unknowable literacy potential in all students. This plan provides districts with guidance and resources to increase their capacity to address each student’s needs, paving the way for more promising literacy outcomes.

## Illinois' Guiding Values for Literacy

Illinois values and affirms all learners across its diverse communities. ISBE believes that it is important to recognize and build on every student's strengths, supporting them through challenges to guide and shape their literacy development. Illinois' Guiding Values for Literacy, outlined on the following page, illustrates the core tenants at the heart of this work:

---

### CALL TO ACTION

**Illinois' Education systems must prioritize literacy as a fundamental goal, recognizing it is essential in all aspects of students' lives.**

---

Illinois' Guiding Values for Literacy have been meticulously crafted through extensive engagement with stakeholders across the state, reflecting a collective belief system deeply rooted in the community.

These statements are a direct embodiment of the insights and convictions expressed by those who engaged in the feedback opportunities, representing a true testament to the shared aspirations and dedicated efforts of the Illinois literacy community.

**Every learner is capable and has the right to equitable access to high-quality, inclusive, differentiated, and evidence-based literacy instruction.**

**Every learner deserves schools that nurture their unique assets and interests, honoring their complexity within the context of their communities.**

### EQUITABLE LITERACY EDUCATION

- Empowers and equips students with skills to make meaning, cultivating individual and collective agency toward continued growth and lifelong learning;
  - Prioritizes explicit, systematic, and structured instruction of foundational reading skills;
  - Utilizes high-quality, evidence-based literacy practices;
  - Considers data from valid, reliable sources as a tool to improve instruction.
- Honors and leverages family and community language and culture;
  - Encourages partnerships between educators, families, students, and community;
  - Implements Universal Design for Learning principles;
  - Provides early, regular, and reliable opportunities for students to showcase literacy skills;
  - Reflects the linguistic resources of each student.

**Every learner**  
has the right to  
develop literacy in two  
or more languages to  
prepare for success in  
our global world.

**Every learner**  
has the right to be  
empowered through  
agency to self-  
advocate within  
supportive learning  
environments.

**Every learner**  
has the right to reliable  
and valid assessments  
that accurately  
measure their literacy  
skills.

## EQUITABLE LITERACY EDUCATION

- Leverages students' language practices and ways of showing what they know;
- Contextualizes literacy and language learning in explicit, authentic, and meaningful ways;
- Adapts to students' sociocultural experiences and language needs;
- Offers culturally and linguistically responsive scaffolding that supports early identification measures.

- Fosters the joy of reading, encourages student choice, and cultivates independent reading habits;
- Optimizes the relationship between receptive and expressive modes of communication;
- Develops critical literacy skills to mastery, enabling all learners to thoroughly examine, analyze, and evaluate texts for power, equity, and social justice;
- Recognizes every student's linguistic knowledge;
- Engages multiple modalities for students to demonstrate knowledge.

- Supports educators with resources, professional learning, student-centered support systems for high-quality, evidence-based literacy practices;
- Identifies and adjusts to evolving learning needs;
- Incorporates ongoing, evidence-based support for students who struggle with literacy;
- Employs comprehensive, adaptable support across all learning areas and levels, incorporating various educational strategies and tools.

## Defining Key Terms

To ensure clarity and avoid any misunderstandings, this plan addresses several key terms that may carry different definitions or connotations in various contexts. These terms are briefly discussed below and are also comprehensively defined within the glossary in [Section 5: Tools and Resources](#).

### Literacy

Literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and abilities. It is the ability to read, write, identify, understand, interpret, evaluate, create, and communicate effectively by using visual, auditory, and digital materials across disciplines and contexts.

Moreover, literacy is the continuous development of multiple skills. It involves applying these skills in diverse contexts, including academic, workplace, community, and personal settings. Literacy is the bridge that connects students to the experiences of others, building empathy skills. It is a fundamental right, an enjoyable practice, and a vital foundation for lifelong learning, active citizenship, and equitable participation in 21st-century society.

### Additional Terms

**Evidence-Based: Activities, strategies, or interventions with strong support from experimental or correlational studies.**

This plan defines evidence-based in alignment with the definition provided in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), reauthorized in 2015 as the Every Students Succeeds Act. Alignment of this definition across initiatives is essential to support coordinated and cohesive systems in education more broadly. Evidence-based practices are activities, strategies, or interventions supported by strong evidence from well-designed experimental, quasi-experimental, or correlational studies, and they involve ongoing efforts to assess their effects. For more information, please reference [Section 8101\(21\)\(A\) of the ESEA](#). Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction clearly delineates between what is and is not considered based on evidence.

**Explicit Instruction: An instructional approach emphasizing clarity, active participation, and effective practice techniques.**

Explicit instruction is a teaching method backed by evidence. It focuses on clear communication and avoids overloading students mentally. This approach encourages students to actively participate, provides quick feedback, and uses specific practice techniques to help with long-term learning.<sup>3</sup>

**Systematic instruction: A methodical approach to teaching foundational skills before complex ones.**

Systematic instruction is key to building reading skills, starting with basic concepts and gradually introducing more complex ones. This method follows a deliberate order, ensuring skills build upon each other in a way that enhances understanding and proficiency. It is both cumulative and diagnostic, crucial for teaching foundational aspects like phonological awareness and phonics. This approach is especially important for young learners mastering reading basics and older students who might need targeted interventions to boost their literacy skills.<sup>4</sup>

### Terms Not Used in this Plan

This plan refrains from referencing the “science of reading” or “balanced literacy” in favor of describing current understandings of literacy development and evidence-based instruction.

The science of reading represents decades of interdisciplinary research that collectively informs how proficient reading and writing develop and emphasizes practices demonstrated to be effective through study. However, some see it as a political agenda and ideology, or a new front in the reading debates.

Balanced literacy includes both foundational and language comprehension instructional features, such as phonemic awareness and phonics (understanding the relationships between sounds and their written representations), fluency, guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension. However, some interpret the term as akin to whole language instruction with little focus on basic skills instruction.

## In Summary

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan aims to improve literacy skills across the state. It sets three primary goals: providing high-quality literacy instruction for every student, equipping educators with the necessary support and resources to deliver this instruction effectively, and enabling leaders to establish equitable literacy learning environments. Central to the plan are the Seven Components of Literacy Instruction: Oracy, Phonological Awareness, Word Recognition Skills, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Writing. The plan emphasizes adaptability and local decision-making, encouraging districts to tailor approaches based on specific needs and data. This plan focuses on core, Tier 1 instruction, with discussions of appropriate interventions and differentiation strategies. This initiative targets the literacy needs of Illinois students and strives to close educational gaps and improve literacy outcomes across diverse student groups. It also includes clear definitions of key literacy terms to ensure a unified understanding of instructional strategies.

## Deeper Exploration

These are texts suggested through public engagements that demonstrate greatest alignment to this section of the literacy plan. The following resources delve further into the topics covered in this section and offer additional context for this work:

- *Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy* by Gholdy Muhammad
- *The Knowledge Gap: The Hidden Cause of America's Broken Education System – and How to Fix it* by Natalie Wexler
- *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain* by Maryanne Wolf
- *The Reading Mind: A Cognitive Approach to Understanding How the Mind Reads* by Daniel T. Willingham
- More information regarding the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan may be found on the [ISBE Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan webpage](#).

## Workbook Overview

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan sections end with workbook pages designed to bridge the section's narrative with practical application. These pages, merging reflection tools and action planning, deepen engagement. The 'Vision and Purpose' workbook helps clarify your role in the literacy community, enabling focused plan exploration. Tailored for each audience, Sections 1-3 workbooks include implementation tips, next steps, and reflection questions, addressing the unique challenges and perspectives for each group. Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations completes the series, guiding essential preparatory thinking for comprehensive literacy initiatives. The intent of the workbook is to foster a cohesive and informed approach to literacy, align insights across educational settings, identify strengths and areas for growth, challenge biases, and prepare for future literacy planning and actions.

## Your Journey Through the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan



## Literacy Plan Audiences

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan understands various stakeholder roles exist in education that each uniquely support literacy. Understanding your role offers insights into effective implementation and collaboration for positive student outcomes. The Plan is designed to support varied uses and can easily be read by section and in varying order. A sample roadmap to the Plan follows for each audience.

**Read about each audience. Identify the stakeholder group that most closely aligns with your role.**

### Students

Students are diverse learners spanning various grade levels, from elementary to high school. Tailored interventions, innovative teaching strategies, and targeted resources are essential to address the unique literacy needs of the dynamic student population, fostering comprehensive language skills and promoting a lifelong love for reading and writing.

#### **A note about engaging with the plan:**

Interact with the literacy plan to enhance reading and writing skills. Take an active role by exploring the suggested resources, engage with recommended practices, and collaborate with educators to tailor strategies to individual learning styles. This plan is a guide to developing strong literacy foundations, critical thinking skills, and a lifelong love for learning.

### Teachers

Educators encompass a diverse group of professionals, including teachers, paraprofessionals, interventionists, and specialists responsible for delivering literacy instruction. They create a supportive and engaging learning environment, foster a love of reading and writing, tailor instruction to diverse needs, and collaborate to ensure literacy goals are met.

#### **Specific sections of note in order of importance include:**

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 5: Tools and Resources

### Teacher Leaders

Teacher leaders include bilingual educators, school librarians, reading specialists, literacy and instructional coaches, department chairs, and additional specialists who support classroom teachers. Teacher leaders use data and their expertise to guide educators in creating and maintaining literacy-rich environments. They support different grade levels and contribute to a sustainable and vertically aligned curriculum.

#### **Specific sections of note in order of importance include:**

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
  - Seven Components of Literacy
  - MTSS
  - Assessment
  - Intervention
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 5: Tools and Resources

## School Leaders

Principals and assistant principals provide critical support for literacy initiatives by fostering collaborative cultures that align with district and state goals. They impact student achievement by providing the structures and support necessary to create the environments needed to implement and sustain a literacy plan. School psychologists, special education coordinators, and the like may also be considered school leaders.

### Specific sections of note in order of importance include:

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
  - Seven Components of Literacy
  - MTSS
  - Assessment
  - Intervention
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership
- Section 5: Tools and Resources

## District Leaders

District leaders are school boards, superintendents, deputy superintendents, curriculum directors, special education directors, world language and bilingual coordinators, and college and career leaders, etc., who have the authority to promote new policies unique to the district, streamline initiatives for this set of schools, and monitor implementation of state and federal policy.

### Specific sections of note in order of importance include:

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
  - Development of a Reader
  - Considerations for Learners
- Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership
- Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations
- Section 5: Tools and Resources

## Regional Leaders

Regional leadership, including Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), various program administrators, professional development providers, and teacher support groups, oversees multi-district literacy initiatives. They ensure effective implementation of state policies, supporting literacy development statewide.

### Specific sections of note in order of importance include:

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
  - Development of a Reader
  - Considerations for Learners
  - Tiers of Evidence
  - Content Literacy/ Disciplinary Literacy
- Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations
- Section 5: Tools and Resources

### Educator Preparation

The staff and faculty of educator preparation programs support aspiring teachers across diverse disciplines, seeking to enhance their proficiency in fostering literacy skills in students. These programs offer the first exposure to evidence based practices and prepare future educators with the necessary knowledge of literacy development to be successful in the classroom.

**Specific sections of note in order of importance include:**

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

### State Leaders

State level decision-makers with authority over literacy policies and resources include the Illinois State Board of Education, state education agencies, the governor, legislators, and education policy stakeholders. They are responsible for shaping literacy development and instruction at both state and local levels of the education system.

**Specific sections of note in order of importance include:**

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership

### Community & Family

Parents, guardians, family members, caregivers, home school educators, community librarians, community members, local business and organization leaders, literacy organizations, and advocacy groups all play an active role in promoting and supporting literacy within the community. It is important to note that the specific members of the community and family audience may vary depending on the context and demographics of the state or local community.

**Specific sections of note in order of importance include:**

- Vision and Purpose
- Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction
  - Instructional Practices

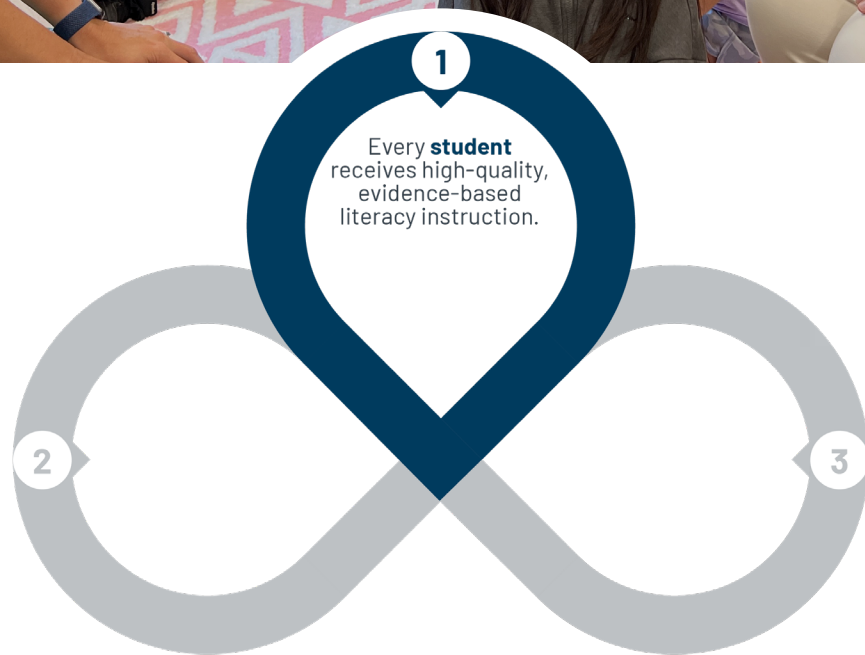
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# FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVIDENCE-BASED LITERACY INSTRUCTION

\*Photo from School District 76



**This section focuses on Goal 1: Every student receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**

This section begins with defining high-quality instruction based on evidence, then takes a close look at a reader's developmental journey, highlighting the Seven Components of Literacy that are central to the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan. The plan carefully lays out the developments of literacy skills, from the fundamental to advanced, offering insightful information to educators, parents, and other stakeholders. Then, the plan explores evidence-based practices that actively support literacy development, providing a general guide for improving students' literacy skills.

## High-Quality, Evidence-Based Instruction

Highlighting the significance of high-quality and evidence-based literacy instruction, this section underscores the need for deliberate instruction in literacy skills. Language represents a systematic method of communicating ideas and feelings through agreed-upon signs, sounds, gestures, or marks with understood meanings. Language is a structured way of expressing ideas and emotions through agreed-upon signs, sounds, gestures, or marks with known meanings. Reading and writing are forms of language, just like speech. However, while speech develops naturally through immersion in a community of speakers in early life, the connections between sounds and letters in reading

and writing (the “code”) need to be explicitly taught.<sup>1</sup> This understanding calls for rigorous and evidence-based literacy instruction to empower students with the tools needed for proficient reading and writing, equipping them for success in their educational journey and beyond.

Evidence-Based Instruction and the Tiers of Evidence

Evidence-based instruction forms the cornerstone of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, representing a forward-thinking and responsive approach to literacy education. This type of instruction is grounded in a comprehensive analysis of educational practices that are validated through a spectrum of studies ranging from experimental to correlational. It’s a dynamic process that continually adapts and evolves in response to emerging educational research and the ever-changing needs of student populations.

The Illinois State Comprehensive Literacy Plan follows ESSA, endorsing instructional practices based on the Tiers of Evidence framework. This framework classifies practices into four evidence-based tiers:

- Tier 1 (Strong Evidence): This tier represents the highest level of evidence. To qualify for Tier 1, an intervention must be supported by at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (such as a randomized control trial).
- Tier 2 (Moderate Evidence): Interventions in this tier are supported by at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study. This means the study has a control group, but the participants are not randomly assigned to the control or intervention group.
- Tier 3 (Promising Evidence): This tier includes interventions backed by at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias. These studies do not reach the rigor of experimental or quasi-experimental designs but still provide some evidence of effectiveness.
- Tier 4 (Demonstrates a Rationale): This tier is for interventions supported by a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such an intervention is likely to improve student outcomes. These interventions require ongoing efforts to examine their effects.

Practices with strong (Tier 1) and moderate (Tier 2) evidence are prioritized. This approach ensures that teaching methods are not just theoretically sound but also have proven effectiveness in enhancing student learning.

Figure 3: What is and is Not Evidence-Based Instruction

What IS Evidence-Based Instruction?	What IS NOT Evidence-Based Instruction?
<b>A collection of research to inform instruction</b> Research about how children learn to read, how to make sure every student learns to read, and what to do when a child encounters difficulty in learning to read continues to expand. The research informs evidence-based instructional practices.	<b>A program, an intervention, or a product you can buy</b> The use of evidence-based instruction is an approach to teaching reading that is based on decades of research and evidence. It is NOT a specific program.
<b>Ever- evolving</b> There is new research and evidence all the time. As populations, communities, and approaches evolve, so should practice. New research can increase or decrease the weight of evidence. The continuum of rigor and quality for research can help identify the weight of claims stemming from research.	<b>Complete and final</b> As with any research, it is never complete. More study happens all the time, and researchers, teachers, and families can work together to bring the best evidence-based practices into classrooms.

Explicit and Systematic Instructional Methods

The significance of explicit and systematic instructional methods is paramount, especially in developing key reading skills such as phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics. These instructional strategies are instrumental in helping learners solidify and automate foundational skills, which are essential for proficient reading. The implementation of such structured learning techniques is vital not only for young learners grappling with the intricacies of reading but also for older students who may require targeted interventions to bolster their literacy capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

While explicit and systematic approaches provide a robust foundation, it's important to recognize that there are situations in which alternative methods, such as constructivist or discovery-based approaches, can contribute meaningfully to the learning process. Constructivist methods, which focus on interactive learning and student-driven exploration, can deepen understanding and foster critical thinking skills. In instances where students have already acquired a solid foundation through direct instruction, incorporating discovery-based activities can further enhance their ability to apply and extend their knowledge. By strategically integrating these approaches, educators can create a well-rounded and adaptive learning environment that combines the strengths of systematic instruction with the benefits of experiential learning, ensuring a comprehensive approach to reading skill development.<sup>3</sup>

Attending to Equity in Literacy Instruction

Ensuring equitable practices in literacy instruction is not just a moral imperative but a critical factor in the success of our educational system. Students come from diverse backgrounds, each with unique learning needs and cultural experiences. Therefore, our approach to literacy must be inclusive and responsive to these differences. By integrating strategies that recognize and value diversity, we can create a learning environment where all students feel seen, understood, and supported. This includes providing resources and training for educators to implement culturally responsive teaching, ensuring access to a wide range of reading materials that reflect the diversity of our student population, and employing assessment methods that accurately measure the progress of all learners. Addressing equity in literacy instruction is essential for closing achievement gaps and fostering a society where every individual has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

English-only or monolingual approaches to literacy instruction for Multilingual learners (MLs) is not considered to be in alignment with evidence-based instructional approaches. As research has continued to evolve, findings indicate that some skills can be more effectively secured by learners when taught bilingually or in their current

Figure 4: Explicit and Systematic Instruction

Explicit Instruction	Systematic Instruction
Encourages active student participation	Is cumulative and diagnostic
Emphasizes clear communication that is free of ambiguity and minimizes cognitive overload	Scaffolds skills, beginning with those foundational to reading success
Maximizes student/teacher interaction, and offers timely feedback	Follows a planned scope and sequence of skills that progresses from easier to more difficult
Enhances long-term retention through purposeful practice techniques	Fosters deeper understanding and proficiency

primary language. Evidence shows that in these instances, MLs are able to apply what they are learning in their current primary language to English language learning.<sup>4</sup>

Additionally, recognizing the diversity in how students learn and the varying rates at which students acquire new skills is essential. Educators need a deep understanding of how to leverage the diverse backgrounds of their students effectively. This involves tailoring instruction to cater to all learners, including those with disabilities, multilingual students, bidialectal individuals, and advanced learners. Such adaptability in teaching is key to providing equitable access to literacy skills development, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed regardless of their unique learning needs.

## Connection to Illinois Standards

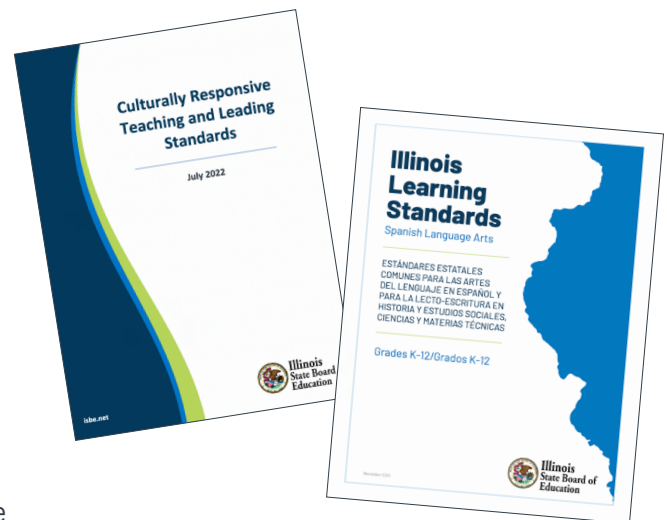
Illinois maintains high-quality learning standards aligned across grade levels. The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan works to support the learning standards and guide literacy instruction and development considerations that span across all grade levels and subject areas. The learning standards connected to literacy are included below to provide a comprehensive framework for educators and stakeholders:

- [Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards](#)
- [Illinois Learning Standards](#), including the [English Language Arts Standards](#)
- [Spanish Language Arts Standards](#)
- English Language Learning/Bilingual Education
  - [English Language Development \(2020\)](#)
  - [Spanish Language Development \(2013\)](#)
- [Career and Technical Education Competencies](#), including the [Cross-Sector Employability Skills](#)
- [Social Emotional Learning Standards \(English and Spanish\)](#)
- [Transitional English Course Parameters, Competencies, and Policies](#)

Moreover, the [Standards for Endorsement in Elementary Education](#) delineate specific literacy standards to guide educator preparation programs. These standards empower elementary teachers to facilitate literacy development effectively.

Illinois adopted the [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#) in March 2021. These standards, which are

rooted in research-based best practices, aim to narrow achievement gaps in literacy and education. They encourage future educators, administrators, and school support professionals to engage in self-reflection, cultivate connections with students' families, align curriculum with students' real-life experiences, and empower student leadership. These standards are seamlessly woven into educator preparation programs, equipping aspiring educators with the skills to engage all students effectively, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds or identities. They foster a learning environment that maximizes literacy development. Including these standards in



literacy instruction is vital because they promote inclusive and culturally responsive teaching practices, ensuring that all students have equitable access to high-quality education that honors their unique perspectives and experiences.

## The Development of a Reader

The following is a brief overview of the development of literacy skills grounded in the research that provides a foundation for the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan and the Seven Components of Literacy. For a more detailed understanding, please consult the recommended Deeper Exploration and References at the end of Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction.

## Oral Language

Literacy begins with acquiring oral language, a natural process for children in any language. Family environment and other factors influence this, but there are typical language milestones that most children reach<sup>5</sup>:

- Birth to 1 Year: Babies respond to sounds, start to babble, and follow simple commands.
- 1–2 Years: Toddlers recognize familiar objects, use about 50 words, and start combining words.
- 2.5–4 Years: Kids use around 500 words, understand basic grammar like pronouns, and ask questions.
- 4–5 Years: Vocabulary grows to 1,500–2,000 words; youngsters respond to more complex questions.
- 5–6 Years: Children use and understand a larger vocabulary, including synonyms and antonyms.
- 6–7 Years: Understanding expands to over 20,000 words, approximating grammar with those around them and early writing skills.
- 8–12 Years: Vocabulary and grammar continue to grow through schooling and reading.
- Note: For multilingual learners, their vocabulary milestones should include a combination of what is known in all their languages.

Speaking and understanding spoken language is important for learning to read and write, so it is essential to recognize the integral role of both native language development for all students and second language development for multilingual students. The National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth found that instruction in the foundational skills was not enough for multilingual learners to learn to read in English. Oral Language development in English and in their home languages as well as literacy in the students' home languages were critical components to their development of English literacy.<sup>6</sup> Each child's proficiency in their first language affects how they learn a second language. This calls for tailored teaching strategies. The following summarizes the stages of learning a second language as informed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell as well as Jim Cummins:

1. Silent/Preproduction Stage: Learners begin to develop receptive (listening) proficiency in the new language without speaking much, understanding basic words and phrases.
2. Early Production Stage: Learners begin to use simple words and phrases for basic communication, understanding around 1,000 words.
3. Speech Emergence Stage: The ability to form simple sentences develops, with a vocabulary comprehension of about 3,000 words, and basic questioning skills emerge.
4. Intermediate Language Proficiency Stage: Learners understand more complex sentences and about 6,000 words, engaging in more detailed conversations with fewer grammatical errors.
5. Advanced Language Proficiency Stage: Comparable to native speaker fluency, this stage includes complex

sentence structures, advanced vocabulary, and a sophisticated grasp of the language.

The developmental progression from comprehending basic oral language word recognition to advanced language proficiency underscores the transformative nature of sustained language exposure and practice. Educators and language facilitators play a pivotal role in guiding learners through these stages, employing strategies that cater to their evolving linguistic needs. Further exploration of second language acquisition is encouraged. The [Multilingual/Language Development Department](#) at ISBE provides further information, including more detailed information on the Illinois English Language Development Standards that describe the various stages of learning a new language in an academic setting across a range of grade levels and content areas.<sup>7</sup>

## Decoding

Unlike oral language development, reading development requires instruction and exposure to texts and is intricately tied to language skills. This involves decoding (turning written words to spoken language) and comprehending these words, as explained by Philip Gough and William Tunmer, who introduced the Simple View of Reading (SVR) in 1986. The SVR provides a fundamental framework for understanding the skills that culminate in reading.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5: Simple View of Reading

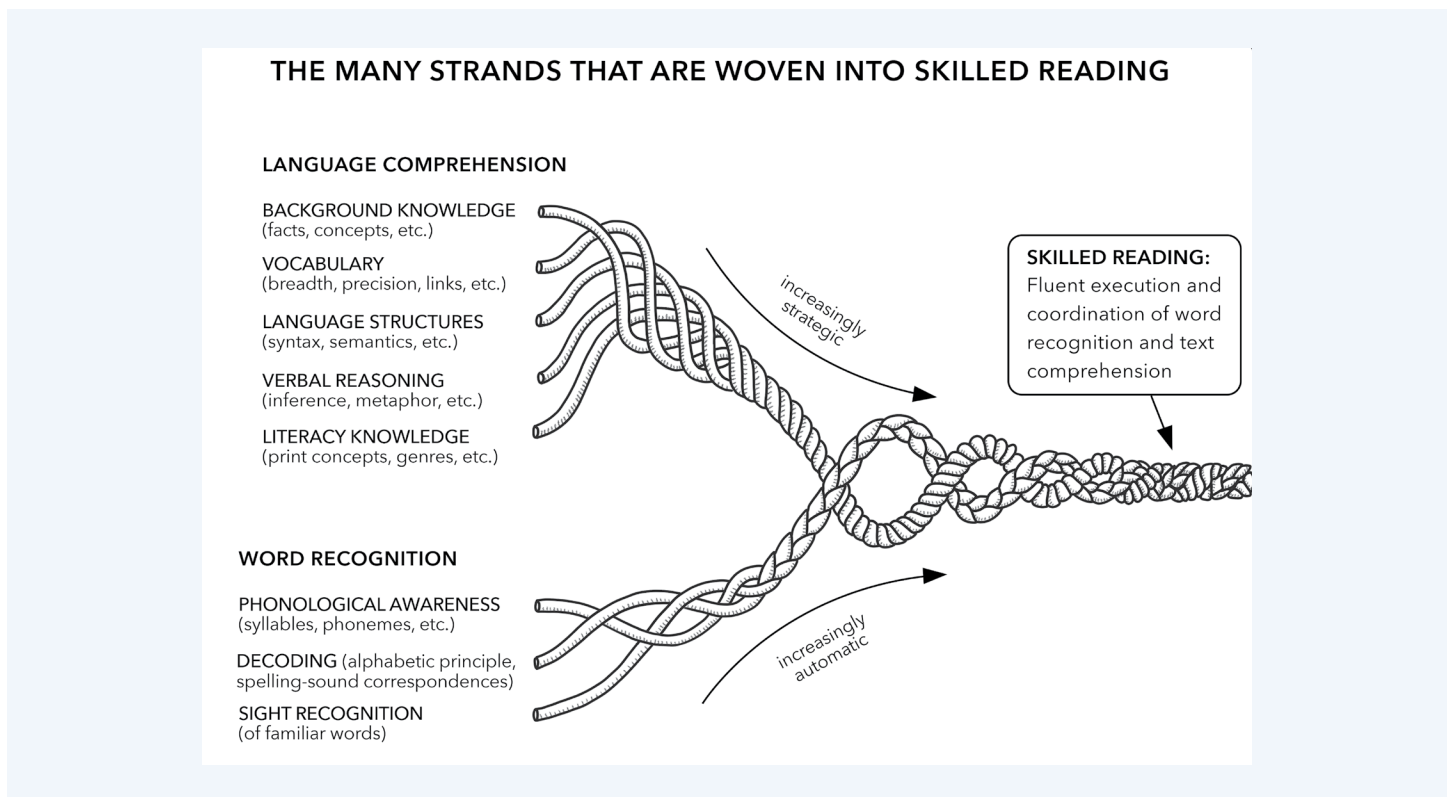


Decoding involves recognizing that written words are composed of letters or groups of letters (graphemes) that represent the smallest sounds of a language (phonemes). Given the variety of ways letters might be pronounced in the English language — a very opaque writing system — decoding becomes more difficult. For example, the letter *c* can symbolize the /k/ sound in *cat* or the /s/ sound in “city.” To develop decoding abilities in English, students need to not only identify individual letter sounds but also comprehend specific sound patterns.

The process of decoding requires complex neural connections. Each new decoding connection prompts a specific region of the brain called the visual word form area to experience rewiring. This area connects visual information with spoken language.<sup>9</sup> It plays a crucial role in reading by facilitating the connection between what is seen and what is said. This region of the brain develops instruction and practice of word-sound relationships. Children have a preexisting grasp of spoken language; however, converting this understanding into written words necessitates explicit instruction and intentional practice of sound-symbol connections and the various patterns seen in the English language.<sup>10</sup>

For students learning to read in the language they are proficient in, the sound-word connection is much more efficient. For students learning to read in their second or new language, it is important to not only work from the print to oral language (decoding), but also work to represent students’ oral language in English in print and ask them to decode that text. Working within students’ oral English proficiency ensures that students are not just word calling but are understanding what they decode. Proficiency in decoding alone does not guarantee comprehension without relevant background knowledge for all learners. Scarborough’s Reading Rope (2001) builds on the framework provided by the SVR, emphasizing the importance of multiple factors in reading comprehension. It illustrates that skilled reading is influenced by the development of various strands over time.<sup>11</sup>

Figure 6: Scarborough's Rope



From Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy*. New York: Guilford Press.

## Prior Knowledge

A classic study by Donna Recht and Lauren Leslie, commonly referred to as "[The Baseball Study](#)," demonstrates the crucial function of prior knowledge in establishing a framework for retaining and understanding information.<sup>12</sup> Recht and Leslie investigated how students engaged with a narrative recounting a fictitious baseball game's half inning. Students' comprehension of the narrative was not significantly impacted by reading ability, specifically the capacity to decode words proficiently. Conversely, it was the students' knowledge of baseball that significantly influenced their capacity to rebuild and comprehend the narrative. Students with a deep understanding of the game outperformed their counterparts, irrespective of their reading proficiency. It is important to note that for students from a variety of cultural backgrounds, the reading passage would have been more comprehensible had it been about another sport other than baseball, such as cricket, soccer, hockey or rugby.

This revelation underscores the profound impact of prior knowledge on comprehension. Prior knowledge acts as a scaffold for reading comprehension by providing a structure for processing and incorporating new information. When students have relevant prior knowledge, they are able to make connections, draw inferences, and gain deeper insights while reading.

The experiment also highlights the implications of prior knowledge in the broader context of literacy instruction and assessment. Students need a well-rounded and diverse knowledge base to successfully navigate a range of subject matter. Teaching reading requires a systematic approach to mastery of foundational reading skills but also necessitates a holistic approach that acknowledges and leverages students' existing knowledge, motivating them to enhance their present understanding, broaden their cognitive frameworks, and cultivate a more profound and nuanced view of the world through written language. Integrating this understanding into literacy instruction can

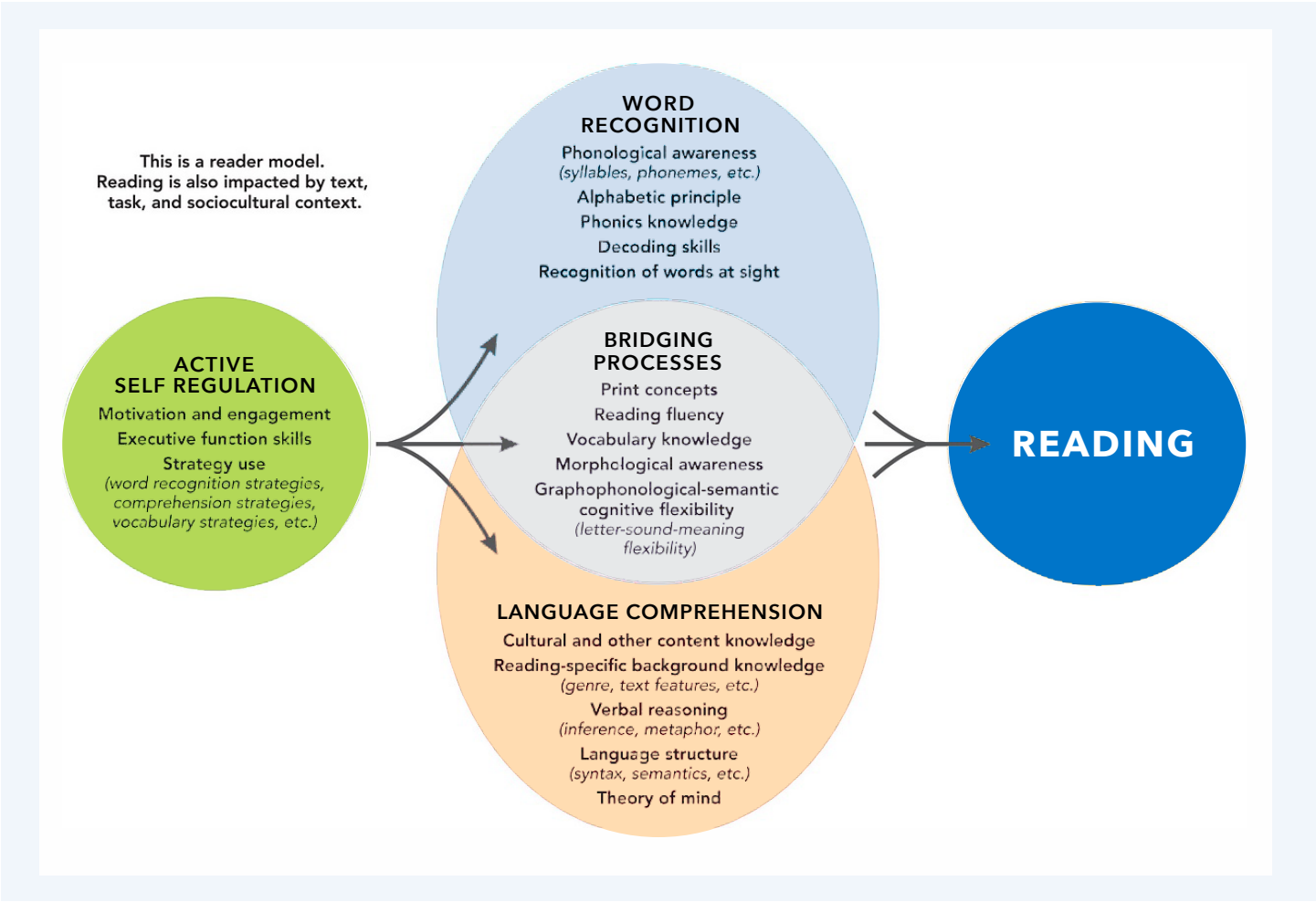
pave the way for a more comprehensive and effective approach to cultivating lifelong readers.

**The Interconnectedness of Literacy Skills**

A recent framework produced by Duke and Cartwright (2021) further considers the vast variances in readers’ knowledge bases and cultural experiences as critical determinants of comprehension with the model known as the Active View of Reading. Instead of viewing words as static symbols, the active view of reading posits that readers actively interact with the text, creating a dynamic exchange that goes beyond the mere translation of symbols into sounds.

The Active View of Reading recognizes that decoding and comprehension are not isolated processes, but rather intersect one another. Vocabulary knowledge, a subset of reading development, demonstrates the interconnectedness of both skills. Understanding the meaning of a word enables readers to monitor its context after decoding, and certain words, like heteronyms, require prior knowledge for accurate decoding. Similarly, fluency, traditionally associated with decoding, encompasses prosody – an aspect crucial for demonstrating comprehension through expression and phrasing.<sup>13</sup>

Figure 7: Active View of Reading

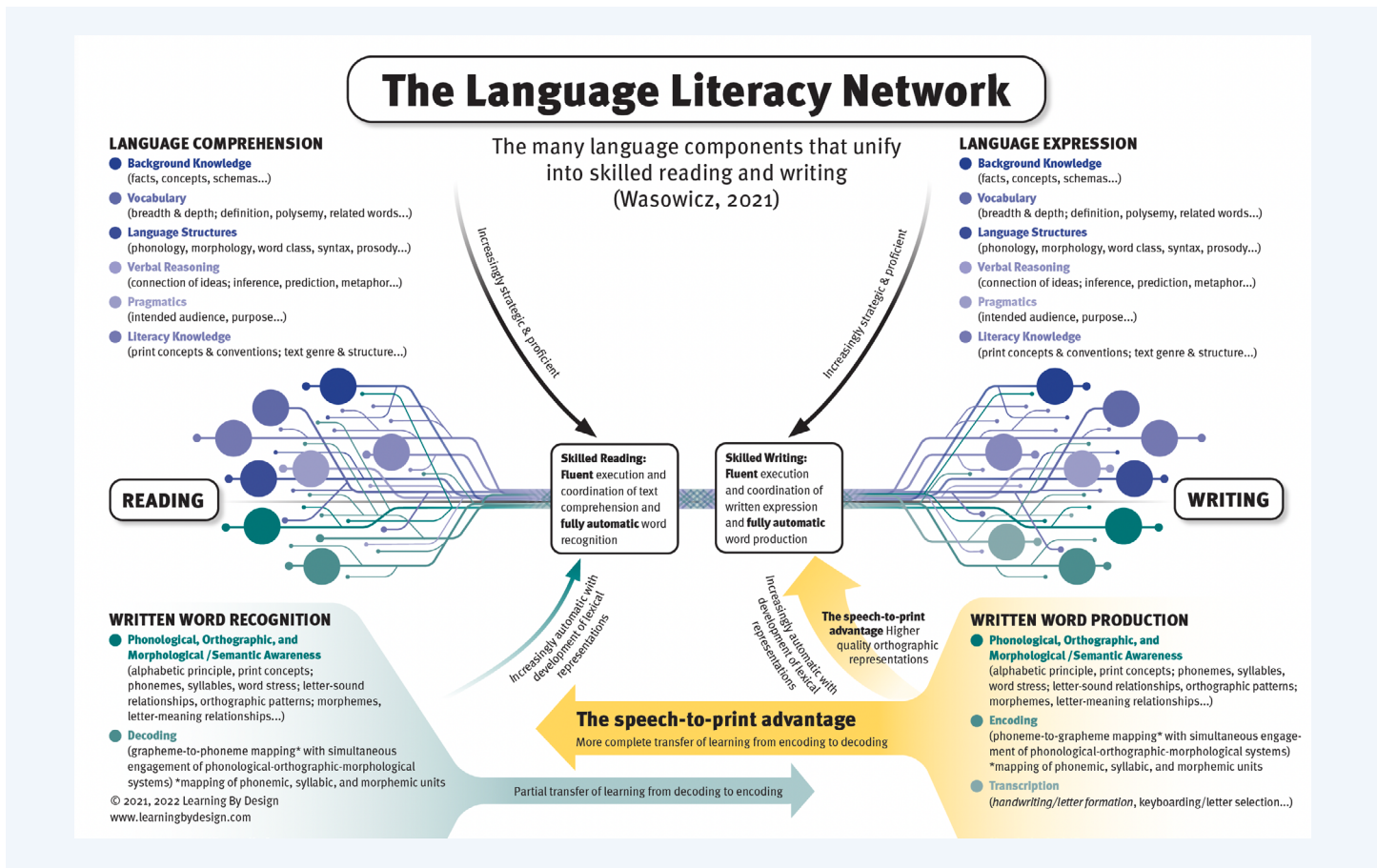


**Adapted from** Duke, Nell K., and Kelly B. Cartwright. “[The Science of Reading Progresses: Communicating Advances Beyond the Simple View of Reading](#).” *Reading Research Quarterly* 56, no. S1 (May 2021).

## Spelling

Developed by Wasowicz in 2021, the Language Literacy Network (LLN) advances the understanding of essential skills for reading and writing proficiency. LLN highlights the importance of spelling, or encoding, where students learn to transform sounds into written letters (sound-to-grapheme approach). This skill is vital as English has multiple ways to spell the same sound, making spelling challenging yet crucial.<sup>14</sup>

### Figure 8: The Literacy Language Network



From Wasowicz, J. (2021). [The Language Literacy Network](#). Learning By Design, Inc.

The LLN clearly shows how encoding (spelling) and decoding (reading) are distinct yet interrelated processes. In encoding, students learn how to turn sounds into written letters or groups of letters (a sound-to-grapheme approach). English has many different ways to write the same sound, so it's easy to make spelling mistakes. In decoding, students learn how to turn written letters or groups of letters back into sounds (a grapheme-to-phoneme strategy). Once students understand this “code” of connecting sounds to letters, they can read and write better. MLs, in particular, benefit from seeing their spoken language transcribed, aiding in decoding English. Effective spelling instruction helps bridge the gap for students to become proficient readers and writers, especially for those who can read well but struggle with text transcription for fluent writing. Effective spelling instruction helps bridge the gap for students to become proficient readers and writers, especially for those who can read well but struggle with text transcription for fluent writing.<sup>15</sup>

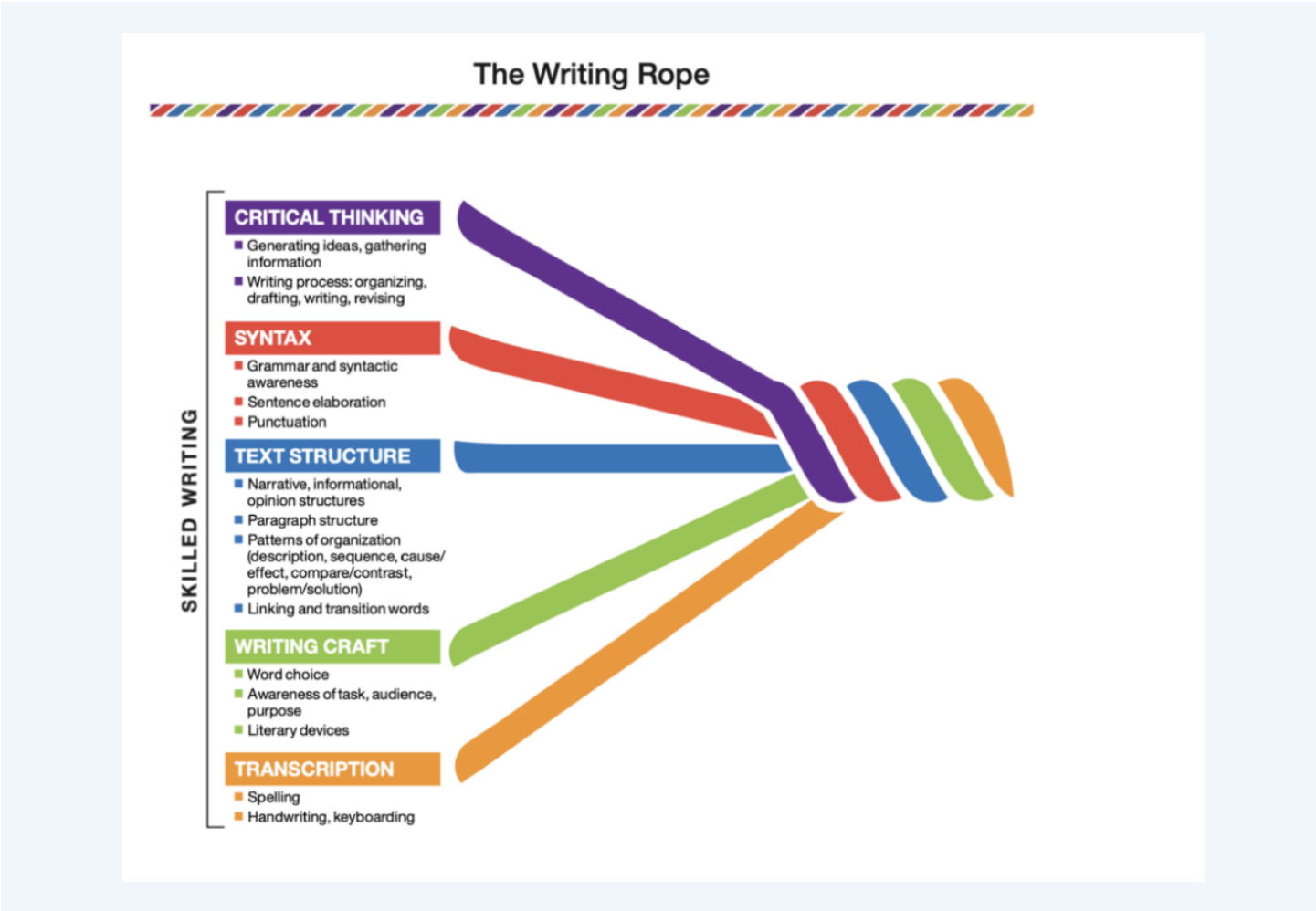
Effective spelling instruction is a cornerstone of literacy, involving the identification of sounds in words and their corresponding graphemes. This process not only supports language processing but also bridges spoken and written language. Direct, systematic instruction integrated with phonics and guided practice is essential for developing spelling skills.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, the role of spelling extends beyond word formation. It is integral to writing fluency, vocabulary development, and communication skills, forming the foundation of language proficiency. The reciprocal relationship between spelling and reading encompasses phonological awareness, vocabulary, grammar, comprehension, and textual elements. This linkage, emphasized in studies like Charles Read’s 1971 research and aligned with the International Dyslexia Association’s 2015 recommendations, highlights the necessity of professional development in these areas. Thus, spelling is not merely a literacy component but a fundamental skill for language proficiency.<sup>17</sup>

**Writing**

Writing is often overlooked in the development of literacy skills, despite its equal importance in student literacy achievement. Writing is often mistakenly viewed as a single skill, leading to a lack of comprehensive writing instruction and assessment strategies among educators. In response, Joan Sedita (2021) proposed a “writing rope” model, similar to Scarborough’s Reading Rope, to illustrate the multiple components necessary for skilled writing. This model includes strands for critical thinking, syntax, text structure, writing craft, and transcription, all of which highlight the multifaceted nature of writing.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 9: The Writing Rope



[From The Writing Rope™](#): The strands that are woven into skilled writing [online article].

## From Research to Practice

The National Reading Panel's findings from 2000 offer valuable insights into the transition from understanding literacy skill development to applying evidence-based instructional practices. The panel highlighted several effective methods for enhancing children's reading abilities in its report. It highlights the importance of developing phonemic awareness, proficiency in phonics, and the ability to read both accurately and effortlessly, alongside the use of comprehension strategies. The panel noted that a lack of phonemic awareness could lead to reading difficulties. However, systematic and explicit instruction in this area can significantly improve reading and writing skills. Systematic phonics instruction is particularly beneficial for students from kindergarten to sixth grade and for those struggling with reading.

Moreover, the panel emphasized the importance of guided repeated oral reading, progressing toward independent repeated reading, as a vital strategy in teaching reading. This approach builds automaticity and prosody, which are crucial for fluency.

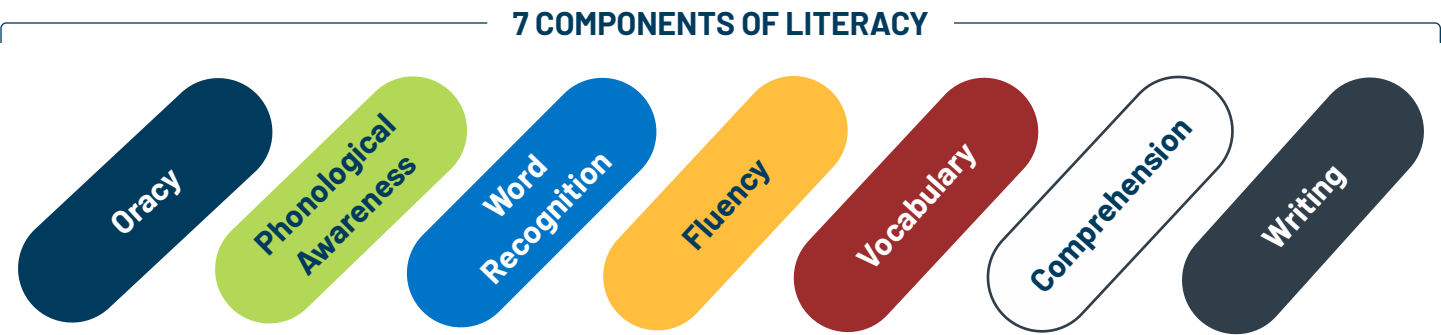
The panel also reported findings on vocabulary development and text comprehension strategies, highlighting the efficacy of both direct and indirect vocabulary instruction. Effective reading comprehension is achievable through a variety of techniques and systematic strategies. The panel advocates for continued high-quality research in teacher preparation and the integration of computer technology in literacy instruction, underscoring their potential impact on literacy education.<sup>19</sup>

Recognizing the focus on monolingual English-speaking students learning to read in English within the National Reading Panel report, the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan looks to the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth, as well as other studies in second language literacy and biliteracy to provide the research base for MLs developing literacy.

# The Seven Components of Literacy

Illinois has identified the importance of the Seven Components of Literacy detailed on the following pages. The components offer a comprehensive overview of developmentally appropriate practices. These practices align with the crucial components of literacy: **oracy**, **phonological awareness**, **word recognition**, **fluency**, **vocabulary**, **comprehension**, and **writing**. The instructional framework is not merely a theoretical construct; it is a practical tool for educators that is designed to enhance student literacy outcomes.

This comprehensive approach underscores the belief that literacy education transcends isolated skills. It encompasses a broader spectrum of communication and expression. Embracing this comprehensive literacy model – incorporating reading, oracy, and writing – ensures that students have equitable access to acquire multifaceted skills, which are vital for success across academic, professional, and personal domains.



The following pages take a closer look at each of the components, providing a deeper understanding of each at varying grade spans, considerations for specific student groups, considerations for assessment and intervention, and evidence-based core instructional practices.

<a href="#">Oracy</a>	34-37
<a href="#">Phonological Awareness</a>	38-41
<a href="#">Word Recognition</a>	42-45
<a href="#">Fluency</a>	46-48
<a href="#">Vocabulary</a>	50-53
<a href="#">Comprehension</a>	54-57
<a href="#">Writing</a>	58-61



## Oracy Overview

Oracy, the skill of effective spoken communication, is fundamental to literacy development across all grades. It encompasses more than speaking skills; it includes building a rich vocabulary, understanding complex syntax, and honing comprehension through meaningful dialogue. Oracy fosters critical thinking, active listening, coherent response, and confidence in self-expression. Essential in nurturing social interaction, empathy, and cultural awareness, oracy skills allow students to lay a solid foundation for reading and writing skills, facilitating the seamless transfer of knowledge between different communication modes, and enhancing overall literacy proficiency.<sup>20</sup>

## Young Learners

- **Interactive Development:**  
Engage in oral language learning through social interactions and educational settings.
- **Playful Learning:**  
Foster language development through culturally relevant play and scaffolding.
- **Literacy Integration:**  
Blend reading and writing in daily activities, enhancing language skills and parental involvement.

## Elementary

- **Oracy Basics:**  
Build vocabulary, basic syntax understanding, and conversation-driven comprehension.
- **Critical Thinking and Confidence:**  
Develop critical thinking and self-expression confidence through active listening and response.
- **Literacy Foundation:**  
Strengthen oral communication to lay a foundation for reading and writing skills.

## Middle Grades

- **Complex Idea Expression:**  
Encourage clear, persuasive articulation of complex ideas.
- **Communication Adaptation:**  
Teach varied speech registers for different contexts.
- **Advanced Skills Introduction:**  
Develop debate, presentation, and narrative skills.

## High School

- **Skill Refinement:**  
Refine complex idea delivery and argumentative skills.
- **Broad Communication Range:**  
Navigate diverse communication situations, including digital.
- **Advanced Debate and Presentation:**  
Emphasize skills for post-secondary and professional interactions.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Oral language skills are essential for literacy. Instruction should begin in the student's strongest language, accommodating bilingual proficiency where present. Strategies should align with students' linguistic abilities, incorporating storytelling and cultural elements. Emphasis is on adapting to MLs' needs, particularly in vocabulary and idioms, within culturally respectful and integrative settings.<sup>21</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners need to be engaged in sophisticated oracy applications, such as high-level debates, public speaking, and exploring complex ideas verbally. They should explore abstract thinking and nuanced expression through these activities. Also, mentoring peers in speaking and listening skills enhances their own proficiency and fosters a collaborative learning environment. This approach broadens their oracy skills while contributing to a community of learners.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Students with specialized needs benefit from customized oracy development strategies, including assistive communication technologies, extended response times, and language simplification that preserves content integrity. Creating a supportive environment that recognizes and accommodates their unique communication styles is crucial. For those who are multilingual learners (MLs), additional support in their native language can be vital, ensuring equitable access to language development opportunities.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Assess speaking skills focusing on fluency, clarity, organization, and overall communication effectiveness. Use rubrics for presentations and discussions. Include formative assessments like self and peer reviews to provide comprehensive feedback on students' oral language abilities.

### **Intervention Supports**

- Conduct personalized coaching for specific speaking challenges.
- Employ visual aids and graphic organizers for thought organization.
- Facilitate confidence-building through storytelling and role-playing.
- Provide sentence starters and frameworks for speech structure.
- Encourage interactive exercises to boost fluency and versatility in communication.

### Further Reading

- *Talk, Read, Talk, Write* by Nancy Motley
- *Transforming Talk: The Interplay of Discourse, Comprehension, and Collaboration in Schooling* by Elizabeth A. City
- *Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk that Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understandings* by Jeff Zwiers and Marie Crawford
- *Content-Area Conversations: How to Plan Discussion-Based Lessons for Diverse Language Learners* by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Carol Rothenberg

### Core Instructional Practices

The practices in the following chart are specifically referencing core, Tier 1 instruction. It is important to recognize that not all of these practices align with evidence-based strategies across ALL grade levels for Tier 1 instruction. This highlights that a practice effective in one context or grade may not be suitable for all tiers or grades. Additionally, this list does not exhaust all evidence-based literacy practices. Moreover, there are evidence-based interventions designed for more specific or intensive educational needs beyond core instruction not represented below.

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan follows ESSA, prioritizing instructional practices with strong (Tier 1) and moderate (Tier 2) evidence. This prioritization reflects the high potential for success these practices offer. Educators are encouraged to understand these tiers thoroughly, applying them to select and implement the most effective methods for the students for whom the approaches were designed.

The chart divides practices into “Aligned with Evidence” and “Not Aligned with Evidence,” based on current research and best practices. However, educators should use their judgment and consider their students’ unique needs when choosing and applying instructional practices.

Access the [Pre-K standards](#) and the [K-12 standards](#) referenced in the figure for more information.

Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Foster structured discussions to develop oral language skills.	PreK-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 1 K-12: CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.3	Provide limited verbal discourse opportunities.
Engage students in spoken language activities to expand vocabulary, construct sentences, and improve grammar proficiency.	PreK-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: RL.K-5.10, SL.K-5.2	Emphasize rote memorization of vocabulary and grammar without meaningful spoken interaction.
Utilize read-alouds and storytelling to enhance expressive language and comprehension.	PreK-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 1 K-12: CCRA.L.3, CCRA.L.6	Conduct passive read-alouds without interactive elements like discussion or relating to experiences.
Promote oral planning and discussion before writing to organize thoughts and develop language skills.	1st-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 1 K-12: CCRA.SL.4	Allow writing without prior oral discussion or planning, leading to disorganization.
Encourage providing and receiving feedback on oral presentations or discussions to refine speaking and listening abilities.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 1 K-12: CCRA.SL.3	Focus solely on presentation content, neglecting oral communication feedback.
Implement debates, drama, and presentations for both formal and informal communication.	3rd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 1 K-12: CCRA.SL.4	Incorporate scripted performances and rehearsed speeches for students without emphasizing opportunities for spontaneous and unstructured communication.
Utilize digital tools like podcasts and video blogs to enhance modern communication skills.	1st-12	K-12: CCRA.SL.5	Introduce digital tools like podcasts and video blogs without providing guidance or structure for their use, leading to passive consumption of media without active engagement or skill development in modern communication.

Evidence for above table<sup>22</sup>

## Phonological Awareness Overview

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate spoken parts of words, including syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes. Phonemic awareness specifically targets identification and manipulation of individual sounds, or phonemes, in spoken words. These skills are vital for reading proficiency, forming brain connections between speech sounds and written symbols. This awareness begins in infancy and evolves through tasks like rhyming and syllable blending in early education. Mastering phoneme segmentation, blending, and substitution is critical for developing these foundational skills, crucial for efficient reading development.<sup>23</sup>

### Young Learners

- **Phonemic Play:**  
Use songs, rhymes, and oral play to develop phonemic awareness.
- **Personalized Learning:**  
Focus on sounds in familiar words for language awareness.
- **Cultural Rhythms:**  
Employ various languages' poetry and songs to build phonemic awareness.

### Elementary

- **Phonological Development:**  
Enhance word part recognition like syllables and onset-rime.
- **Phonemic Introduction:**  
Begin identifying and manipulating individual phonemes.
- **Basic Literacy Foundation:**  
Link sounds to letters for early reading and writing skills.

### Middle Grades

- **Phonemic Refinement:**  
Strengthen ability to segment, blend, and manipulate phonemes effectively to decode complex words and improve reading fluency.
- **Spelling and Writing Proficiency:**  
Apply phonemic awareness in spelling and complex writing.
- **Complex Language Structures Exposure:**  
Introduce technical vocabulary and nuances in language and dialects.

### High School

- **Complex Application:**  
Apply phonological skills in diverse reading and writing to decode and understand complex texts in various subjects.
- **Advanced Writing Application:**  
Utilize phonological awareness in creative and analytical writing.
- **Language Variations Exploration:**  
Deepen understanding of different dialects and languages for enhanced linguistic and cultural awareness.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Effective phonological awareness for MLs involves teaching sound connections across languages, acknowledging their diverse linguistic backgrounds. This includes using familiar words, rhymes, and songs to aid sound recognition, which varies in development pace. Integrating these elements into literacy instruction is vital for enabling MLs to decode English, understand its vocabulary, and comprehend sentence structures effectively.<sup>24</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners benefit from curriculum compacting for quick mastery and flexible pacing for individual learning speeds. Tiered activities cater to varying skill levels, while enhancement or extension tasks offer deeper, more challenging engagement. These learners should explore phonological concepts through poetry, rhymes, and songs and create their own linguistic patterns. Such activities not only reinforce their understanding but also foster creative and analytical thinking in phonological awareness.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Multimodal methods and technologies are crucial for learners with special needs, aiding in sound discrimination and manipulation. Essential support for these foundational skills should start with using students' names, familiar words, and stories. Those with reading disabilities like dyslexia may find initial challenges in discerning and manipulating spoken language sounds, which precedes their encounter with printed sounds.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Evaluate students' ability to manipulate sounds in words, including tasks like identifying, segmenting, and blending phonemes. Regular assessments help identify students needing additional support in phonological awareness skills.

### **Intervention Supports**

- Implement small group or one-on-one instruction for specific skill gaps.
- Utilize explicit phonics programs teaching sound-letter correspondences.
- Progress from simple to complex phonological tasks in activities.
- Incorporate engaging, hands-on exercises for phonemic awareness.

### Further Reading

- *Equipped for Reading Success* by David Kilpatrick
- *Speech to Print* by Louisa Cook Moats
- *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum* by Marilyn Jager Adams et al
- *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Student Bilingualism for Learning* by Ofelia García Otheguy

### Core Instructional Practices

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Access the [Pre-K standards](#) and the [K-12 standards](#) referenced in the figure for more information.

Literacy Components  
**Phonological  
 Awareness**

Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Deliver explicit phonemic awareness instruction with a clear scope and sequence.	PreK-2	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.2, RF.1.2, RF.2.3a	Focus on instruction limited to larger phonological units (syllables, rhyme, onset-rime) without progressing to phonemes.
Incorporate games and activities for identifying and producing rhyming words.	PreK-1	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.2a, RF.1.2a	Rely solely on silent reading of poetry or alliterative texts without interactive rhyme or alliteration activities.
Engage students in activities for isolating and identifying sounds in spoken words.	PreK-1	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.2d, RF.1.2d	Conduct spelling activities without explicit focus on sounds.
Provide manipulatives or oral exercises for blending and segmenting sounds.	PreK-1	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.2b-c, RF.1.2b-c	Promote memorization of whole words without phonemic breakdown or blending activities.

Evidence for above table<sup>25</sup>



## Word Recognition Overview

Word recognition entails the efficient, accurate identification and understanding of words and is vital in grasping word structure and meaning. These skills are honed through systematic instruction and practice.<sup>26</sup>

Word recognition skills include:

- **Phonics:** Understanding the relationship between letters (e.g., the sound /k/ can be represented by c, k, ck, or ch spellings) and sounds, and using this knowledge in reading and writing.
- **Decoding:** Interpreting words by applying letter-sound knowledge, recognizing letter patterns and rules.
- **Morphology:** Analyzing word structures, including roots and affixes, to understand complex words.
- **Orthographic Mapping:** Developing and strengthening mental links between the sounds of words and their spellings, aiding quick recognition without sounding out.
- **Encoding:** Using letter-sound knowledge to write or spell words, integrating phonics and morphology.

## Young Learners

- **Contextual Learning:**  
Utilize environmental print to boost word recognition in children's languages.
- **Interactive Literacy:**  
Strengthen word recognition through read-alouds and labeled environments.
- **Modeling Writing:**  
Enhance recognition skills with adult-modeled writing practices.

## Elementary

- **Phonics Skills:**  
Teach and apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships for reading and writing words, progressing from simple to complex patterns.
- **Morphology Introduction:**  
Explore basic word structures, advancing to complex morphemes.
- **Orthographic Mapping Foundations:**  
Create and strengthen mental links between spoken words and their written forms, establishing sight words in memory.

## Middle Grades

- **Advanced Phonics:**  
Focus decoding and encoding complex words and letter patterns.
- **Morphological Understanding:**  
Deepen knowledge of advanced word structures.
- **Orthographic Mapping Skills:**  
Improve quick word recognition for smoother reading.

## High School

- **Phonics Mastery:**  
Ensure mastery in sound-spelling correspondences for complex reading and apply comprehensive phonics and morphology for varied spelling and writing tasks.
- **Advanced Morphology:**  
Study complex structures for interpreting sophisticated words in academic texts.
- **Orthographic Mapping Proficiency:**  
Achieve fluent word recognition across text types.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Teaching word recognition to MLs requires sensitivity to their linguistic backgrounds. This includes translanguaging pedagogy and crosslinguistic analysis, leveraging their phonemic and orthographic knowledge. Recognizing letter-sound and word structure differences between languages is crucial. Instruction should be direct and systematic for MLs, honoring the more proficient language when appropriate.<sup>27</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners benefit from exploring word recognition through etymology and advanced morphology. This deepens their understanding of word origins and structures, enhancing their recognition skills. Engaging with complex word forms and their linguistic roots challenges their cognitive abilities and fosters a more comprehensive grasp of language.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Customized strategies for students with specialized needs in word recognition include focused phonics, decoding, and orthographic mapping. Bilingual intervention is advantageous for multilingual students with special needs. Collaboration among educators and therapists and integrating assistive technologies like speech-to-text and screen readers ensures comprehensive support and accessibility.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Assesses a range of word recognition skills, including decoding accuracy, speed, and efficiency, and applying morphological knowledge in reading and spelling, to identify areas needing further support.

### **Intervention Considerations**

- Provide clear, targeted phonics and decoding instruction covering all 44 phonemes in English and cross-language connections for MLs.
- Teach decoding and encoding simultaneously.
- Implement morphology-based activities for understanding complex word structures.
- Utilize techniques to improve orthographic mapping and automaticity in word recognition.

### Further Reading

- *Choosing and Using Decodable Texts* by Wiley Blevins
- *Uncovering the Logic of English* by Denise Eide
- *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties* by David A. Kilpatrick
- *Unlocking Literacy: Effective Decoding and Spelling Instruction* by Marcia K. Henry: *Focuses*
- *A Fresh Look at Phonics* by Wiley Blevins

### Core Instructional Practices

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Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Deliver explicit, direct phonics instruction that follows a clear scope and sequence.	K-2	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.3, RF.1.3, RF.2.3	Focus on embedded/implicit phonics and generic phonics worksheets.
Teach phoneme-grapheme correspondence in words and syllables.	K-3	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.3a, RF.1.3a, RF.2.3b, RF.3.3a	Emphasize memorization of whole words without focusing on phoneme/grapheme correspondence.
Guide students to use phonetic decoding first, then context and pictures for comprehension.	K-3	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.3, RF.1.3, RF.2.3, RF.3.3	Allow guessing words from context or pictures without phonetic decoding.
Use decodable books aligned with phonics scope and sequence.	K-2	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.3c, RF.1.3g, RF.2.3f	Rely on predictable texts with unlearned phonics patterns and rely on decodable books without varied texts.
Employ multi-sensory phonics approaches using visual, auditory, and kinesthetic methods.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K.3c, RF.1.3g, RF.2.3f	Limit phonics instruction to visual or auditory methods only.
Deliver explicit spelling instruction aligned with phonics.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: RF.K.3d, RF.1.3f, RF.2.3e, RF.3.3b, RF.4.3a, RF.5.3a	Provide random, disconnected spelling lists and use non-phonics-based methods like "rainbow writing.
Provide explicit morphology instruction connecting to etymology and phonology.	2nd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.4	Isolate morphology instruction without connecting it to language structure.
Instruct on root words, affixes, and word families.	1st-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.4	Focus on vocabulary instruction without connecting root words and affixes.
Conduct derivational morphology activities that explicitly teach the structure of words.	3rd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.4	Ignore the morphological structure of words in reading instruction.
Teach students a strategy to decode multisyllabic words by identifying affixes and dividing syllables.	2nd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.R.4	Encourage guessing unknown words based on context or pictures alone.

## Fluency Overview

Fluency, the ability to read text accurately, swiftly, and with proper expression, is a critical bridge between word recognition and comprehension. It involves not just ease of reading but also reading with correct intonation and expression. Fluency development starts with repeated language exposure and shared reading, and advances as students practice reading aloud with proper prosody. Fluency varies with text familiarity, requiring varied reader-text interactions for development. Effective instruction and opportunities to read various text types are crucial, underscoring the role of content area teachers in fluency within their disciplines. <sup>29</sup>

### Young Learners

- **Repetitive Reading:**  
Use repetitive patterns and props in read-alouds for text familiarity.
- **Playful Extension:**  
Integrate read-aloud language into play for fluency development.
- **Creative Expression:**  
Employ storytelling fluency with dictation and dramatization.

### Elementary

- **Initial Fluency:**  
Foster fluency through repeated language exposure and shared reading of various text types, which is crucial for recognizing language patterns.
- **Reading Aloud Practice:**  
Incorporate teacher modeled oral reading and student practice reading aloud with proper prosody to improve accuracy, automaticity, and expression.
- **Explicit Instructional Components:**  
Emphasize teaching sentence types, simple and complex structures, and explicit vocabulary instruction.

### Middle Grades

- **Fluency Skill Development:**  
Enhance reading pace, accuracy, and expression with complex texts, including approaches like partner reading and fluency games.
- **Targeted Interventions:**  
Implement strategies for students needing additional fluency support.
- **Diverse Material Exposure:**  
Broaden reading material exposure for engagement and challenge.

### High School

- **Advanced Fluency Refinement:**  
Engage with diverse texts to deepen comprehension.
- **Complex Text Fluency:**  
Analyze and interpret various literary elements and styles.
- **Ongoing Fluency Focus:**  
Continue advanced fluency techniques for ongoing development.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- For MLs, fluency in their native language may not directly translate to English comprehension. MLs' ability to analyze language can enhance literacy across languages but requires intentional support. Incorporating culturally relevant materials and targeted support improves fluency and comprehension. Explore diverse program models, like dual language, and collaborate with families to leverage students' cultural and linguistic strengths.<sup>31</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners benefit from engaging with complex texts and sophisticated language structures in classic literature, scientific articles, and analytical essays. These materials enhance their vocabulary and understanding of intricate sentence constructions. Discussions and creative composition tasks using advanced language also refine their fluency and critical thinking, preparing them for higher academic and professional communication.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Accommodations, such as additional reading time, using authentic and engaging texts at an appropriate reading level, opportunities to rehearse and practice oral reading, and supportive technologies, can help learners with special needs develop fluency.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Use regular formative assessments like oral reading fluency checks to monitor students' progress in reading rate, accuracy, and expressiveness, guiding instructional adjustments for improved reading fluency.

### **Intervention Considerations**

- Regular exposure to fluent reading models.
- Implement repeated reading interventions to enhance speed and accuracy.
- Provide one-on-one coaching for specific fluency challenges.
- Utilize audio recordings for students to model fluent reading.
- Practice with controlled, connected texts for decoding skills.
- Offer feedback to develop reading accuracy and correct common errors.

### Further Reading

- *The Fluent Reader: Oral & Silent Reading Strategies for Building Fluency, Word Recognition & Comprehension* by Timothy Rasinski
- *The Megabook of Fluency: Strategies and Texts to Engage All Readers* by Timothy Rasinski and Melissa Cheesman Smith
- *Developing Fluent Readers* by Melissa Cheesman Smith and Jan Hasbrouck
- *Artfully Teaching the Science of Reading* by Chase Young, David Paige, and Timothy V. Rasinski

### Core Instructional Practices

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Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Implement assisted-reading strategies for fluency practice and monitor independent reading.	K-8	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K-5.4	Allow unstructured, unscaffolded silent reading.
Model fluent reading by teachers.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K-5.	Have students read silently without fluent reading models.
Include pacing and prosody exercises.	1st-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: CCRA.R.	Focus only on reading speed, neglecting expression.
Promote repeated oral reading practices.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 4 K-12: RF.K-5.4	Encourage silent reading without oral practice.

Evidence for above table<sup>32</sup>



## Vocabulary Overview

Vocabulary encompasses the words used for both oral and written communication. Vocabulary acquisition starts early in life through spoken language interactions and continues to grow throughout different educational stages. Effective vocabulary development involves learning new words, understanding their meanings, uses, and connections to other words. A robust vocabulary is essential for reading comprehension, effective idea expression, and higher-level thinking. It lays the groundwork for building background knowledge and understanding complex texts. <sup>33</sup>

### Young Learners

- **Vocabulary Integration:**

Choose key vocabulary for study units and offer varied practice opportunities in both teacher-led and child-centered activities.

- **Daily Scaffolding:**

Tailor vocabulary development throughout the day with tools like visuals, technology, and props based on children's needs.

- **Family Collaboration:**

Share key vocabulary with families for additional practice at home and in the community.

### Elementary

- **Vocabulary Development:**

Focus on acquiring basic vocabulary through interaction and learning.

- **Word Knowledge:**

Teach word meanings and usage, connecting new and known words.

- **Word Structure Basics:**

Introduce word origins, prefixes, and suffixes.

### Middle Grades

- **Advanced Vocabulary Knowledge:**

Emphasize word origins, prefixes, suffixes, and basic morphology to enhance complex vocabulary understanding.

- **Contextual Word Learning:**

Encourage inferring new word meanings using context clues to develop comprehension and vocabulary usage.

- **Reading Material Variety:**

Expose students to diverse reading materials to expand vocabulary across different subjects.

### High School

- **Advanced Vocabulary Instruction:**

Continue advanced vocabulary instruction through challenging texts and academic vocabulary study.

- **Sophisticated Context Clues:**

Instruct students to use context clues for understanding sophisticated words, enhancing comprehension.

- **Complex Idea Vocabulary Use:**

Employ advanced vocabulary for expressing intricate ideas, preparing for higher education and professional communication.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Effective vocabulary instruction for MLs involves diverse content area engagement. Focus on conceptual understanding, using visual aids, morphological analysis, and contextual discussions. Linking new vocabulary to students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds is vital, utilizing cognates and pre-teaching key terms. Emphasizing vocabulary for social and academic contexts aids young MLs, as does play-based learning. Sharing key vocabulary with families encourages development in both languages.<sup>34</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners should delve into etymology, word relationships, and nuanced meanings for enriched vocabulary development. This includes analyzing complex word structures and origins, enhancing their understanding and usage of sophisticated language. Such exploration challenges their cognitive skills and deepens their linguistic proficiency.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Adapting vocabulary instruction to the learning profiles of students with special needs may involve visual aids, simplified language, and technology-assisted tools. These strategies facilitate understanding and retention, accommodating diverse learning abilities. Tailored approaches ensure these learners grasp and use new vocabulary effectively, enhancing their language development.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Focus assessments on both the breadth and depth of students' vocabulary, including tests, analysis of vocabulary uses in writing and speaking, and informal assessments through class discussions and activities.

### **Intervention Considerations**

- Implement targeted instruction for specific vocabulary needs.
- Employ multimodal strategies (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) for reinforcement.
- Conduct small group or individual sessions for personalized support.
- Integrate contextual and experiential learning to enhance vocabulary acquisition.

### Further Reading

- *Bringing Words to Life* by Isabel L. Beck, Margaret G. McKeown, and Linda Kucan
- *Textured Teaching: A Framework for Culturally Sustaining Practices* by Lorena Escoto German
- *Teaching Vocabulary to Improve Reading Comprehension* by William Nagy
- *Vocabulary Their Way: Word Study with Middle and Secondary Students* by Shane Templeton, Donald R. Bear, Marcia Invernizzi, Francine Johnston

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Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Provide direct teaching of synonyms, antonyms, and homonyms.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: L.K-5.5	Teach vocabulary in isolation.
Encourage contextual analysis for word meaning.	K-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: L.K-5.4	Rely solely on dictionary definitions.
Actively instruct in academic and domain-specific vocabulary.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.6	Focus on copying dictionary definitions.
Motivate students to use new words in varied student-friendly contexts.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.6	Emphasize limited motivation for students to use new words.
Integrate vocabulary instruction across different subjects and texts.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.6	Neglect the integration of vocabulary instruction.
Instruct in word-learning strategies related to morphology, word parts, grammar, and syntax.	3rd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA.L.4	Neglect word-learning strategies related to morphology, word parts, grammar, and syntax.

Evidence for above table<sup>35</sup>

## Comprehension Overview

Reading comprehension involves understanding and interpreting text. This skill requires active engagement with the text, relating it to personal experiences, and employing various strategies to extract and construct meaning. Starting with listening to stories and conversations in childhood, comprehension skills evolve to enable students to grasp both literal and deeper meanings in texts. Comprehension depends on background knowledge, vocabulary, and a set of skills for meaning extraction. These skills transfer across languages, but with vocabulary and language structures varying, explicit instruction in the structure of English text is crucial for MLs. <sup>36</sup>

### Young Learners

- **Structured Comprehension:**  
Organize comprehension activities for before, during, and after read-alouds, including questioning, visualization, and sequencing.
- **Peer Interaction:**  
Foster discussion among children to enhance text language development and thinking skills.
- **Comprehension Aids:**  
Use visuals and props to aid in understanding and engaging with texts.

### Elementary

- **Foundational Comprehension:**  
Explicitly create environments for story listening and conversational engagement to build basic comprehension skills.
- **Basic Comprehension Skills:**  
Instruct students in grasping the literal meaning of texts, connecting text to personal experiences, and extracting meaning with strategies.
- **Structure and Vocabulary Introduction:**  
Teach text structure and basic vocabulary explicitly, crucial for comprehension, especially for English learners.

### Middle Grades

- **Enhanced Comprehension Skills:**  
Guide students through complex texts, teaching comparative analysis of themes and inferential reasoning.
- **Text Structure Analysis:**  
Instruct in closely analyzing text structures for deeper comprehension.
- **Background Knowledge Expansion:**  
Continue to develop students' background knowledge and vocabulary, key for advanced text analysis.

### High School

- **Critical Reading Skills:**  
Focus on teaching critical reading, including evaluating perspectives and synthesizing information from varied sources.
- **Advanced Comprehension Strategies:**  
Teach advanced strategies like analyzing complex text structures and interpreting deeper text implications.
- **Real-World Comprehension Application:**  
Emphasize applying reading comprehension skills in real-world and future educational/professional contexts.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Comprehension instruction for MLs should focus on English language and text structure teaching, linking new concepts to prior knowledge, pre-teaching vocabulary, and using scaffolding techniques. While MLs may read fluently, comprehension may vary. Comparing linguistic elements across languages, supported by targeted instruction, enhances their phonological awareness and metacognitive skills.<sup>37</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners can be challenged with texts that necessitate higher-order thinking and analysis. This encourages exploration of complex concepts and diverse perspectives, enhancing their comprehension skills. Engaging with such materials develops critical thinking and deepens their understanding of varied textual elements and viewpoints.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Comprehension instruction for students with specialized needs might include adapted materials, visual aids, and individualized strategies. These adaptations cater to their unique learning profiles, ensuring they effectively comprehend texts. Emphasizing accessible and engaging content, along with supportive learning aids, facilitates their understanding and engagement.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Assess students' comprehension abilities through their responses to reading assignments, participation in discussions, and formal assessments like comprehension questions and essays, focusing on understanding, analysis, and reflection.

### **Intervention Considerations**

- Focus on targeted interventions for specific comprehension strategies.
- Provide small group or individual instruction for personalized support.
- Use graphic organizers and visual aids to help organize and retain text information.
- Incorporate interactive reading and discussion sessions to enhance comprehension.

### Further Reading

- *Reading in the Brain* by Stanislas Dehaene
- *Understanding and Teaching Reading Comprehension: A Handbook* by Jane Oakhill, Kate Cain, and Carsten Elbro
- *Subjects Matter: Exceeding Standards Through Powerful Content-Area Reading* by Harvey Daniels and Steven Zemelman
- *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement* by Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis

### Core Instructional Practices

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Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Build content area knowledge.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.1	Omit instruction in social sciences in favor of literacy or teach primarily with stories, poems, and plays instead of diverse and authentic information texts.
Provide access to diverse fiction, non-fiction, and culturally-affirming books.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.10	Limit book access to specific levels and few interests.
Plan intentional, read-alouds, and model comprehension monitoring.	PreK-5	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: RF.K.1-5	Conduct random, unplanned read-alouds without focus.
Teach strategies like summarizing, visualizing, and questioning.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.2	Allow reading without active comprehension strategies.
Monitor comprehension.	1st-12	CCRA.R.1; IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3	Over-rely on comprehension strategies.
Model inferencing and predicting based on text evidence.	1st-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.1	Encourage guesses or predictions without requiring students to base them on textual evidence or prior knowledge.
Implement discussion-based approaches to deepen understanding.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.3	Allow unstructured classroom discussions.
Expose students to texts across difficulties, disciplines, genres, and provide appropriate scaffolds.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.10	Exclusively use leveled readers and frustration-level texts without supports.
Engage students in sustained exploration of a topic.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.R.7	Move quickly between disconnected topics or units without providing in-depth exploration within each topic.
Structure active engagement with texts through discussions and reflective writing.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2	Passive reading without discussion or reflection.
Use a variety of texts to develop skills in analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 2, Goal 3 K-12: CCRA: R.9	Limited reliance on a single type of text for all skills.

Evidence for above table<sup>38</sup>



## Writing Overview

Writing is a fundamental literacy skill involving the coherent expression of thoughts and ideas in print. More than a communication method, it is a tool for cognitive development, structuring ideas, reflection, and critical thinking. Writing encompasses elements like grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary use, and organization. It complements reading and is vital in enhancing language understanding. Writing enables individuals to develop their ability to articulate thoughts, expand their vocabulary, and improve their grammar proficiency. Writing fosters creativity, reflection, and self-expression, deepening language understanding and enhancing both written and verbal communication skills. <sup>39</sup>

## Young Learners

- **Dynamic Writing Center:**  
Stock the writing center with diverse tools and materials, updating them regularly to keep interest high.
- **Integrated Writing Spaces:**  
Incorporate writing elements in all center areas, with frequent modeling and scaffolding of their use.
- **Drawing and Writing in Planning:**  
Promote the use of drawing and writing for planning, offering individualized support based on developmental levels.

## Elementary

- **Writing Fundamentals:**  
Introduce the basics of writing, including simple grammar, sentence structure, and basic vocabulary use, guiding students to express thoughts coherently in print.
- **Creative and Reflective Expression:**  
Direct students in creative writing activities to develop self-expression and reflection skills, using writing as a tool for cognitive development.
- **Language and Communication Enhancement:**  
Use writing exercises to boost language comprehension and complement reading skills, focusing on clear, organized written communication.

## Middle Grades

- **Advanced Writing Development:**  
Guide students in developing complex writing skills across various styles like creative and analytical writing.
- **Expressing Complex Ideas:**  
Teach the articulation of complex ideas and viewpoints through clear, coherent writing, including text analysis.
- **Writing for Learning and Organization:**  
Instruct students to use writing as a learning tool, synthesizing information and organizing arguments.

## High School

- **Sophisticated Writing Mastery:**  
Refine students' ability to articulate complex ideas and arguments, focusing on clarity, organization, and voice development.
- **Analytical and Critical Writing:**  
Teach advanced analytical and critical writing skills, encouraging evaluation of multiple perspectives.
- **Preparation for Academic and Professional Writing:**  
Prepare students for higher education and professional writing demands, emphasizing effective communication in various contexts.

### **Considerations for Multilingual Learners**

- Writing instruction for MLs should develop skills in both their native and English languages. Building confidence in English writing while respecting linguistic diversity is key. Strategies like translanguageing and encouraging use of all linguistic resources aid development. Fostering awareness of sounds, letters, and cognates supports early reading skills through culturally responsive practices.<sup>40</sup>

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

- Advanced learners should be tasked with higher-level writing activities, including persuasive essays, research papers, and creative writing. These tasks challenge their writing skills, encouraging them to articulate complex ideas and arguments. Such assignments develop their analytical and creative abilities, fostering a deeper understanding and proficiency in writing.

### **Considerations for Learners with Specialized Needs**

- Adapted writing instruction for students with special needs may involve technology, graphic organizers, and guided practice. Tailoring feedback and providing models support their writing development. Such adaptations, including collaborative efforts with educators, ensure these students effectively develop writing skills, expressing their thoughts and ideas clearly.

### **Assessment Considerations**

- Assess students' writing for clarity, coherence, vocabulary use, grammar, and organization through assignments, essays, and formative tools like journals and portfolios, focusing on expression and structure.

### **Intervention Considerations**

- Provide targeted interventions on aspects like sentence construction and grammar.
- Conduct one-on-one or small group sessions for personalized writing instruction.
- Utilize assistive technology and tools to facilitate the writing process.
- Incorporate practical writing exercises to enhance skills in real-world contexts.

### Further Reading

- *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades* by Judith C. Hochman and Natalie Wexler
- *Inside Writing: How to Teach the Details of Craft* by Donald H. Graves and Penny Kittle
- *They Say / I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing* by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
- *Write Like This: Teaching Real-World Writing Through Modeling and Mentor Texts* by Kelly Gallagher
- *Young, Gifted, and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students* by Theresa Perry, Claude Steele, and Asa Hilliard III

### Core Instructional Practices

The practices in the following chart are specifically referencing core, Tier 1 instruction. It is important to recognize that not all of these practices align with evidence-based strategies across ALL grade levels for Tier 1 instruction. This highlights that a practice effective in one context or grade may not be suitable for all tiers or grades. Additionally, this list does not exhaust all evidence-based literacy practices. Moreover, there are evidence-based interventions designed for more specific or intensive educational needs beyond core instruction not represented below.

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan follows ESSA, prioritizing instructional practices with strong (Tier 1) and moderate (Tier 2) evidence. This prioritization reflects the high potential for success these practices offer. Educators are encouraged to understand these tiers thoroughly, applying them to select and implement the most effective methods for the students for whom the approaches were designed.

The chart divides practices into “Aligned with Evidence” and “Not Aligned with Evidence,” based on current research and best practices. However, educators should use their judgment and consider their students’ unique needs when choosing and applying instructional practices.

Access the [Pre-K standards](#) and the [K-12 standards](#) referenced in the figure for more information.

Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Teach grammar, sentence structure, and organization within the context of writing and communication.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: L.K-5.1, L.6-12.1	Isolated grammar instruction such as proofreading activities with no scope and sequence.
Provide varied writing opportunities; focus on planning, editing, revising.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 3 K-12: RI.K-5.5, RI.6-12.5	Assign writing tasks without emphasis on the writing process.
Write with multiple sources, evidence; support translanguageing for biliterate students.	4th-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: W.7	Short-answer writing without text dependence.
Conduct peer review and feedback sessions.	3rd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: W.5	Unstructured feedback without guidelines.
Assign cross-curricular writing assignments.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: W.7	Writing tasks disconnected from other subjects.
Integrate writing across the curriculum to reinforce learning in other subject areas.	3rd-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: W.10	Keep writing isolated from other subjects, avoiding cross-curricular connections.
Instruct explicitly in handwriting, including cursive.	K-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: L.1	Eliminate explicit handwriting instruction, especially cursive, in lieu of practices such as keyboard only or at home only writing instruction.
Offer opportunities for various writing forms, such as narrative, expository, persuasive, and descriptive.	4th-12	Pre-K: IELDS: Goal 5 K-12: CCRA: W.3	Focus solely on one type of writing, neglecting others.

Evidence for above table<sup>41</sup>

## Additional Instructional Factors

### Considerations for All Learners

The objective is clear and universal: equipping every student with the necessary skills, strategies, and knowledge for proficiency in reading and writing. Achieving this objective demands a multifaceted approach, tailored to the diverse needs of learners. Every learner's journey toward literacy proficiency is unique — from English learners, who are navigating the complexities of acquiring a new language to students with specialized education needs who may require tailored support. Yet, certain principles and strategies cut across these diverse contexts and serve as guiding lights for educators and stakeholders in the field of literacy. Following are considerations for a wide array of learners, emphasizing that effective literacy instruction must adapt to individual requirements:

**High-Quality, Diverse, and Culturally Sustaining Materials:** Selecting books and educational materials that resonate with students' community, ethnicity, and culture is essential in shaping their literacy perception. Providing materials in students' home languages bridges home and school, fostering linguistic awareness.<sup>42</sup>

**Concepts of Print:** Students need to understand basic print concepts, such as directionality and genre structure. Educators must recognize that these concepts can vary across languages and adjust teaching methods accordingly.<sup>43</sup>

- Experience books through exposure to board books with colorful pictures and simple text, learning that words and pictures convey meaning.
- Learn book handling, page turning, and basic print concepts in preschool, beginning to recognize some letters.
- Recognize letters and understand reading direction (left-to-right, top-to-bottom).
- Develop print awareness, letter recognition, and familiarity with text features like tables of contents.
- Become proficient in using a wide range of text features to enhance understanding, including titles, headings, maps, sidebars, and more.

**Extensive Access to Books and Promotion of Active Text Engagement:** Ample Access to a broad selection of print materials and opportunities to engage with books and reading are essential. This access includes making books available in students' home languages as necessary. Promoting active engagement with these texts is key to enhancing reading skills and fostering a deep connection with literacy. The more students engage with reading, the better they become at it.<sup>44</sup>

**Print-Immersive, Language-Rich, and Content-Rich Environment:** Creating an environment rich in diverse content, language, and print materials significantly supports learning. Visual and tangible aids, including content in students' home languages when needed, are particularly beneficial.<sup>45</sup>

**Support for Home Language and Bilingualism:** Encouraging students to utilize their primary language's linguistic resources is advantageous. Acknowledging the language skills all students bring is essential. Fostering cross-language awareness enhances literacy development.<sup>46</sup>

**Flexible, Differentiated Instruction Based on Formative Assessment:** Literacy development varies among students. Implementing differentiated instruction based on ongoing assessment ensures personalized support. This approach addresses unique needs, such as vocabulary development and language acquisition, supporting an inclusive learning environment that caters to diverse strengths and requirements.

Core Instructional Practices			
Instructional Practice Aligned with Evidence	Grade Level(s)	Illinois Learning Standards for ELA and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)	Instructional Practice Not Aligned with Evidence
Flexibly group students according to their needs on the specific skill being addressed.	K-12	Various student learning standards are connected to this teaching strategy.	Utilizing static groups based on general levels.
Promote developmentally-appropriate print interactions.	PreK-K	Various student learning standards are connected to this teaching strategy.	Reducing unstructured classroom experiences and replacing with structured literacy instruction.
Provide motivation to read for understanding through presentations and book clubs.	K-12	Various student learning standards are connected to this teaching strategy.	Provide disconnected prizes to reward student reading.
Offer additional literacy opportunities through summer reading programs, after-school tutoring, and preschool.	PreK-12	Various student learning standards are connected to this teaching strategy.	Limit literacy development opportunities to the traditional school year without supplemental programs or interventions.
Tailor instruction to meet the diverse needs of each student.	PreK-12	Various student learning standards are connected to this teaching strategy.	Adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to literacy instruction without considering individual student differences or needs.

## The Significance of Handwriting

In an era where digital technologies often overshadow traditional methods, the significance of handwriting in literacy development cannot be overstated. It transcends the act of transcribing thoughts onto paper; instead, it assumes the role of a cognitive catalyst, reinforcing letter recognition, sound-symbol relationships, and word formation. The process of physically crafting letters by hand engages fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination, fostering intricate cognitive connections between the visual representation of letters and their corresponding phonetic sounds. This tactile experience is not confined to the realm of writing fluency; it holds profound implications for reading fluency and comprehension. Moreover, the cognitive involvement required for handwriting lends itself to memory retention and refined cognitive processing, nurturing a deeper understanding of language. The role of handwriting remains indispensable even in an increasingly digital world where keyboarding skills have gained prominence. Handwriting supports learners who are equipped with a comprehensive foundation for literacy that extends far beyond screens and keyboards, ultimately enabling them to navigate the complexities of written communication with confidence and proficiency.<sup>47</sup>

## The Integration of 21st Century Skills

Incorporating 21st-century skills into literacy education is essential for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and global awareness. Integrating these skills into literacy instruction enhances students' ability

to analyze information, evaluate sources, and think critically about texts. It empowers effective communication in various mediums, including digital platforms, where multimedia and digital literacy skills are essential. Collaboration and communication skills enable students to work in diverse teams, engage in meaningful discussions, and express ideas effectively. Developing global awareness allows students to understand different perspectives, engage with cultural competency, and communicate across diverse communities. Incorporating 21st-century skills into literacy education equips students to navigate and thrive in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.

Recognizing the intricacies of literacy and its various forms allows educators to customize their teaching to match individual requirements and developmental stages. This method fosters holistic literacy development, guaranteeing that every student possesses the essential tools and abilities to excel in reading, writing, and navigating today's society.<sup>48</sup>

Following are 21st Century literacy skills that warrant attention in local literacy plans:

### **Critical Literacy**

Critical literacy extends beyond basic comprehension to encompass the analysis of texts in the context of power, justice, and equity. It involves recognizing and challenging the power dynamics embedded in language and literature. This form of literacy empowers students to critically examine how language can perpetuate societal inequalities and biases. Integral to culturally responsive teaching, critical literacy acknowledges and respects the diverse cultural backgrounds of students, fostering a more inclusive and equitable learning environment. Students are encouraged to use language as a tool for empowerment, advocating for social justice and challenging inequitable power structures. This aspect of literacy education helps students develop a sense of agency and the ability to effect change through communication and expression. Analyzing texts for their representations of race, gender, class, and other social categories, students learn to understand the impact of these representations on perceptions and social dynamics. The critical literacy curriculum integrates diverse authors and texts to ensure exposure to a wide range of perspectives, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the world and enabling students to see themselves represented in the curriculum. The [Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science](#) are a great resource for embedding critical literacy skills into student learning, and the [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#) support educators in their own skill development.

### **Media Literacy**

Media literacy has become crucial in this era of abundant and often overwhelming information. This skill empowers students to critically assess and engage with various forms of media. It involves understanding the media's role in shaping societal values and recognizing biases and misinformation. The curriculum aims to strengthen students' abilities to discern reliable sources and interpret media messages with a critical eye, equipping them to navigate the media-saturated world.

[Public Act 102-0055](#) amends the Illinois School Code to ensure that students in every public high school in Illinois develop 21st-century skills for inquiry and critical thinking to better navigate the current information landscape. Please refer to ISBE's [Media Literacy](#) webpage for more information.

### **Print and Digital Reading**

The balance between print and digital reading is a critical aspect of modern literacy education. Each medium offers unique advantages and presents distinct challenges to comprehension and engagement. The body of empirical research on the "digital brain" is steadily growing, but examination of the interaction

and impact of digital texts and virtual platforms on children in the development of foundational literacy skills is still a field in its infancy. The plan acknowledges that the overwhelming majority of studies providing insights into the differences between comprehension and processing of text in digital formats have been conducted with those in the adolescent years or beyond. Some value can be gleaned from these findings which are more consistently identifying differences in the outcomes of consuming text based on the format of the text.

**Impact on Comprehension:** Digital reading can impair comprehension, especially for longer, more complex texts. This impairment may be due to the “shallowing hypothesis” – the idea that constant exposure to fast-paced, digital media trains the brain to process information more rapidly and less thoroughly. Millward Brown conducted a study in which it was found that print materials activated brain areas linked to emotional processing and spatial navigation more intensely than digital materials.<sup>49</sup>

**Spatial and Visual Cues:** The physical layout of print texts aids in comprehension. People often remember where on the page or in the book certain information appeared, aiding understanding and recall. In contrast, scrolling through digital texts can disrupt this spatial memory, making it harder to form a cognitive map of the information.<sup>50</sup>

**Eye Strain and Fatigue:** Digital screens, particularly those that are not based on e-ink, can cause more eye strain and mental fatigue, potentially affecting reading comprehension and endurance. E-readers offer a more comfortable digital reading experience but lack the tactile experience of turning physical pages.<sup>51</sup>

**Reading Medium and Comprehension:** Consistent findings have shown that reading from paper offers advantages over digital reading, particularly in contexts requiring deep comprehension, such as with complex or lengthy texts. This advantage highlights the importance of maintaining and developing print reading skills alongside digital literacy.<sup>52</sup>

Given these findings, literacy education should balance the use of print and digital mediums. Digital literacy is essential for navigating the modern world, but maintaining and developing skills in print reading is equally important to ensure deep, reflective comprehension. This balanced approach ensures students are well-equipped to process and understand information across various formats, enhancing their overall literacy and learning experiences.

## Computer Literacy

Computer literacy, an essential component of 21st-century skills, is increasingly vital in literacy development. It encompasses knowledge and proficiency in using computers and related technologies efficiently and effectively. In the broader context of literacy, computer literacy extends beyond traditional reading and writing, encompassing the ability to understand, interpret, create, and communicate information in various digital formats. This proficiency is crucial in a world where digital communication and information access are ubiquitous.

Illinois’ work around computer literacy reflects a commitment to preparing students for a technology-driven future. [PA 101-0654](#) mandates computer literacy instruction in Illinois schools. This legislation requires all school districts to provide opportunities to develop computer literacy skills at each K-12 grade level, emphasizing the importance of these skills for all students. The resulting [Computer Literacy Skills Continuum](#) developed for K-12 education outlines a progression of computer literacy competencies,

ensuring that students acquire age-appropriate skills throughout their schooling. This continuum guides educators in implementing a structured and comprehensive computer literacy curriculum, aligning with the state's broader literacy goals.

This work ensures students are not only literate in traditional senses but also adept at navigating, analyzing, and creating digital content. This holistic approach to literacy acknowledges the evolving nature of how information is processed and communicated in the modern world.

### **Content/Disciplinary Literacy**

Content or disciplinary literacy focuses on developing students' ability to effectively read, write, and communicate within specific academic disciplines. This aspect of literacy recognizes that different subjects like science, mathematics, history, and literature each have unique conventions, vocabularies, and methods of inquiry.

**Subject-Specific Skills:** In content literacy, students learn to engage with texts in a manner that is reflective of how experts in the field approach them. For example, in science, this might involve interpreting data from graphs and experiments, while in history, it might focus on analyzing primary source documents.

**Deepening Understanding:** Content literacy helps students deepen their understanding of subject matter, as they not only learn the content but also how to think and communicate like experts in the field. This approach enhances their overall academic performance and prepares them for more advanced studies in these areas.

**Integration Across Curriculum:** Integrating content literacy across the curriculum ensures that students develop a comprehensive set of skills that are applicable to various areas of learning. This holistic approach not only improves their subject-specific understanding but also prepares them for the complexities of real-world problem-solving and communication. The Illinois English Language Arts Learning Standards are designed for use across various curricula. These standards emphasize skills like critical thinking, reasoning, and the effective communication of ideas, which are essential across all disciplines. Additionally, Illinois Learning Standards collectively address literacy skills as they apply to specific disciplines.

Educators are encouraged to purposefully design literacy-rich activities that align with specific learning standards within content areas. This approach not only adheres to state educational guidelines but also enhances the depth and relevance of literacy activities in various disciplines, fostering a more comprehensive and engaged learning experience for students. Through such targeted and thoughtful integration, students gain a nuanced understanding of content, enriched by the diverse literacy skills that are pivotal in today's educational landscape.



## Further Considerations for Multilingual Learners

The U.S. Department of Education established the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Children and Youth in 2002. It was tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of research focused on effective strategies for enhancing literacy development among English learners.<sup>53</sup>

The findings of the panel, released in 2006, underscored the importance of five key components in reading — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The report highlighted that these components yield “clear benefits” for MLs when implemented effectively. It emphasized that two critical adjustments must be made to cater to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners: (1) literacy development in home languages allowing for the examination of cross-language connections and transfers, and (2) fostering oral language proficiency in both English and students’ home languages.

The research unequivocally demonstrated that instruction must be adapted to align with the specific requirements and backgrounds of MLs. This includes a substantial emphasis on the development of oral English proficiency, encompassing essential areas such as vocabulary expansion, listening comprehension, and syntax.

In the instructional realm, it becomes imperative for educators to engage in ongoing dialogues concerning word meanings, including those shorter and simpler terms that might not conventionally be categorized as vocabulary words when teaching monolingual English speakers. When instructing students in the process of acquiring a new language, educators must be meticulous in their approach, consistently nurturing vocabulary and oral language skills throughout every lesson.<sup>54</sup> Multilingual supports for learners take place in Tier 1, core instruction.

Additionally, consider the following:

**English Language Development:** Dedicated English Language Development (ELD) instruction is essential to facilitate learning to read in English. This instruction should focus on how English functions and provide MLs with the tools to navigate the linguistic demands of academic tasks. ELD instruction is a legal requirement and a fundamental civil right for English learners.<sup>55</sup>

**Cross-Language Connections:** MLs bring linguistic resources from their primary language to the process of learning English and literacy. Neglecting to leverage these resources, as well as failing to address differences between languages, can lead to confusion and errors. Recognizing differences in sound-letter relationships and language structures across different languages is crucial in instruction.<sup>56</sup>

**Dual Language Programming:** Dual language programming, a vital aspect of bilingual education, plays a crucial role in the literacy development of MLs. These programs, which integrate instruction in both English and the students’ native languages, not only enhance language proficiency in both languages but also foster academic excellence. They are characterized by a balance in the use of two languages for instructional purposes, offering an immersive bilingual environment. Such programs are especially effective for simultaneous bilinguals — students who develop skills in two languages concurrently. Through this approach, these students gain the ability to navigate and express themselves in both languages with equal proficiency.



The concept of metalingual awareness within dual language programs is key. It involves students' understanding of language structures and their ability to compare and contrast linguistic elements across languages. This heightened linguistic awareness supports the development of strong literacy skills in both languages. Furthermore, these programs often naturally incorporate translanguageing strategies, allowing students to seamlessly use resources across both of their languages in a fluid manner. This practice not only validates the students' entire linguistic repertoire but also enhances cognitive flexibility and deepens their understanding of language nuances. Translanguageing in the classroom promotes a more inclusive, effective learning environment, where students can leverage their full linguistic capabilities for academic success.<sup>57</sup>

## **Newcomers**

Literacy instruction for newcomer students, defined as K-12 students born outside the United States who have arrived in the last three years and are still learning English, differs from other MLs in several key aspects. Newcomer students require a specialized approach that builds on their unique strengths and supports their development to enable them to reach their full potential. This involves addressing both their need to develop English proficiency and their need to understand grade-level concepts and skills simultaneously.

Key aspects of literacy instruction for newcomers include:

- **Inclusive School Community:** Creating an inclusive school community should be the focus of welcoming newcomers and providing them with the necessary information and resources to thrive academically and socially in their new environment.
- **Clear Vision and Goals:** Establishing academic and social goals specifically for newcomer students is crucial. This includes setting clear entry and exit criteria for these students in specialized programs for newcomers, ensuring they are held to the same high standards as other students, but with additional support tailored to their unique needs.
- **Courses for Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education:** Developing literacy and numeracy courses intentionally designed for newcomers, especially those with interrupted educational backgrounds, to prepare them for grade level academic work.
- **Simultaneous Development of Language and Academic Skills:** Implementing instructional designs that integrate language development with conceptual and analytic practices. This could include bilingual or dual language programs and a focus on building academic literacy alongside English language development.
- **Promoting Home Languages:** Encourage the use and development of newcomers' native languages both at school and in the community, which can aid in their overall linguistic and academic development.
- **Flexible Scheduling Based on Needs:** Provide alternative schedules and structures, such as after-school programs or summer school, to meet the specific needs of newcomer families.
- **Family and Community Engagement:** Actively involve families and community stakeholders in the educational process, including educating them about the U.S. schooling system and involving them in school planning and programs.
- **Transition to Mainstream Programs or Postsecondary Options:** Establish processes that facilitate newcomers' smooth transition from specialized programs to mainstream education or postsecondary opportunities.

- **Qualified and Continuously Trained Staff:** Recruit, place, and retain teachers who are specifically trained to teach newcomers and providing ongoing professional development for them. This includes ensuring that all school staff are sensitive to cultural diversity and are equipped with strategies to support second-language acquisition.

These components highlight the need for a comprehensive and nuanced approach to literacy instruction for newcomers, acknowledging their unique challenges and leveraging their strengths for successful integration into the educational system.<sup>58</sup>

### Seal of Biliteracy

The opportunity for MLs to earn the State Seal or Commendation of Biliteracy recognizes the deep linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge that students bring to schools and validates the efforts of teachers, families, communities, and themselves to preserve and even expand their fluency in their home language while also mastering English. Students can earn the State Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation in multiple languages. The annual report on the State Seal of Biliteracy program shows a significant increase in the number of different languages Illinois students have mastered – from 38 in 2022 up to 51 in 2023.

Both the State Seal and Commendation count toward foreign language course credits at any public college or university in Illinois. The State Seal and Commendation on students' resumes prove they will bring extra talent and perspective to any job. Earning the State Seal of Biliteracy exempts students who want to become bilingual teachers in Illinois from taking further language proficiency tests toward a Bilingual endorsement. Additional information on how schools may offer the State Seal of Biliteracy in this [program overview](#) and on the [ISBE website](#).

Elementary school districts may consider implementing “Pathways to Biliteracy” programs. These programs recognize students as they reach milestones in language learning and encourage them to strive for the seal of biliteracy in the future.

### Considerations for Learners with Specialized Education Needs

It should be noted that **all** students should receive instruction focused on the areas identified by the Seven Components of Literacy.<sup>59</sup> Differences in the amount, type, and intensity of instruction may need to vary for these learners. While some readers may have mastered skills with minimal practice, others will need much more intense instruction to gain the same mastery. Careful evaluation of these students will guide classroom teachers, reading teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, and other stakeholders to the appropriate levels for instruction in each domain. For example, most learners will have generalized phonemic awareness skills by the end of second grade. Some learners with reading disabilities will continue to need this instruction beyond second grade to develop the skills necessary to be good readers. Additionally, some students may be dually identified as MLs with special education needs or considered twice exceptional, gifted, and talented students with one or more learning disabilities. These students will need additional supports and considerations that may not be needed or appropriate for monolingual English-speaking students with special needs.<sup>59</sup>

Early screening is important to identify students at risk and those with specialized education needs who may need evidence-based supports. Identification takes place via screening and assessment, and learning supports for individuals are determined through Individualized Learning Programs. Explicit and systematic approaches are especially important for specialized education needs.

## Dyslexia

It becomes pertinent after acknowledging the diverse needs of the student population to consider dyslexia, which impacts a significant portion of the population. As defined in School Code (105 ILCS 5/2-3.161), dyslexia is a:

*Specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.*

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, while not frequently using the term “dyslexia,” recognizes the challenges faced by individuals with this specific learning disability. This approach aligns with the broader terminology that encompasses specific learning disabilities in reading and language processing disorders. The commitment to these students is reflected in tailored interventions and supports designed to address the unique challenges dyslexia presents. With an understanding of the widespread impact of dyslexia, the plan emphasizes early identification and evidence-based intervention strategies, ensuring that educational practices inclusively and effectively cater to the needs of all learners, including those with dyslexia. More information regarding dyslexia can be found in the Dyslexia Guide from the [Special Education Department at ISBE](#).

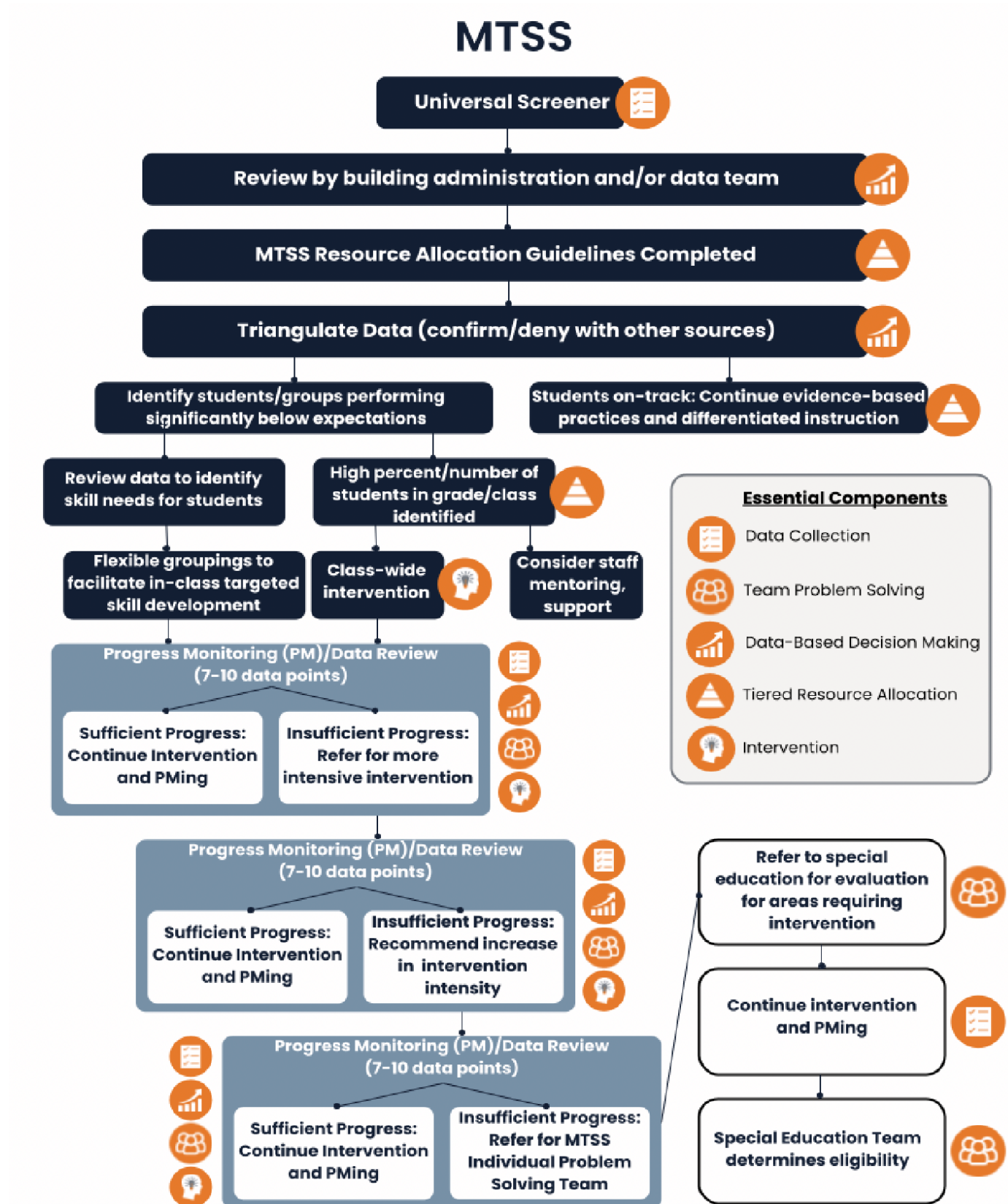
## Considerations for Advanced Learners

ISBE recognizes the importance of catering to the unique needs of advanced learners in our educational system. Implementation of strategies such as acceleration, extension, enhancement, and curriculum compacting ensure that these students continue to progress in their literacy skills, even when working above grade level. Acceleration allows advanced learners to move through the curriculum at a pace that challenges them appropriately, preventing boredom and stagnation. Extension activities provide opportunities for in-depth exploration of literacy concepts and texts, fostering a deeper understanding. Enhancement involves incorporating complex and enriched materials that stimulate critical thinking and creativity. Curriculum compacting allows advanced learners to skip redundant content and focus on more challenging literacy tasks. By integrating these strategies, the goal is to create a supportive learning environment where all students, regardless of their level, can thrive and continue their literacy journey with enthusiasm and confidence.

## Multi-Tiered System of Supports and Literacy

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a proactive comprehensive approach to provide targeted assistance to students who require additional support in instruction and intervention in a timely manner. It addresses students’ diverse needs while providing essential support to educators. This system is designed to enhance the core learning environment and identify struggling students early and offer timely interventions that encompass various aspects of a child’s development, including academics, behavior, social and emotional needs, and absenteeism. ESSA specifies that MTSS is recognized to enhance teacher effectiveness, with states receiving funding for professional development to facilitate its implementation. In this context, MTSS ensures that educators are equipped with the necessary tools and strategies to address these diverse needs effectively.

Figure 11: MTSS Intervention Framework



\*Not all areas of special education eligibility require the RtI process. This represents an ideal intervention framework; there may be individual exceptions requiring a referral for special education prior to when this model prescribes.

[The Dyslexia Handbook](#) (2023). SLD Supports Project. Illinois State Board of Education, Eastern Illinois Area of Special Education, and Eastern Illinois University.

## Key Components of MTSS in Literacy Instruction and Intervention:<sup>61</sup>

**Universal Screening:** MTSS begins with universal screening for all students at the outset of the school year. This process aims to identify students who may require additional support in literacy.

**Tiered Support:** MTSS is organized into tiers of support, each escalating in intensity. These tiers cater to the specific needs of students based on their needs and response to intervention and supports.

**Tier 1 – Whole Class:** All students in Tier 1 receive core instruction in the general education classroom. Teachers utilize evidence-based literacy instruction techniques, differentiating instruction to accommodate individual strengths and needs. Continuous monitoring allows for early identification of students who may need additional support. School MTSS team members lead the process of information gathering (qualitative and quantitative) as well as offer coaching and support to classroom teachers. It is important to note that English Learner (EL) and Bilingual instruction (TPI and TBE), even if it takes place outside of the general education classroom, is considered tier 1 for students who qualify.

**Tier 2 – Small Group Interventions:** Students who require more focused assistance move to Tier 2 while still participating in Tier 1 lessons. Here, they receive targeted support through small group lessons and interventions. MTSS team members continue to support classroom teachers and model intervention strategies in the classroom.

**Tier 3 – Intensive Individualized Support:** Tier 3 provides even more intensive support for students who continue to face challenges. This may include individual lessons or small group work, with an increased focus on addressing underlying literacy difficulties.

**Fluid Movement Among Tiers:** Movement among tiers in the MTSS framework is fluid and not solely based on specific designations or diagnosed disabilities. Instead, it relies on data from assessments, progress monitoring, and the student's response to interventions to determine the appropriate level of support.

**Integrated Plans:** MTSS emphasizes integrated plans that address not only academic but also behavioral, social, and emotional needs of students. It encourages collaboration among educators, counselors, psychologists, and specialists to assess students comprehensively and plan interventions accordingly.

**Professional Development:** MTSS supports ongoing professional development for educators to ensure that staff can provide effective interventions and monitor progress.

**Family Involvement:** MTSS recognizes the importance of involving parents and caregivers in the intervention process. They are encouraged to understand the interventions being employed and offer support at home.

**Frequent Progress Monitoring:** Continuous monitoring of students' progress is a vital aspect of MTSS. This ongoing assessment helps determine if students require additional interventions or modifications to their support plan.

**Evidence-Based Strategies:** MTSS emphasizes the use of linguistically and culturally responsive, evidence-based strategies at every tier of support to guide instruction and intervention.

**Data-Informed Decision-Making:** MTSS emphasizes data-driven decision making, ensuring that interventions are tailored to the specific needs of students. It utilizes screening assessments and information about instructional materials to guide instructional decisions effectively.

**Equity and Cultural Responsiveness:** MTSS plays a critical role in promoting equity by shifting the focus from assuming deficits within students to assessing the quality of support they have received. It encourages educators to consider various factors that may hinder a student's learning progress, including inadequate instruction, inconsistent language support, resource disparities, low expectations, or prior tracking into remedial learning. This approach is particularly relevant when addressing the over-identification of certain groups of students for special education services.

The MTSS framework offers a structured, responsive, and inclusive pathway to literacy excellence. By adhering to this model, schools can ensure that every student has access to the quality literacy education they deserve,

paving the way for lifelong learning and success. The Illinois MTSS Network provides high-quality professional learning and coaching for schools and districts in order to develop and sustain a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS).

## Assessment to Support Literacy

Assessment plays a pivotal role in education, serving as the compass by which we navigate toward our educational goals. It shapes decisions about grades; student placement; progression; instructional needs; curriculum development; and, in some instances, funding allocation.

### Universal Screening

Universal screening encompasses a systematic evaluation of all students within a class, grade, school building, or school district, focusing on critical academic and social-emotional indicators. This process empowers school and district staff to identify students who are thriving, those at risk, or those in need of accelerated support. It also serves as a vital signal for potential systematic instructional improvements. Universal screeners should be concise assessments that provide a holistic view of a student's academic well-being, enabling educators to intervene at the earliest signs of need. The integrity of the screening process relies on the use of measures with proven reliability and validity.

The data from universal screeners helps school teams assess whether the core curriculum effectively meets the majority of students' needs and if enhancements are warranted in curriculum, instruction, or educational environments.

Additional information on universal screening, assessments, and the process for identifying specific learning disabilities can be found in [The Dyslexia Guide](#).

### Guidance on Screening Tools

Effective universal screening involves selecting and implementing tools that are scientifically valid and reliable. When screening for reading difficulties, such as dyslexia, it's crucial to use tools that accurately reflect a student's literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, decoding, and fluency.

For MLs, screenings should be culturally and linguistically responsive. It's important to distinguish between language acquisition challenges and true reading difficulties. Where possible, screeners should be available in the student's first language, or at least account for language differences in the assessment process. For simultaneous bilinguals, it is important to note that students' linguistic assets may not be accurately measured in English or the student's first language alone as their entire linguistic repertoire exists across multiple languages.

Screening tools must be sensitive to diverse student needs, including those with disabilities and bidialectal backgrounds. It's critical to ensure that the tools do not unfairly disadvantage these students and are capable of providing a true measure of their reading abilities. Students with identified needs may need accommodations or supports provided during screening administration. These should be more intensive and diagnostic, allowing for a detailed understanding of each student's unique challenges and strengths in literacy.



## **Benchmarking**

Benchmark assessment is a cyclical process that involves using a screening tool multiple times throughout the school year. Its purpose is to monitor students' response to core instruction, which also informs curriculum improvement efforts, and to identify students who will benefit from additional support. Benchmarks define expected skill levels for students at each grade level at specific periods of the year. When students fall below the expected levels – as determined by the district – further assessment is warranted to pinpoint specific skill deficits.

Our approach to assessing students aligns with the Illinois State Response to Intervention plan. Ideally, all students should participate in screening and benchmarking assessments three times annually – typically, at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.

## **Diagnostic Assessments**

Educators must determine the specific needs of students who do not make progress with universal instruction. Diagnostic assessments serve as valuable tools to identify precise skill gaps and areas of deficit. Following this determination, a problem-solving approach should be applied to match interventions with the areas that require growth. Ongoing progress monitoring is essential throughout and after the implementation of intervention strategies to assess their effectiveness in meeting the learner's needs.

## **Progress Monitoring**

To monitor the impact of specific interventions, progress monitoring measures should be administered at least every two weeks to assess their efficacy. This process is distinct from benchmarking. Progress monitoring should incorporate standardized procedures to track student performance and progress toward predefined goals. The rate of improvement is a critical indicator of student progress. More intensive interventions should be prescribed for students who do not adequately respond to targeted interventions. These interventions should increase in duration, intensity, and frequency and should be regularly monitored for progress.

## **Formative and Summative Assessment**

Formative assessment aims to measure student learning as it unfolds, enabling instructors to make timely adjustments and identify misconceptions and learning gaps. Summative assessment, conversely, evaluates student learning at the conclusion of an instructional unit, comparing it to established standards. Both formative and summative assessments are vital for monitoring core instruction and measuring student progress.

## **State Assessment**

The federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) mandates that states assess learning standards for English language arts, mathematics, and science. Each state may have a general assessment for the majority of its students and an alternate assessment for students with significant cognitive disabilities. Additionally, English learners are assessed in four domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) annually until they attain proficiency. For the most up-to-date information regarding Illinois state assessments, please visit the [ISBE Assessment webpage](#).

## **Interventions to Support Literacy**

Within the MTSS framework, interventions are carefully selected and implemented, aligning with evidence-based practices to ensure that all students, regardless of their individual challenges or backgrounds, have the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills. This approach is crucial for creating an inclusive and effective learning environment that supports and nurtures every student's journey towards literacy proficiency.

## General Literacy Intervention Strategies

- **Structured Literacy Programs:** Implementing systematic, structured literacy approaches that emphasize the foundational skills of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. These programs are designed to be explicit, sequential, and multisensory.
- **Small-Group Interventions:** Utilizing small group settings to provide intensive support in reading and writing. This allows for more personalized instruction and attention to individual student needs in literacy.
- **Incorporation of Educational Technology:** Leveraging technology tools and digital platforms that support literacy development. These can offer interactive and adaptive learning experiences that reinforce reading skills and engage students in a variety of learning modalities.
- **Comprehensive Approach:** Adopting a comprehensive approach that combines both foundational skills instruction and opportunities for students to engage with rich, diverse texts. This approach should facilitate both skill development and the application of literacy in meaningful contexts.
- **Explicit Instruction in Critical Reading Skills:** Providing direct and explicit instruction in key literacy skills such as decoding, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension strategies. This includes modeling and guided practice in these areas.

## Literacy Support Beyond the Classroom

Literacy support extends far beyond the confines of the classroom, necessitating the active involvement of families and community members in the literacy development of students. It's essential to engage parents and caregivers, providing them with resources and strategies to support literacy at home, thereby fostering a culture that values and promotes reading and writing within the community. Equally important is ensuring that students have access to a diverse array of reading materials, accommodating various interests and reading levels. This objective can be achieved through partnerships with local libraries, school librarians, and community organizations, which play a crucial role in enriching the pool of resources available to students. Collaborative efforts are instrumental in creating a comprehensive literacy support system that encompasses both school and community environments.

## Monitoring and Adapting Interventions

The effectiveness of literacy interventions hinges significantly on continuous monitoring and adaptive strategies. It is imperative to regularly assess and monitor student progress in literacy, which serves as a cornerstone in informing instruction and guiding necessary adjustments to interventions. This process should encompass both formative and summative assessments, providing a comprehensive view of each student's literacy development. Additionally, the implementation of adaptive, school-wide literacy strategies plays a crucial role in responding effectively to the collective literacy needs of the student population. Regular review and adaptation of these strategies are essential to ensure their ongoing



effectiveness and alignment with the latest best practices in literacy education. By maintaining a dynamic and responsive approach, schools can create an environment where literacy interventions are continuously refined and tailored to meet the evolving needs of their students.

## In Summary

Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan emphasizes providing high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction. It details the tiers of evidence and underscores the need for explicit, systematic instructional methods. The section advocates for literacy equity, aiming to meet diverse student needs while aligning with Illinois Learning Standards. A review of key research that explains the development of a reader is provided, including aspects such as oral language, decoding, prior knowledge, and interconnected literacy skills. Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction explores the Seven Pillars of Literacy—**Oracy, Phonological Awareness, Word Recognition, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension, and Writing**—connecting to instructional practices. The section also addresses additional instructional factors including handwriting, 21st century skills, and support for newcomers and students with specialized needs. Finally, it discusses the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), focusing on its key components, assessment practices, and literacy interventions.

### Deeper Exploration

These are texts suggested through public engagements that demonstrate greatest alignment to this section of the literacy plan. The following resources delve further into the topics covered in this section and offer additional context for this work:

- *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching* by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey
- *The Reading Strategies Book* by Jennifer Serravallo
- *Language at the Speed of Sight* by Mark Seidenberg
- *Reading for Life: High Quality Literacy Instruction for All* by Lyn Stone
- *Shifting the Balance* by Jan Burkins & Kari Yates
- *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* by Zaretta Hammond

# Goal 1

## WORKBOOK

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Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

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**GOAL 1**

Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Classroom environments should be rich with evidence-based literacy practices.
- ✓ Effective collaboration between all levels ensures the integration of evidence-based literacy practices within classroom instruction.
- ✓ Curriculum and access to resources must be equitable and implemented with fidelity.
- ✓ Literacy instruction should combat the barriers that may exist outside the classroom.
- ✓ Educators need to be equipped to make evidence-based instructional decisions that are data-based, student-centered, and consistent vertically across grade bands.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Ensure that curated collections of materials that enhance units are available and well-implemented.
- ☐ Ensure the instruction delivers access to decodable books where students practice what they are learning.
- ☐ Acknowledge that best practices evolve.
- ☐ Collaborate within grade bands, school, and district to ensure curriculum is implemented with fidelity.
- ☐ Utilize consistent data collection that shows student growth and areas of need over grade-level bands.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. What are the essential components of literacy-rich classroom environments?
2. How does a literacy-rich classroom environment look and sound?
3. How does equitable implementation across all student populations look?
4. What tools and systems (instruction, curriculum, interventions, data, etc.) are in place to assess if the curriculum and related resources are of high quality?
5. What obstacles get in the way of me implementing evidence-based literacy best practices with fidelity?

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Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

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- ✓ Effective collaboration between all levels ensures the integration of evidence-based literacy practices within classroom instruction.
- ✓ Curriculum and access to resources must be equitable and implemented with fidelity.
- ✓ Literacy instruction should combat the barriers that may exist outside the classroom.
- ✓ Teacher leaders need to be equipped to make evidence-based instructional decisions that are data-based, student-centered, and consistent vertically across grade bands.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Ensure that curated collections of materials that enhance units are available and well-implemented.
- ☐ Identify cross-curricular connections to infuse literacy in all subject areas.
- ☐ Acknowledge that best practices evolve and work to support educators in the transition.
- ☐ Focus on consistent data collection that shows student growth and areas of need over grade-level bands.
- ☐ Communicate implementation success, needs, and gaps with teachers and administrators.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. What are the essential components of literacy-rich classroom environments?
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**Implementation Considerations**

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- ✓ Effective collaboration between all levels ensures the integration of evidence-based literacy practices within classroom instruction.
- ✓ Curriculum and access to resources must be equitable and implemented with fidelity.
- ✓ Literacy instruction should combat the barriers that may exist outside the classroom.
- ✓ Appropriate, school-level assessment tools accessible by all students are necessary to drive instruction and monitor whether students are advancing in their literacy skills.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Engage teacher teams in data analysis to understand who is served by current literacy instruction and what gaps exist.
- ☐ Evaluate current curriculum and intervention materials with teachers and staff and invest in high quality curriculum and resources as needed.
- ☐ Screen students in their primary language, when valid and reliable screeners are available, in addition to the district's universal screening measures.
- ☐ Identify criteria to determine if students need interventions in accordance with MTSS.
- ☐ Build school-level capacity in assessment administration and communication of the assessments with families.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. Are all student literacy needs being met?
2. Are the school's actions developmentally appropriate and based on evidence?
3. Does the curriculum meet the standards of high-quality, evidenced-based literacy instruction?
4. Are the appropriate assessments used to monitor student progress and determine when students need intervention?
5. Does student data support the school's current literacy strategy?

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**GOAL 1**

Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ All districts, regardless of grades served, need to consider how a literacy plan could help improve their student achievement.
- ✓ District literacy plans should consider the local context of student data to establish a plan that will be beneficial for all learners.
- ✓ Student data should guide instruction throughout the year as part of the district assessment plan and MTSS system.
- ✓ Identifying quality curriculum and intervention materials will be necessary.
- ✓ Curriculum may look different for different grade bands. The district needs to consider how to support all its educators in the best way possible.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Identify quality curriculum as a top priority.  
Review current curriculum and implementation using an approved rubric.
- ☐ Assess year-over-year data to understand student achievement and identify success in schools. Disaggregate data by race, language learners, and diverse learners.
- ☐ Implement assessment systems to identify students in need of intervention.
- ☐ Avoid excessive testing and value diverse assessment methods.
- ☐ Identify criteria to determine if students need interventions in accordance with MTSS.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. What do the current structures and data indicate about the district's beliefs and the implementation of support for literacy instruction?
2. How can data be utilized to present a comprehensive overview of the reading proficiency of all students?
3. What notable achievements can be identified within the district's practices?
4. What evidence-based strategies are being employed successfully and which strategies are being excluded?
5. What resources are allocated at each grade level to ensure that all students can read and receive the necessary support?

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## GOAL 1

Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ Differing support may be needed across districts within a region.
- ✓ Regional support may look like guiding the analysis of the local context of student data, reviewing curriculum on a regular cycle, connecting schools to resources, providing professional learning, and so on.
- ✓ Educators within the region have varied experiences, professional learning, teacher preparation, and beliefs about literacy. Consider the strengths that the variety presents.
- ✓ Students in most need of literacy support will benefit from prioritizing the commitment to equity.

### Next Steps

- ☐ Utilize a needs assessment with districts to deepen the understanding of the instructional shifts that need to take place.
- ☐ Analyze regional data to identify who is served by current literacy instruction and what gaps exist.
- ☐ Engage in review cycles of literacy curriculum and intervention materials that are commonly used across the region.
- ☐ Offer guidance for districts who need help with selecting and or purchasing literacy materials.
- ☐ Provide special attention to alternative education students to specifically support their unique literacy needs.

## NOTES

### Reflection Questions

1. How will regional leaders identify localized support needed across districts?
2. How can regional leaders build educator capacity when using MTSS to support the implementation of the literacy plan?
3. What existing organizations or resources in the area are engaged in similar work?
4. How can regional leaders meet the diverse needs of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from marginalized and disenfranchised communities?
5. What obstacles exist that prevent regional leaders from achieving this goal?

**GOAL 1**

Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Literacy should be a focus for all students, grades, and content areas.
- ✓ Curriculum and access to resources must be equitable across the state.
- ✓ Localized contexts must be considered. Differing support may be needed across regions.
- ✓ Ongoing research continues to change the literacy landscape.
- ✓ Students in most need of literacy support will benefit from prioritizing the commitment to equity.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Communicate the comprehensive literacy plan to all stakeholders and provide aligned resources and training.
- ☐ Provide an evaluation tool for selecting high-quality materials to support the implementation of the literacy plan and prioritize the selection of materials that meet the diverse needs of all students.
- ☐ Monitor state trends in student data and provide timely, actionable data to educators to inform instruction and intervention.
- ☐ Identify areas of need and target resources to support students in high-poverty areas or those facing other systemic barriers to literacy development.
- ☐ Require professional learning opportunities to be aligned to the latest research and evidence-based practices.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. How will state leaders ensure a comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable perspective is used to attend to student learning?
2. How can state leaders meet the diverse needs of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from marginalized and disenfranchised communities?
3. How can state leaders ensure that assessments provide timely, actionable data to inform instruction and intervention?
4. How can state leaders ensure that all schools have equitable access to literacy resources and opportunities, particularly in areas with high rates of poverty or other systemic barriers to literacy development?
5. What other obstacles exist in meeting this goal?

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**GOAL 1**

Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Local literacy plans should be comprehensive, inclusive, and consider the needs and challenges of all students, including those with diverse learning needs, linguistic backgrounds, and abilities.
- ✓ Resources and support services should promote equitable access to literacy education for every student.
- ✓ Equitable resource distribution to schools, districts, and communities with the greatest literacy challenges ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction and materials.
- ✓ Transparency in assessment practices, including reporting and using assessment data to inform instructional decisions, is an important component to instruction.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Ask questions and be involved.
- ☐ Collaborate with local educators and stakeholders to develop supplementary literacy support programs tailored to local needs.
- ☐ Advocate for the inclusion of resources and strategies that promote accessibility and inclusivity.
- ☐ Analyze resource distribution within the community and identify disparities.
- ☐ Review literacy assessment methods and provide feedback on their fairness and relevance.
- ☐ Encourage the development of transparent reporting mechanisms that share assessment data with community and family partners to inform their involvement.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How can the community play a role in supporting literacy initiatives?
2. What strategies can promote greater family involvement in literacy education?
3. What resources can be made available to parents and caregivers to support literacy at home?
4. How can partnerships with schools and districts enhance community literacy efforts?
5. Are there opportunities to engage in public advocacy for evidence-based literacy instruction?

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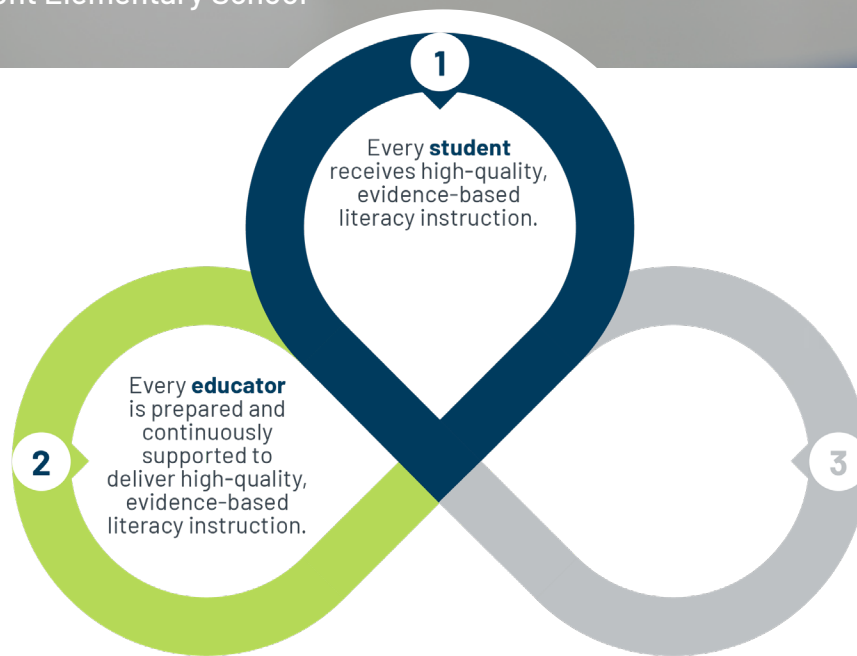
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# EDUCATOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

\*Photo from Clearmont Elementary School



**This section focuses on Goal 2: Every educator is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**

Effective professional learning in literacy instruction is pivotal in developing a comprehensive understanding of the language and literacy development continuum, along with the application of evidence-based instructional practices. This educational vision requires alignment across all levels of the system:

- **Classroom and pre-service educators** are equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach concepts explicitly and in ways that align with children's developmental needs, fostering the authentic application of acquired skills.
- **School leaders** who are responsible for curriculum development and teacher evaluation possess a thorough understanding of creating literacy-rich environments and supporting instructional program decision-making that is driven by data.

- **Instructional coaches, school librarians, professional development providers, and external consultants** build upon this knowledge and provide evidence of successful implementation and longitudinal outcomes.
- **Faculty at institutions of higher education** align their instruction with this plan and to state literacy instruction and learning standards by incorporating practical experiences and other research-based practices into their coursework.

Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development emphasizes the crucial roles of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in developing future educators and school districts in advancing current educators who primarily work with PreK-12 learners. For information on professional learning for educators who work mostly with teachers, parents, or community members see the next section of this plan, Framework for Effective Literacy leadership.

Additionally, Public Act 103-0402, which mandates the creation of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, mandates EPPs to align their curricula and courses of study with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan. This alignment is essential for consistent and effective literacy instruction for all students. This section supports EPP providers in aligning with the literacy plan goals, focusing on curriculum design for diverse learners and integrating assessment and accountability.

The overall focus is on establishing intentional, comprehensive, and coordinated approaches to developing both pre-service and in-service educators. This approach aims to foster equitable and positive literacy outcomes for all Illinois learners. This section acknowledges the significant roles played by diverse educational figures, including classroom teachers, pre-service educators, school leaders, external consultants, professional development providers, instructional coaches, and faculty at higher education institutions.

The ultimate goal is to cultivate a robust and interconnected network of professional learning and development, catering to both pre-service and in-service educators. This ecosystem empowers every educator, from those in college to experienced professionals, to effectively deliver evidence-based literacy instruction.<sup>1</sup>

## Attending to Equity

This part of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan firmly focuses on integrating equity into all aspects of professional learning for both pre-service and in-service educators. Providing equal access to high-quality professional development is key to promoting inclusive and effective literacy teaching. It's important that educators of various backgrounds, serving a diverse student body, have access to the necessary resources, strategies, and support to excel. The objective is to reduce the literacy achievement gap and foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for all students in Illinois. Prioritizing equity is vital to achieving this goal.

## Literacy Instruction Across All Grade Levels and Content Areas

Literacy instruction is a critical consideration at every grade level in PreK-12 classrooms. Consideration for developmentally appropriate literacy instruction at every step along the way for each learner is essential to improve literacy success for all Illinois learners. Integral to achieving our goals is a common understanding of developmental trajectories of literacy skill development. Learners who were enrolled in PreK-12 education during the global pandemic are still in our classrooms, so it is imperative that districts double down and make sure that all educators have a clear understanding about literacy development. This understanding can help classroom teachers identify when students are struggling in their coursework due to gaps in literacy skill development.

It is common knowledge that students will have significant academic struggles if they have not been able to develop the essential literacy skills necessary for the level of coursework they are engaged in. *Teachers who have an increased understanding of what literacy skill gaps look like in content areas outside of language arts settings can more quickly identify students in need of intervention. Timely intervention can enable students who need additional supports to be more likely to get back on track as opposed to continuing to fall behind.*

## Educator Preparation and Training

### Expectations for Educator Preparation Programs

Preparing future educators is essential for improving literacy outcomes for Illinois learners. [PA 103-0402](#), calls for revisions to educator testing requirements. These updates include expanding the content knowledge test for Grades 1 through 6 to cover bilingualism, biliteracy, oral language development, foundational literacy skills, and appropriate higher-order comprehension. This aims to ensure a reliable subscore in language and literacy. The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) is required by this public act to collect and share data on the number of candidates taking this test and their success rates in the language and literacy section, though specific subscores in this area are not mandatory.

ISBE approves and monitors educator preparation programs in colleges and universities. Additionally, ISBE can offer guidance and support as the programs at postsecondary institutions work to realign their curricula and courses of study to meet the amended educator testing requirements set forth in the language and literacy area. EPPs play a crucial role in shaping the educators who will work in Illinois' elementary and secondary schools. A key focus is to work collaboratively and offer support to align the training of future educators with the literacy goals of the state and the needs of PreK-12 teachers and students.

EPPs are pivotal not only in training future educators but also in offering ongoing education to current educators. EPPs need to align their programs with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan to foster more purposeful and coordinated literacy promotion efforts across the state. These programs must regularly evaluate and adjust their approaches, especially as deadlines for revisions to teacher licensure exams and outcome reporting, as set by PA 103-0402, draw near. While not mandated by current laws, ISBE advises extending this review to programs for educators of Grades 9-12, beyond those preparing elementary educators. By aligning all teacher preparation programs with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, a consistent and continuous support system for literacy development can be established, guiding all learners towards academic and career success in their postsecondary years.

The following considerations are specific to the design and implementation of educator preparation programs and courses:

- **Alignment with literacy framework:** Higher education partners must align their EPPs with the literacy framework and the objectives outlined in this plan. The aim is to establish a unified and coherent approach to literacy instruction from the classroom to teacher preparation institutions.
- **Inclusion of evidence-based practices:** All PreK-12 EPPs must incorporate evidence-based literacy instruction practices into their curricula, as appropriate, for the endorsements candidates are seeking. This includes the integration of the latest research in literacy education, technology-driven teaching methods, and strategies that address the diverse needs of learners. Embracing evidence-based practices ensures that future educators are well-equipped to deliver effective literacy instruction.
- **Incorporating practical experiences:** Illinois is known for its diverse student population, including students from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds. EPPs should include field-based clinical

teaching experiences that are intentionally designed to provide pre-service teachers with real world experience teaching and working with a broad range of learners to increase depth of knowledge and classroom readiness.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the U.S. Department of Education's independent research arm, developed 'Integrating Reading Foundations: A Tool for College Instructors of Pre-service Teachers.' This tool aids college instructors in teaching pre-service educators about evidence-based strategies for kindergarten to Grade 3 literacy skill acquisition. It is meant to be used alongside the 'Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade' guide by the What Works Clearinghouse, another IES department. Recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity's importance in classrooms, EPPs are encouraged to prepare future teachers for effectively teaching students from varied backgrounds. This includes understanding cultural differences, creating inclusive classroom environments, and adapting teaching to all learners' needs. EPPs are updating their curricula to include the [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards](#), vital for preparing educators for diverse learning needs. These programs should offer pre-service teachers opportunities to observe and directly engage with diverse learners, covering preparation across all PreK-12 educational levels, including various cultural backgrounds, multilingual, special needs, and advanced learners.

Given the increasing number of multilingual students in our schools, EPPs should emphasize strategies for supporting MLs. This includes training in language acquisition, differentiation, and the use of resources like the [WIDA English Language Development Framework](#).

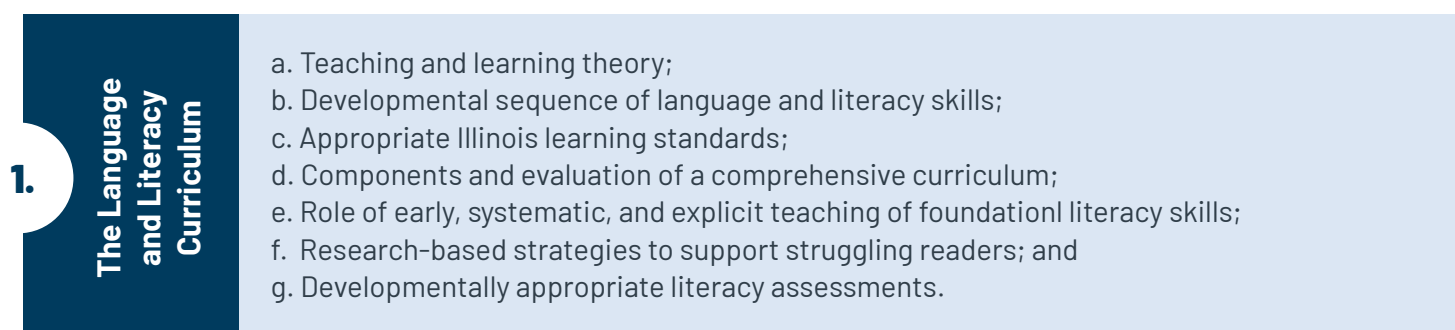
### Data-Driven Evaluation of Program Success

EPPs should emphasize robust evaluation processes programs to assess teacher candidates' readiness in literacy instruction. These evaluations measure candidates' literacy instruction knowledge and their practical application skills in classroom settings. Data derived from these evaluations drive improvement and revisions to programs in EPPs with successful improvement cycles.

Furthermore, alignment with this plan requires EPPs to leverage assessment data for the purpose of program improvement. This data-driven approach ensures that teacher candidates receive the most relevant and effective training, aligning with the overarching goal of evidence-based literacy instruction.

EPPs should also evaluate the effectiveness of their curricula against the [Standards for Endorsement in Elementary Education](#). This includes using longitudinal measures to assess how well their programs prepare educators for evidence-based literacy instruction for diverse learners. These standards encompass seven learning domains: curriculum, foundational knowledge, instruction, assessment, instructional methods, addressing all learners' needs, and creating a supportive literacy environment.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 12: [The Seven Domains of Learning – from the Illinois Standards for Endorsement in Elementary Education](#)



**2.****Foundational Knowledge**

- a. Language: Semantics, syntax, morphology & pragmatics; Theories and stages of first and second literacy acquisition; Emergent literacy evidence-based development of language, reading, and writing; Academic language; Conventions of standard English grammar/usage.
- b. Alphabetic Code: Phonological awareness; Orthographic-phonological system; Structural analysis.
- c. Text: Factors that affect text complexity; Organizational structures, literacy devices, rhetorical and text features and graphics; Genre characteristics; Resources for struggling readers; and Text in specific disciplines.

**3.****Using Research-Based Instructional Approaches**

- a. Decoding and fluency;
- b. Reading comprehension;
- c. Writing;
- d. Speaking and listening; and;
- e. Vocabulary.

**4.****Using Materials, Texts, and Technology**

- a. High-quality literature and informational texts;
- b. Selecting materials to address interests, background, and learning needs of each student;
- c. Research-based criteria to select and evaluate materials;
- d. Estimate difficulty level of text;
- e. Culturally responsive texts; and
- f. Technology to support literacy instruction.

**5.****Monitoring Student Learning Through Assessment**

- a. Developmentally appropriate literacy assessments;
- b. Monitor student progress toward benchmarks;
- c. Assess student interest, engagement, and response;
- d. Use assessment data, student work, and observations to monitor progress and evaluate instruction;
- e. Providing feedback to help students understand progress and performance;
- f. Engage students in self-assessment;
- g. Maintain and use records of student performance; and
- h. Interpret and use student outcome data.

6.

Meeting the  
Needs of Diverse  
Learners

- a. Impact of cultural, linguistic, cognitive, academic, physical, and social and emotional differences on language development and literacy;
- b. Plan and implement targeted literacy instruction responsive to student strengths and needs;
- c. Seeking assistance for struggling readers and writers;
- d. Vertical alignment of literacy instruction;
- e. Meeting diverse learning needs of each student;
- f. English learner accessible content;
- g. Delivering literacy instruction within a multi-tier system of support;
- h. Data-based decision making to target interventions; and
- i. Delivering instruction explicitly to struggling readers.

7.

Constructing a  
Supportive Language &  
Literacy Environment

- a. Design learning around motivation, engagement and the “gradual release of responsibility” approach;
- b. Promote independence, self-directions, collaboration, and responsibility for literacy learning;
- c. Using flexible grouping to meet individual learner needs;
- d. Incorporate student choices in materials and activities;
- e. Build collaborative classroom communities.

## Alignment of Educator Preparation Programs to the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

The following are key strategies for aligning educator preparation programs with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan<sup>3</sup>:

### Course Content Improvement:

- Assess courses for thorough coverage of the Seven Components of Literacy from **Section 1 – Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction**, identifying areas for enhancement.
- Ensure consistency across course sections, which could involve co-creating syllabi or synchronizing assignment sequences.
- Integrate more emphasis on evidence-based reading instruction in courses.
- Focus lecture topics and assignments on the fundamental components of reading instruction from Section 1.

### Quality of Course Materials and Instruction:

- Ensure field-based practice opportunities allow candidates to apply effective reading instruction techniques to diverse student groups.
- Offer candidates access to high-quality, evidence-based materials that embrace multicultural and multilingual perspectives.
- Exclude curriculum elements that conflict with evidence-based practices.
- Teach methods to evaluate the quality and evidence base of instructional materials.

**Faculty Development and Hiring Practices:**

- Provide additional training for faculty needing more knowledge in evidence-based reading practices.
- Hire reading instructors proficient in evidence-based practices.

**External Collaboration and Expert Review:**

- Utilize professional networks to connect with experts in evidence-based reading instruction.
- Encourage collaboration between practicing teachers and faculty, bridging the gap between the field and educator preparation.
- Invite literacy experts to review course syllabi and materials.

The [Illinois Educator Preparation Profile \(IEPP\)](#) should be utilized to identify high-performing education programs, especially for elementary education and reading specialist programs. The IEPP is a valuable tool for prospective educators, PreK-12 administrators involved in teacher hiring, current higher education faculty and staff, parents, and others interested in learning more about educator preparation programs in Illinois. The IEPP includes program data across several key program performance indicators and may be an important resource for colleagues to utilize in making connections across institutions to exchange knowledge and strengthen course offerings.

**Professional Learning for In-Service Educators**

The remaining portion of Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development focuses on the specialized professional learning for in-service educators, including teachers, school and district leaders, and professional learning providers. High-quality, job-relevant learning experiences closely aligned with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan are part of a broader framework of effective instruction essential for reading success. Professional learning providers vary, ranging from EPPs and local education agencies to professional organizations and curriculum publishers. The main goal is to support educators at every stage of their career, acknowledging the evolving nature of effective literacy instruction and the diverse needs of educators.

The Learning Forward [Standards for Professional Learning](#) describe the conditions, content, and processes for professional learning that result in high-quality leading, teaching, and learning for students and educators.

**Effective Professional Learning Systems**

Professional learning should strategically focus on instructional methods grounded in evidence-based practices. The aim is to equip educators with the necessary knowledge and skills for applying these practices effectively in their teaching. This blend of theoretical knowledge and practical application is designed to enhance educators' ability to foster literacy growth in their students.

Moreover, customizing professional learning to accommodate the diverse needs of educators is crucial for improving literacy outcomes.

Ensuring various avenues for professional learning provides equitable access and meaningful opportunities for educators dedicated to advancing literacy instruction. Professional learning that prioritizes equity empowers educators to provide inclusive and effective literacy instruction to all students, regardless of their own language backgrounds. Emphasizing evidence-based practices, especially for MLs and neurodiverse learners, is essential for inclusive and effective literacy instruction for all students.

## Differentiated Professional Learning Strategies for Educators

Recognizing the diversity among educators in terms of needs and preferences, professional learning strategies should be adaptable to a wide audience, including teachers, school and district leaders, and professional development providers. The selection of professional learning strategies for in-service educators should consider urgency, budget, and teacher availability. Effective strategies should offer diverse, job-embedded experiences, allowing for the practical application of new knowledge and reflection.

Guiding questions that may be helpful to help determine which professional learning strategy is most beneficial include:

- **What is the preferred balance between in-person and virtual interactions for the target audience?**
  - Consider the preferences and constraints of the educators involved. Some may thrive in face-to-face settings, while others may prefer the flexibility of virtual options. This question helps identify the optimal blend of in-person and virtual elements.
- **How critical is real-time collaboration and discussion for the learning objectives?**
  - Assess the importance of synchronous interactions in achieving the learning goals. If real-time engagement, collaborative problem-solving, or immediate feedback are crucial, a strategy that incorporates virtual synchronous sessions (Strategy 1 or 2) might be more suitable.
- **What level of flexibility is required to accommodate diverse schedules and learning paces?**
  - Evaluate the time commitments and flexibility needs of the educators. If they require the freedom to progress at their own pace, a virtual, asynchronous approach (Strategy 3) may be more appropriate, allowing them to access content at convenient times.
- **How can community and relationship-building be best fostered among participants?**
  - Consider the importance of community and relationship-building in the professional learning process. If building connections is a priority, a blended approach (Strategy 1) with in-person bookends and virtual platforms for ongoing discussion might be more effective in creating a sense of community.
- **What is the preferred method for ongoing support and collaboration after the formal learning series?**
  - Explore the desired post-learning support structure. If participants value continued collaboration and support, a strategy that incorporates virtual discussion platforms and sustained virtual cohorts (e.g., Strategy 1) may be more effective in establishing long-lasting networks.

These questions aim to align the chosen professional learning strategy with the unique needs, preferences, and objectives of the educators involved.

## Professional Learning Strategies for Educators

### Strategy 1: In-Person/Virtual Blended Approach

- Combine in-person and virtual elements for a blended approach that leverages the benefits of both formats, while also reducing financial and scheduling demands and mitigating some of the downsides of each format.

- Consider in-person sessions to bookend the professional learning series for both the onset and conclusion of the series to increase connectedness, fostering a sense of community and building relationships between and among instructors, facilitators, and participants.
- Schedule virtual meetings to allow for cost-effective and schedule-friendly avenues to engage in real-time synchronous learning and discussion. Regularly scheduled virtual meetings enable the presentation of essential information to all participants, along with addressing any questions or clarifications needed by participants on other components that are completed outside of scheduled meeting times.
- Utilize asynchronous, offline learning experiences to provide for the inclusion of implementation exercises where participants can apply what they are learning, using an action research approach. By applying new learning and collecting data on the outcomes in their own classrooms, educators receive scaffolding as needed while problem-solving and reflecting on their experiences toward improved future practice.
- Encourage participants to engage in further learning via asynchronous virtual modules to increase depth of knowledge and allow for differentiation of learning and content based on need.
- Leverage virtual discussion platforms to continue fostering relationships among participants and promote discussion with colleagues to create longer-lasting more sustainable and organic support networks for educators. This is especially important for educators who work in smaller school districts that have fewer – and sometimes completely lack – colleagues who work in similar or the same role.

### **Strategy 2: Virtual Synchronous/Asynchronous Hybrid**

- Blend synchronous online sessions with asynchronous learning for flexibility in consideration of the demands of both the career and personal lives of educators. This approach can significantly reduce the financial and scheduling demands presented by in-person learning.
- Provide synchronous online sessions with instructors, facilitators, and colleagues for real-time engagement that can allow for deeper discussion and collaborative problem solving or reflection.
- Prepare asynchronous, previously-recorded modules on the topic to be accessed at the participant's convenience, typically within certain boundaries determined by the progression of the series.
- Repeat strategy across a suite of topics to ensure comprehensive coverage.

### **Strategy 3: Virtual, Asynchronous**

- Utilize previously prepared modules to allow learners to progress at their own pace, accommodating busy schedules
- Include brief learning checks to document minimum learning attainment.
- Acknowledge completion with “badges” for completing predetermined suites of modules.
- Employ multiple stackable modules to span the curriculum, offering a comprehensive approach with maximum flexibility and an orientation toward continued growth and improvement.
- Implement a virtual, asynchronous format to provide content or practice “refreshes” for practicing educators, keeping in mind that this is considered a less desirable approach for professional learning

in comparison to the aforementioned approaches. Additionally, this format can support the building of baseline knowledge prior to engagement in a format that promotes deeper learning through supervised practical application.

- Form cohorts based on grade level; however, other groups may be beneficial for varied purposes, such as vertical alignment. Smaller or rural schools may need to consider alternate cohort formation or collaboration with other schools in the region. Instruction for each module could incorporate initial learning plus implementation to bring the new knowledge “into the classroom.” Each cohort meeting then builds on what was learned during the week’s implementation of learning. The strength of a networked cohort by grade model is that teachers will be experiencing common knowledge in conjunction with a common implementation that gives meaning to instruction and that can then be shared with colleagues in breakout rooms.

Consistency between and among strategies can be achieved by a common curriculum and instructors participating in weekly meetings with each other to debrief on the past week and discuss the upcoming implementation for the next week.

### **Learning Outcomes for In-Service Educators**

The goal of professional learning is to achieve observable improvements in literacy instruction, leading to enhanced student learning outcomes. High-quality, job-related professional learning significantly benefits student achievement. Considerations for in-service educators participating in professional learning include:

- Developing a deeper understanding of the Seven Domains of Literacy.
- Mastering evidence-based literacy practices.
- Creating literacy-rich environments in their classrooms.
- Implementing diverse and inclusive instructional strategies.
- Using effective assessment tools and data to inform instruction.
- Building positive dispositions toward language and literacy skills.
- Engaging collaboratively within professional learning communities.
- Committing to ongoing reflection and improvement in literacy instruction.

### **Prioritizing Professional Development**

Professional development should begin with preschool and early elementary teachers as they are in the most advantageous position to quickly impact reading achievement. State statutes, mandates pertaining to compulsory school attendance, and provisions for learners with special needs should be contemplated when considering grade- or age-level content for professional learning. Additional information for consideration may be found in **Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership**.

### **In Summary**

Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan articulates a comprehensive strategy for educator professional learning and development, aimed at enhancing literacy outcomes across Illinois. It underscores the vital role of Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in training future educators and aligning their curricula with state literacy goals. The section outlines specific strategies

and considerations for effective professional learning, emphasizing the need for evidence-based practices, data-driven program evaluations, and alignment with literacy standards. It also highlights the importance of differentiated professional learning approaches to cater to the diverse needs of educators, ranging from in-person and virtual blended formats to asynchronous online strategies. The goal is to ensure all educators, whether pre-service or in-service, are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster literacy-rich environments and implement inclusive and effective literacy instruction. This concerted effort in professional development is pivotal in narrowing the literacy achievement gap and creating an empowering educational landscape for all learners in Illinois.

### Deeper Exploration

These are texts suggested through public engagements that demonstrate greatest alignment to this section of the literacy plan. The following resources delve further into the topics covered in this section and offer additional context for this work:

- *The New Art and Science of Teaching* by Robert Marzano
- *Teaching Reading* by Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, and Diane Lapp
- *Disrupting Thinking* by Kylene Beers and Bob Probst
- *Literacy Foundations for English Learners: A Comprehensive Guide to Evidence-Based Instruction* by Elsa Cardenas-Hagan Ed.D.
- *The Teacher Gap* by Rebecca Allen, Sam Sims
- *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* by Gloria Ladson-Billings

# Goal 2

## WORKBOOK

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Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

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**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Professional learning priorities and experiences vary and recognizing how prior learning experiences were anchored is important.
- ✓ Educators' professional learning goals are valuable mechanisms to build capacity in evidence-based literacy instruction.
- ✓ Collaboration with colleagues to share effective instructional strategies and resources should be prioritized as they benefit student achievement.
- ✓ Ongoing formative assessment to adapt instruction is valuable, and professional learning should reflect this need.
- ✓ Educators need to be equipped to make evidence-based instructional decisions that are data-based, student-centered, and consistent vertically across grade bands.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Create an individual professional learning plan focused on evidence-based literacy practices.
- ☐ Attend relevant workshops, webinars, or conferences.
- ☐ Form or join a literacy-focused PLC (Professional Learning Community).
- ☐ Request peer observations and provide feedback to colleagues.
- ☐ Collect and analyze student data to inform instructional adjustments.
- ☐ Advocate for quality professional learning on evidence-based literacy practices within your school or district.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. How does the literacy plan ensure that it is accessible and inclusive for all students, including those with diverse backgrounds and abilities?
2. How can the partnership between schools and families be strengthened to enhance literacy development for our students?
3. Does the literacy plan distribute resources, such as funding, materials, and staffing, in an equitable manner?
4. Are there any resource disparities that need to be addressed to ensure that all students have access to quality literacy education?
5. What assessment methods are outlined locally, and do they provide fair and meaningful insights into student progress?

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## GOAL 2

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ Teacher leader capacity in evidence-based literacy practice is essential in shifting educators' instructional practices.
- ✓ Mentoring and supporting fellow teachers in implementing literacy practices requires teacher leaders to prioritize their own professional learning in literacy.
- ✓ The newest reading research in literacy pedagogy should guide professional development and instructional decisions and teacher leaders should commit to staying updated in this area.
- ✓ Collaboration with school leadership to align literacy goals to the needs of the district is key.
- ✓ Data should drive professional learning decision making.

### Next Steps

- ☐ Connects with experts in the field to share strategies that will enhance instruction and provide opportunities for teacher growth in mindset and practice.
- ☐ Organize and lead literacy-focused workshops or PLCs.
- ☐ Provide ongoing coaching and feedback to teachers.
- ☐ Collaborate with school leaders to set literacy-related goals aligned to the local literacy plan and the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.
- ☐ Create a resource library for teachers on evidence-based literacy practices.
- ☐ Advocate for dedicated time and resources for literacy instruction.

## NOTES

**Reflection Questions**

1. What support is needed for educators to effectively utilize the available tools and systems?
2. What professional development experiences equip educators to make evidence-based literacy decisions? What can I provide? What professional learning do I need help providing?
3. How can I promote a culture of evidence-based literacy instruction within my school?
4. What data can inform decisions about professional learning?
5. Are there specific challenges or needs related to literacy instruction within our school?

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**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Literacy development applies to all grade levels and content areas. Be explicit and strategic in building capacity for the different teacher groups and staff who interact with students daily.
- ✓ All educators within the school need access to appropriate materials and professional learning on high quality, evidence-based literacy practices.
- ✓ Educators require sustained and appropriate professional learning and development opportunities to hone their skills that demand current evidence-based practice.
- ✓ Teachers may feel a sense of attachment towards a specific activity or curriculum, and recognizing and understanding that is essential for shifting practices.
- ✓ Appropriate, school-level assessment tools accessible by all students are necessary to drive instruction and monitor whether students are advancing in their literacy skills.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Train staff to analyze assessment data and allocate time for data review.
- ☐ Provide funding and time for teachers to attend relevant literacy training.
- ☐ Provide job-embedded and sustained professional learning.
- ☐ Form a literacy leadership team with representation from various grade levels and subject areas.
- ☐ Implement regular classroom observations with a focus on literacy instruction.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How will the structure of professional learning be leveraged or changed to let teachers use their expertise yet also learn about new approaches and ideas?
2. How will literacy leaders within the school be developed and utilized?
3. How are paraprofessionals being upskilled to ensure consistent implementation practices for all students?
4. How can we measure the impact of evidence-based literacy practices on student achievement?  
How can we measure the impact of professional learning on student achievement?
5. Are resource allocations effectively supporting literacy initiatives?

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**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Equitable access to evidence-based literacy resources and training across the district is essential.
- ✓ Professional learning and curriculum may look different for different grade bands.
- ✓ District-wide literacy standards and benchmarks should guide professional learning.
- ✓ Student literacy outcome should be analyzed to guide instruction and professional learning.
- ✓ An effective feedback cycle should support professional learning.
- ✓ Collaboration to align literacy initiatives with regional and state leaders increases effectiveness of local efforts.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Allocate funding and resources for district-wide literacy initiatives.
- ☐ Utilize state and national professional organizations for support to secure high quality professional learning.
- ☐ Focus on evidence-based practices for literacy instruction.
- ☐ Provide training on supporting implementation, evaluating instructional materials, and monitoring fidelity of use.
- ☐ Implement a data management system for tracking literacy outcomes.
- ☐ Provide ongoing coaching and support to schools for effective literacy instruction.
- ☐ Engage in regular communication and collaboration with regional and state leaders on literacy initiatives.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How are educators involved in the planning process and how is feedback obtained from local stakeholders by school districts?
2. How does the district support and monitor school level implementation of evidence-based literacy practices? How is professional learning offered to facilitate the implementation of the evidence-based curriculum?
3. Do our district literacy standards align with comprehensive literacy plan?
4. How can we provide consistent access to literacy resources and training across all schools?
5. What data are we collecting to assess district-wide literacy outcomes?
6. Are there opportunities for collaboration with regional and state leaders to strengthen literacy efforts?

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**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Identifying regional champions of literacy and providing the necessary professional learning for implementation of evidence-based literacy practices creates a coalition supportive of literacy and one another.
- ✓ Regional leaders need to be proactive and strategic when designing and implementing state level support to ensure districts have the appropriate levels of guidance to support them where they are at.
- ✓ Professional learning opportunities should be encouraged and promoted to all Pre-K through 12th grade teachers.
- ✓ Regional leaders should identify and monitor literacy outcomes and trends impacting local student outcomes.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Research and apply for funding to support professional learning for administrators and teachers across your region.
- ☐ Assist districts in developing their own professional learning and embedded on-the-job training using district coaches.
- ☐ Share messaging plans with regional leaders to help maintain a consistent focus on literacy.
- ☐ Establish regional literacy coordination committees, conferences, or workshops.
- ☐ Create a platform for districts to share effective literacy strategies.
- ☐ Share strategies for analyzing and monitoring literacy data and progress.
- ☐ Advocate for policy changes that promote evidence-based literacy instruction at the state level.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. How can regional coordination enhance the impact of literacy initiatives?
2. How can regional coordination enhance the impact of literacy initiatives?
3. How will regional leaders sustain ongoing professional learning?
4. How can we ensure the exchange of successful literacy practices among districts?
5. What data should we monitor to assess regional literacy progress?
6. Are there policy barriers at the regional level that need to be addressed to support evidence-based literacy instruction?

**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Shifting instructional practices require significant investments at many levels.
- ✓ Professional learning must consider the sociodemographic needs of teachers and learners.
- ✓ State leaders must be proactive in addressing obstacles related to funding and resources.
- ✓ Clear communication of state-level literacy initiatives is necessary.
- ✓ State level monitoring and evaluation of literacy outcomes is essential to statewide progress.
- ✓ The state should lead the work in collaborating with educational stakeholders to refine and improve literacy initiatives.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Provide guidance on professional learning that can be leveraged in alignment with the Comprehensive Literacy Plan.
- ☐ Establish and fund accessible, relevant, ongoing, high-quality professional learning.
- ☐ Promote professional learning opportunities through established networks.
- ☐ Provide support to schools in focusing their efforts on the most effective literacy strategies and initiatives, such as through targeted professional development and coaching.
- ☐ Establish a centralized literacy resource center for districts and regions.

**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. What statewide data can be collected and analyzed to assess literacy outcomes?
2. How can state leaders ensure that all educators have access to the latest research and evidence-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment?
3. How can state leaders support educators in applying evidence-based practices to meet the diverse needs of all learners, including Multilingual Learners, Advanced Learners, Learners with Specialized Needs, and students from marginalized and disenfranchised communities?
4. How can state leaders create a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement around literacy instruction and assessment among educators at all levels of the education system?
5. As best practices and evidence-based research continues to evolve, how will ISBE ensure the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan considers longitudinal and current best practices?
6. What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?

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**GOAL 2**

Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Strategies that foster family engagement, such as literacy workshops, home reading programs, and regular communication between schools and parents to support children's literacy development should be encouraged and promoted.
- ✓ The allocation of resources, including funding, staffing, and materials, to support literacy education within a school, district, region, or state often indicate areas of strengths and weaknesses.
- ✓ Each community varies in its literacy awareness and engagement.
- ✓ Families, caregivers, and communities need support too.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Provide learning opportunities for parents and community members to share the reasoning behind a literacy plan and provide ways to support their children at home.
- ☐ Participate in training sessions and workshops to better understand and support students with diverse needs.
- ☐ Collaborate with local schools, childcare centers, libraries, or after-school programs to create literacy-focused family engagement programs and share expectations on literacy skill development.
- ☐ Organize community literacy events, book drives, or reading programs.
- ☐ Establish parent and caregiver workshops on supporting literacy development.
- ☐ Attend school board meetings and advocate for strong literacy policies.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How can the community play a role in supporting literacy initiatives?
2. What strategies can promote greater family involvement in literacy education?
3. What resources can be made available to parents and caregivers to support literacy at home?
4. How can partnerships with schools and districts enhance community literacy efforts?
5. Are there opportunities to engage in public advocacy for evidence-based literacy instruction?

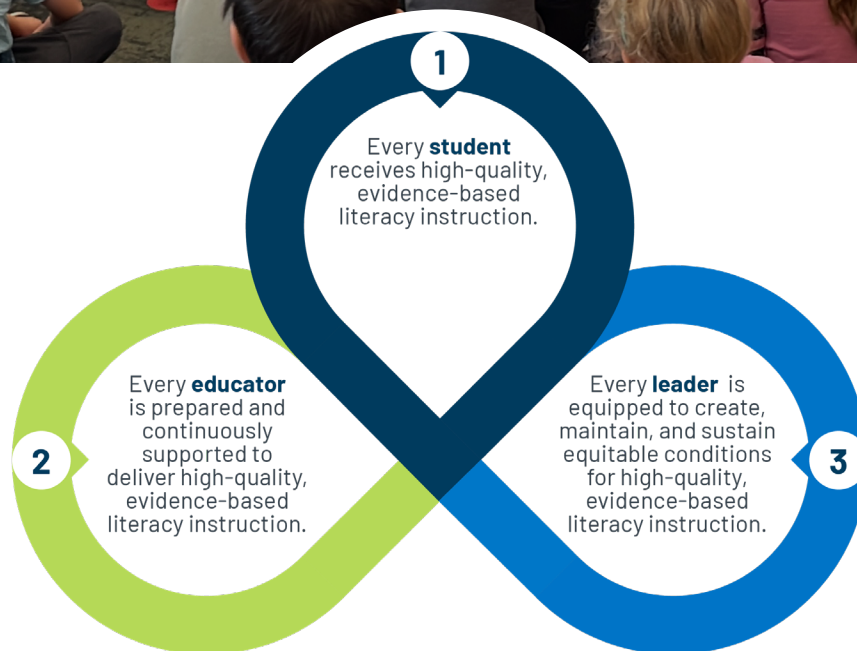
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# EFFECTIVE LITERACY LEADERSHIP

\*Photo from Prairie Trails School



**This section focuses on Goal 3: Every leader is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.**

Leaders across all levels of the educational system play a pivotal role. A solid foundation of literacy expertise within leadership is essential for cultivating an environment where all students become proficient readers and effective communicators.<sup>1</sup> This section delineates strategies for enhancing the capacity of leaders at the school and district levels across the diverse landscape of Illinois. The aim is to empower leaders to effectively champion evidence-based literacy instruction.

## Attending to Equity

At the core of this commitment to literacy success lies an unwavering dedication to equity. ISBE acknowledges that persistent disparities in literacy outcomes exist and offers a firm resolution to confront them head-on. A strategic approach to enhancing leadership capacity is anchored in principles of fairness, inclusivity, and justice.

Leaders across all levels must prioritize equity in their decision-making, recognizing the distinct needs of diverse students and working to dismantle systemic barriers to literacy achievement. This commitment to equity acknowledges the multifaceted identities and experiences of students, fostering a learning environment that serves the needs of all students.

Key actions for leaders to attend to equity include:

- **Promoting a Diverse Workforce:** Leaders should actively seek and support educators from a variety of backgrounds, enhancing the inclusivity and representation of the teaching staff.
- **Ensuring Inclusive Literacy Plan Development and Implementation:** Leaders must assemble diverse teams for literacy plan development and implementation, reflecting the student population's diversity and ensuring comprehensive strategies that cater to all students' needs.
- **Disaggregating Data to Unearth Inequities:** Leaders must analyze literacy achievement data across different student demographics systematically. This analysis enables targeted interventions and resource allocation to address identified disparities effectively.
- **Involving Students in Needs Assessment Processes:** Leaders should incorporate student input and perspectives in assessing literacy needs. This inclusion ensures that literacy initiatives are responsive to and reflective of the actual requirements and experiences of the student body.

ISBE appreciates the ongoing commitment of districts to adopt state and local equity-focused initiatives, with the aim of providing clear, explicit, and evidence-based guidance. The focus lies in supporting educators to implement these changes, encouraging all stakeholders to approach the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan with an asset-based mindset. The plan emphasizes the collective responsibility of all educators to help every student acquire adequate literacy skills by graduation. The components of literacy are found across all subjects and content areas for all students.

## **Foundations and Responsibilities of Effective Literacy Leadership**

Leaders capacity to lead for literacy begins with a solid base of knowledge and expertise. At its core, effective leadership in literacy instruction is about creating an environment where every student has the opportunity to become a proficient reader and a skilled communicator. This foundational knowledge is the bedrock upon which leaders can construct such an environment, and it serves multiple critical purposes.

Literacy Leaders have several important responsibilities:

- Maintain and uphold the current standards and practices in literacy instruction.
- Develop a forward-looking vision for the institution, focusing on achieving literacy excellence.
- Possess a comprehensive understanding of the key processes and practices essential for literacy success.
- Inspire and motivate teams to work collaboratively towards common literacy goals.
- Organize and lead teams in a cohesive manner, ensuring aligned efforts towards improving literacy outcomes.
- Manage and coordinate support and resources for effective implementation of literacy programs and initiatives.

Effective leaders realize that a dynamic approach that recognizes and harnesses the diverse values and expertise of various staff members, particularly those possessing essential literacy knowledge, is important. Schools that adopt the distributive leadership model, where decision making is dispersed from one individual to a team of leaders, tap into a wealth of talent distributed among educators. This collective leadership approach acknowledges that expertise is not confined to a select few. Schools that recognize and leverage the unique skills and insights of different staff members can enrich professional development opportunities. This collaborative approach ensures that the collective knowledge and experience of the entire staff are utilized to enhance literacy initiatives, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and continuous learning. The result is a school environment where each staff member is valued for their unique contributions, creating a more comprehensive and effective approach to literacy education.

## Strategic Leadership in Literacy

Strategic leadership in literacy encompasses a multifaceted approach, focusing on informed decision-making, providing tailored support to educational stakeholders, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement in literacy instruction.

- 1. Informed Decision-Making:** Leaders equipped with a deep understanding of effective evidence-based literacy instruction (see Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction) are poised to make well-informed decisions. They should have knowledge of evidence-based practices and literacy development and know where to look for guidance in sources such as trustworthy professional organizations, national centers, etc.
- 2. Tailored Support:** Leadership isn't just about setting directions; it's about understanding the unique needs and roles of various stakeholders within the educational landscape. Proficiency in literacy instruction allows leaders to provide tailored support to teachers, specialists, and support staff through educator professional learning and development. They can identify gaps in knowledge or skills and provide targeted resources and guidance, thus ensuring that each member of the team is equipped to contribute effectively to literacy development.

Visibility and engagement of leadership is essential for collaborating with staff and effectively responding to their professional needs, particularly within instructional blocks and Professional Learning Communities. Active engagement by leadership in professional learning also supports the ability to respond to the needs of staff.

Administrators must prioritize strategies that equip educators with essential training in language acquisition, differentiation, and resource utilization to effectively support our diverse population of multilingual students. This approach aims to create an inclusive learning environment that fosters both academic success and linguistic development among multilingual students.

- 3. Continuous Improvement:** The field of literacy is ever evolving, characterized by regularly emerging research and practices. Leaders with expertise in literacy instruction understand the necessity for ongoing learning and improvement. They establish a culture of continuous professional development and growth, underpinned by a commitment to improvement science. Improvement science is a systematic approach that seeks to understand and improve educational practices through iterative testing and refinement in various contexts. It involves recognizing the variability of practice implementation and emphasizes continuous monitoring and adaptation to optimize educational outcomes in specific environments.

In essence, leaders who acquire a deep understanding of literacy instruction are important because of their ability to effectively lead, support, and inspire those within their purview. <sup>2</sup>

## Leadership Levers to Promote Literacy Success

Leaders who want to cultivate an environment conducive to evidence-based literacy instruction should consider the following levers as they apply to the specific local system in which they are operating.

### Cultivate a Passion for Literacy

Empower the educational system to instill a culture that underscores literacy as a paramount priority. Encourage the articulation of clear expectations, the nurturing of enthusiasm for reading, and the seamless integration of literacy objectives into the broader educational spectrum.

Fostering [family and community engagement](#) as it relates to literacy is important. It is widely acknowledged that learning begins at birth and takes place in the home, school, and community. Meaningful family engagement is based on the premise that parents, educators, and community members share responsibility for the academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development of students. Family engagement is nurtured through a deliberate process that is embraced throughout the school. It empowers adults to jointly support student growth, addresses any barriers to learning, and ensures college and career readiness. Foremost, effective family engagement systems, policies, and practices include diverse school communities that are rich in language, culture, and school experiences that respond to student and family needs.

Family and community engagement plays a crucial role in fortifying literacy opportunities for students. The involvement of families and communities in a child's educational journey supports a dynamic system that extends beyond the classroom. A cohesive approach to literacy emerges when open lines of communication and collaboration between educators, families, and communities are cultivated. Families, as a child's first educators, can provide invaluable insights into a student's unique learning needs, while community resources can supplement and enrich the educational experience. When families actively participate in literacy-related activities and community initiatives, students witness the significance of reading and writing in real-world contexts. This interconnected approach not only reinforces the importance of literacy but also encourages a collaborative and nurturing environment.

School and community libraries should be considered as integral elements in fostering a shared enthusiasm for literacy within educational settings, at home, and throughout the broader community. School and community libraries play a vital role in promoting literacy by collaborating with schools for events like book fairs and author visits, fostering a reading culture. Beyond the academic setting, they extend their impact by offering family literacy programs and partnering with local organizations, creating a communitywide enthusiasm for reading.

### Prioritize Tailored Professional Learning

Implement educator professional learning initiatives that delve deeply into the nuances of evidence-based literacy best practices and the most current research findings. Tailor these initiatives to the distinctive requisites and roles within the educational system.

### Encourage Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Encourage educators at every level to engage in fruitful collaborations with literacy experts, researchers, and educators – both internal and external to their respective institutions. Encourage the sharing of ideas and practices to enrich the collective consciousness of literacy instruction.

### Strengthen Data-Informed Decision-Making Skills

Foster a culture of data-informed decision-making. Encourage the use of data for decisions in education by ensuring all educators can analyze literacy data effectively. This enables educators to make informed choices about curriculum, teaching methods, and interventions, ensuring fair support for all students. Assessment,

including diagnostic, formative, summative, and evaluative assessments, plays a crucial role in this process, providing insights for continuous improvement in education.<sup>3</sup> The role of a leader is to ensure staff understand the purpose of assessment and the results from crafting individual instruction using data-informed decision-making.

### **Undertake Equity Appraisals**

Conduct comprehensive equity assessments designed to identify and inform solutions for inequities in literacy outcomes across different student groups. This examination should consider existing policies, resource allocation practices, and instructional strategies.

School leaders should review the master schedule to ensure sufficient time is allocated for literacy instruction and intervention, as well as supplemental literacy supports for literacy for MLs, learners with specialized education needs, and advanced learners.

### **Champion Culturally Sustaining Literacy Instruction**

Provide leaders guidance and resources for the skillful implementation of culturally responsive literacy instruction, one that both respects and reflects the rich cultural backgrounds represented among the student population.<sup>4</sup>

### **Benchmark Performance**

Establish clear and visible performance benchmarks concerning literacy outcomes and equity. These benchmarks may form the foundation for assessing the competence of individual leaders.

### **Engage in Continuous Feedback and Sustained Support**

Institute mechanisms for the provision of structured feedback and steadfast support of all educators. This strategic commitment will facilitate a process of continual improvement in leadership aptitude within the context of literacy instruction.<sup>5</sup>

### **Align Leadership**

Establish a robust connection between district and building leadership with school board members. This is pivotal for fostering collaborative efforts to support literacy initiatives. Aligning leadership at all levels enables the cultivation of a unified vision for literacy education, ensuring consistent and strategic implementation of initiatives. Regular communication and collaboration between these key stakeholders facilitate the sharing of insights, resources, and expertise. This interconnected approach not only enhances the overall effectiveness of literacy programs, but also demonstrates a collective commitment to advancing educational outcomes. Shared leadership allows district administrators, building leaders, and school board members to collectively drive a comprehensive and sustainable approach to literacy that positively impacts students across the educational spectrum.

### **In Summary**

Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership emphasizes the critical role of leadership in shaping environments conducive to high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction. It underscores the necessity of a deep understanding of literacy instruction principles among leaders at all levels. This section presents a comprehensive framework for leaders to cultivate a strong literacy culture, including tailored support for educators, engagement with families and communities, and a focus on equity. Leaders are encouraged to use data-informed decision-making, promote interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuously seek improvement in literacy practices. The section highlights the importance of creating a unified literacy vision across different levels of leadership and underscores the need for continuous feedback, professional development, and aligning leadership efforts towards literacy success. This framework aims to guide leaders in creating an inclusive, equitable, and literacy-rich educational environment, ultimately contributing to enhanced literacy outcomes for all students.

### Deeper Exploration

These are texts suggested through public engagements that demonstrate greatest alignment to this section of the literacy plan. The following resources delve further into the topics covered in this section and offer additional context for this work:

- *Leading a Culture of Reading* by Lorraine M. Radice
- *Five Practices for Equity-Focused School Leadership* by Sharon I. Radd, Gretchen Givens Generett, Mark Anthony Gooden
- *Know Better Do Better* by David Liben and Meredith Liben
- *How to Plan Differentiated Reading Instruction: Resources for Grades K-3* by Sharon Walpole and Michael C. McKenna
- *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom* by Lisa Delpit

# Goal 3

## WORKBOOK

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Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

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### GOAL 3

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

#### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering a culture of literacy within their classrooms and school communities.
- ✓ Equipping teachers with the knowledge and tools to promote literacy empowers them to be effective agents of change.
- ✓ Collaboration among teachers, teacher leaders, and other stakeholders is essential for creating a comprehensive literacy-supportive environment.

#### Next Steps

- ☐ Attend professional development workshops focused on literacy instruction.
- ☐ Collaborate with colleagues to share effective literacy strategies and resources.
- ☐ Engage in ongoing assessment and reflection of literacy practices in the classroom.

### NOTES

**Reflection Questions**

1. How can I integrate literacy promotion into my subject-specific instruction and classroom routines?
2. What professional development opportunities can help me enhance my literacy instruction skills?
3. How can I collaborate with teacher leaders and administrators to align classroom practices with literacy goals?

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**GOAL 3**

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ The entire school community must work together to curate opportunities for a home-to-school connection by providing opportunities for literacy-based programming, access to a school library, or by creating additional literacy access points for students in and out of the school learning environment.
- ✓ Teacher leaders serve as instructional experts and advocates for literacy excellence in their schools.
- ✓ Empowering teacher leaders with leadership skills and literacy expertise amplifies their influence on peers.
- ✓ Mentorship and collaboration with teachers are essential components of teacher leaders' roles in shaping literacy conditions.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ School administrators can hire certified teacher leaders who are specialists in their field and create systems of support for classroom teachers and students.
- ☐ Facilitate professional learning communities focused on literacy improvement.
- ☐ Seek opportunities for leadership training and development.
- ☐ Mentor and coach teachers in literacy best practices.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How can teacher leaders streamline curricular goals and focus on effective literacy strategies and initiatives?
2. How can I support fellow teachers in implementing evidence-based literacy practices?
3. What leadership skills do I need to effectively advocate for literacy excellence in my school?
4. How can I foster a culture of continuous improvement in literacy instruction?

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**GOAL 3**

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Leadership should understand the history of literacy achievement in the building.
- ✓ Leadership has an opportunity to create the conditions for learning, which is key for all students to achieve grade level literacy standards.
- ✓ As a school builds out their strategy to achieve higher levels of literacy success, they should examine current initiatives and obligations and remove those which have not been successful or are duplicative efforts.
- ✓ School leaders are crucial in establishing a school-wide commitment to literacy success.
- ✓ Effective leadership requires a deep understanding of literacy research and best practices.
- ✓ School leaders play a pivotal role in allocating resources to support literacy initiatives.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Foster relationships and use discussion protocols to analyze the data with staff.
- ☐ Streamline school efforts to align with improved literacy practices.
- ☐ Engage in a continuous improvement cycle.
- ☐ Develop a school-wide literacy plan aligned with the state's goals.
- ☐ Provide leadership training for teachers and teacher leaders.
- ☐ Regularly monitor and assess the effectiveness of literacy initiatives within the school.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How will literacy leaders within the school be developed and utilized?
2. Can building level MTSS data be utilized to document student growth?
3. How can the local literacy plan overlap with current initiatives, such as School Improvement Plans?
4. How can I create a school culture that prioritizes literacy as a foundation for all learning?
5. What professional development can enhance my literacy leadership skills?
6. How can I allocate resources to provide teachers with the tools and materials needed for literacy instruction?

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**GOAL 3**

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ District leaders should consider developing a feedback loop for checking in and monitoring implementation.
- ✓ Teachers need to be deeply and meaningfully engaged in district planning work.
- ✓ Literacy is the bedrock of achievement. The district must take bold steps to align district efforts so schools are not unnecessarily overwhelmed with a myriad of different initiatives.
- ✓ Data should be used to signal improvements and separated from measures of accountability.
- ✓ Engaging teachers and district leaders collaboratively in the work will facilitate transparency and connect closely to the daily work of the schools.
- ✓ District leaders shape policies and allocate resources to support literacy initiatives across schools.
- ✓ Collaboration with schools and communities is essential for district-wide literacy success.
- ✓ Data-driven decision-making and assessment are key components of effective district leadership in literacy.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Build leadership capacity within schools.
- ☐ Establish principal support groups.
- ☐ Consider piloting implementation to learn what works best.
- ☐ Initiate a Request for Proposal process with curriculum providers.
- ☐ Collaborate with school leaders to develop district-wide literacy benchmarks and goals.
- ☐ Establish regular communication channels for sharing best practices and successes.
- ☐ Allocate funding and resources strategically to support district-wide literacy initiatives.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. Where is overlap evident in the current systems and structures?
2. What demonstrates effectiveness in our current systems and structures and what can be eliminated?
3. How are openness and transparency demonstrated in the actions of district leaders?
4. How can I align district policies and resources to support literacy from pre-K through 12th grade?
5. What partnerships can be forged with schools, regional leaders, and community partners to strengthen literacy efforts?
6. How can I ensure equitable access to literacy resources and opportunities for all students?

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### GOAL 3

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

#### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ Stakeholders may have varying levels of comprehension when it comes to the state literacy plan. It is essential to ensure that clarity is uniform across all target audiences.
- ✓ Recognize the vast diversity of the state while acknowledging that each school and community commitment to literacy will vary.
- ✓ Through data, community, engagement, analysis and strategies, implementation, and accountability and communication must remain at the center of the work ahead.
- ✓ Regional leaders serve as connectors between districts, schools, and the state education system.
- ✓ Collaboration among regional leaders fosters a unified approach to literacy improvement.
- ✓ Supporting district leaders in implementing state literacy goals is a core responsibility.

#### Next Steps

- ☐ Organize regional conferences or workshops focused on literacy best practices.
- ☐ Foster partnerships between districts and community organizations to expand literacy resources.
- ☐ Advocate for state-level support for regional literacy initiatives.

### NOTES

### Reflection Questions

1. How will regional leaders communicate and update the districts in your region regarding the Comprehensive Literacy Plan?
2. How will regional leaders identify localized support needed across districts?
3. How can I facilitate collaboration among districts to share effective literacy strategies and resources?
4. What regional professional development opportunities can support district and school leaders in their literacy efforts?
5. How can I advocate for regional initiatives that align with the state's literacy vision?

**GOAL 3**

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Varying levels of understanding and acceptance of the Comprehensive Literacy Plan.
- ✓ ROE/ISC office staff are integral in supporting the implementation of the literacy plan as an intermediary between ISBE and local districts.
- ✓ State leaders provide the overarching vision and guidance for literacy education statewide.
- ✓ Aligning state policies, standards, and assessments with literacy goals is fundamental.
- ✓ State leaders are instrumental in driving systemic change for literacy success.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Collaborate with teacher preparation programs to ensure they are aligning longitudinal and current evidenced-based practices when providing literacy instruction to preservice teachers.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for educators to work together, share best practices, and provide feedback on each other's instructional and assessment practices.
- ☐ Establish clear criteria and standards for evaluating literacy initiatives and programs to ensure they align with state priorities and goals for literacy development.
- ☐ Develop and communicate statewide literacy standards and guidelines.
- ☐ Invest in research to identify and promote effective literacy programs.
- ☐ Collaborate with educators, researchers, and policymakers to create a cohesive statewide literacy strategy.

**NOTES**

### Reflection Questions

1. How can state leaders ensure that all literacy initiatives and programs align with the state's goals and priorities for literacy development?
2. How can state leaders support schools and districts in prioritizing and focusing their efforts on the most effective literacy strategies and initiatives?
3. How can state leaders create a system for assessing the effectiveness of literacy initiatives and programs, and making data-driven decisions about whether to continue or modify them?
4. What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?
5. How can I engage with other states to learn from their successful literacy programs?

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**GOAL 3**

Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Local schools need to be explicit on their view surrounding literacy. Information regarding educational goals, initiatives, and expectations should be shared freely with informal learning partners in the community.
- ✓ Community and family partners play a vital role in supporting literacy beyond the school environment.
- ✓ Collaboration between schools, families, and community organizations enhances students' access to literacy resources.
- ✓ Engaging families in literacy activities strengthens the home-school connection.

**Next Steps**

- ☐ Collaborate with local policymakers and education authorities to advocate for fair resource allocation that ensures equitable access to literacy support.
- ☐ Establish a parent and caregiver support group or committee to facilitate engagement in literacy activities.
- ☐ Communicate regularly with the school to stay informed about literacy initiatives and opportunities for involvement.
- ☐ Establish literacy-focused community programs or initiatives.
- ☐ Collaborate with schools to host literacy-related events and workshops for families.
- ☐ Advocate for policies that promote literacy engagement within the community.


**NOTES**

**Reflection Questions**

1. How can our organization or group contribute to improving literacy outcomes for students?
2. What literacy resources and programs can we provide to support schools and families?
3. How can we empower parents and caregivers to become active participants in their child's literacy journey?

### End Notes for Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership

1. Allensworth, E.M., and H Hart. "[How Do Principals Influence Student Achievement?](#)" *Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Consortium on School Research.*, 2018.
2. Leithwood, Kenneth, Alma Harris, and David Hopkins. "[Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership.](#)" *School Leadership & Management* 28, no. 1 (February 2008): 27–42.
3. Greenleaf, Cynthia, Ruth Schoenbach, Linda Friedrich, Lynn Murphy, and Nika Hogan. *Reading for Understanding: How Reading Apprenticeship Improves Disciplinary Learning in Secondary and College Classrooms*. Third edition. San Francisco: Hoboken, New Jersey: Jossey-Bass; John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2023.
4. Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, Calif: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2009.
5. [How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition](#). Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2000.



# SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

\*Photo from Diamond Lake School District 76

**This section provides guidance in the form of suggestions for reflections and discussion at different levels to ensure that every system is aligned to promote literacy success by streamlining and focusing initiatives on literacy.**

The primary goal in this section of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan is crystal clear: To ensure that every system is aligned and dedicated to promoting literacy success for all students at every grade level. It is imperative that districts streamline and focus initiatives on literacy instruction. By doing so, districts empower students with the essential skills and knowledge they need to thrive academically, professionally, and personally. This workbook-style section is designed to guide educators, administrators, and stakeholders in reflecting on the current practices within districts and schools, recognizing the importance of alignment in literacy education and providing actionable strategies to bring about positive change.

## Attending to Equity

Equity is prioritized by recognizing that literacy success cannot be achieved without addressing systemic disparities. Improving literacy instruction is one crucial approach to addressing these disparities, ensuring all individuals have the opportunity to develop essential reading and writing skills. Aligning the entire system to prioritize the elimination of barriers and biases that hinder access to quality literacy instruction and resources is necessary. Students come from diverse backgrounds, each with unique needs, strengths, and challenges. This commitment means actively working to provide additional support and resources to those who need it most to ensure that every child, regardless of their background, can acquire adequate literacy skills by graduation. Thoughtful reflection and action can enable districts to create a system in which every student has an equitable opportunity to excel in literacy, setting the stage for a brighter future for all while making equity a central guiding principle.

## Next Steps

Identifying literacy leaders within districts is crucial for informed decision-making, data review, and effective planning in education. Literacy leaders may be serving as teachers, reading specialists, resource teachers, principals, school librarians, or other roles within districts. These leaders, equipped with a deep understanding

of literacy dynamics, curriculum development, and instructional strategies, play a pivotal role in shaping and implementing successful literacy initiatives. Their presence at the decision-making table ensures that the unique challenges and opportunities related to literacy are addressed comprehensively. Involving these leaders in data review processes means their insights contribute to a nuanced understanding of student needs and program effectiveness. Their participation in planning initiatives guarantees that literacy goals align with broader curricular outcomes. In essence, having literacy leaders actively engaged in these key aspects of educational governance promotes a holistic and targeted approach to advancing literacy outcomes within the district.

Individuals should consider the questions at the end of this section from specific roles and perspectives and consider what leverages exist that can implement change and transform local systems.

## **Local Funding Considerations**

Blending and braiding funds are essential strategies for optimizing literacy outcomes in a school district. Blending consolidates financial assistance into a unified framework, streamlining reporting and administrative processes for more efficient resource management. This approach provides a comprehensive view of the impact on literacy programs. Conversely, braiding funds involves coordinating resources while preserving each funding source's identity. This strategy allows for tailored interventions, addressing specific literacy needs with a nuanced understanding of each source's contribution. Together, these approaches offer a flexible and strategic financial framework, promoting efficiency and targeted improvements in literacy initiatives.

[Targeted, Comprehensive, and Intensive Schools](#) receiving Title 1, Part A Section 1003 School Improvement Grant funding may wish to consider the leverage of resources to impact literacy outcomes. The purpose of the funding is to build the capacity of school leaders to implement effective school improvement practices. The goal is to enable schools that are engaged in improvement status to raise student achievement, to increase performance outcomes, and to exit status. Funding must be used to develop, implement, and monitor School Improvement Plans. A key part of this process is building the knowledge, skills, and competencies of the adults in the school's system. Increasing adult capacity is a critical step to improving outcomes for all students.

## **In Summary**

This section of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan serves as a guide for enhancing literacy success across educational systems. It stresses the importance of aligning and committing all systems to improve literacy for students at every level. Key focuses include streamlining district-level literacy initiatives and fostering a culture of reflective practice among educators, administrators, and stakeholders. The section adopts a workbook-style approach to facilitate this reflective process, aiming to align literacy education and propose practical, actionable strategies for improvement. A significant emphasis is placed on equity, addressing systemic disparities to ensure all students, regardless of their background, achieve literacy proficiency. It also highlights the pivotal role of literacy leaders in guiding decision-making, analyzing data, and formulating effective literacy strategies. Furthermore, the section delves into financial strategies like blending and braiding funds to enhance literacy programs.

### Deeper Exploration

These are texts suggested through public engagements that demonstrate greatest alignment to this section of the literacy plan. The following resources delve further into the topics covered in this section and offer additional context for this work:

- *Literacy Across the Community: Research, Praxis, and Trends* by Laurie A Henry, Norman A. Stahl
- *Coherence: The Right Drivers in Action for Schools, Districts, and Systems* by Joanne Quinn and Michael Fullan
- *Unlocking Literacy* by Marcia Henry
- *Literacy Is Liberation* by Kimberly N. Parker
- *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain: Promoting Authentic Engagement and Rigor Among Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students* by Zaretta Hammond

*The following reflections and guiding questions are provided as a resource to help you build on the information provided in the previous sections of this plan.*

## Assessing Your Current Literacy Landscape

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**Reflection:** What are the **strengths** of the school or district? Consider what school/district/state data suggests and challenges faced by current literacy programs.

### Guiding Questions:

1. How can **strengths** be built upon and challenges addressed?
2. What **evidence-based instructional strategies** need to be incorporated?
3. What programs does the school/district have in place to support the needs of various **learners**, including learners who are from varying cultural backgrounds, multilingual learners, high-incidence special needs learners, advanced learners, and learners from the range of ages and grade levels?

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**Reflection:** What patterns or trends can be observed through **student performance data** (examining a range of years/school level/district/state)? Close attention should be paid to the lowest performing sub-groups of students, as their performance may reflect most clearly on the strength of the school/district's literacy instruction. Disaggregation of assessment data should be completed by, but not limited to, the following categories:

- Grade levels and cohorts, as appropriate.
- Student demographic identifiers: race/ethnicity, low income, homelessness, migrant status.
- Special programming enrollment: Individualized Education Program/504 Plan students, English learner designations, Title 1 service identification, and identification for advanced learner programs.

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**Guiding Questions:**

1. How can this data inform **literacy improvement** efforts?
2. How do assessment tools align across grade levels to **build** a coherent system?
3. What type of **data** is being collected at each grade level?
4. How can this data **inform** literacy improvement efforts?
5. Does the data **align** with what we know about literacy development?
6. Are benchmark assessments evaluating **key literacy components** for each grade level?
7. Are these assessments identifying students in need or evaluating **student growth** in literacy components?

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**Reflection:** Who are the key **stakeholders** in the literacy initiative of the school or district?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. How can the school/district involve these stakeholders in **shaping** the local literacy plan?
2. How can the school/district communicate the process of instructional shifts in **teaching** literacy and what considerations will be made for the building towards buy-in of the local literacy plan?

Setting Clear Goals  
**Defining Your Vision  
and Mission**

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**Reflection:** What is envisioned for literacy experiences in the school/district and how will these lead to improved **student outcomes**?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How can a clear **vision and mission** guide the local literacy plan?

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**Reflection:** What specific **literacy goals** are most critical for students in your school/district?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How will progress be measured toward the **achievement** of these goals?

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**Reflection:** Who should be included on the literacy **leadership team**?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. How can **diverse expertise** benefit literacy efforts in your school/district?
2. How will outside expertise/experience be identified/used to augment/support the literacy **leadership team** in its work?

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**Reflection:** How well does the current curriculum **align** with state standards?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What changes or enhancements are needed for **alignment**?
2. How will the alignment provide insight into necessary professional learning tied to **improved outcomes** for students?

**Print me!**

**Reflection:** Are there evidence-based instructional **strategies** that can be incorporated?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How can teachers use these strategies to **engage students** in order to build upon student assets and interests?

Aligned Supports  
**Assessment and Progress  
Monitoring**

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**Reflection:** What assessment tools will help track **student growth**?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How, when, and in what form can assessment **data** guide instructional adjustments?

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**Reflection:** How can **local resources** (e.g., considerations for time, money, or space) be allocated strategically for maximum impact?

**Guiding Question:**

1. What **resources** are essential for successful implementation of a local literacy plan?

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**Reflection:** What **professional learning** opportunities do local educators need in order to deliver high-quality evidence-based literacy instruction? How can these opportunities be built over time?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. How will ongoing training **support** the local literacy plan?
2. What is the cadence for **training**?
3. How might the school/district differentiate **training** based upon staff need, expertise, or topic?

## Implementation Considerations

### Family and Community Engagement

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**Reflection:** How can the school/district actively **involve** families and the community in literacy?

#### Guiding Questions:

1. What strategies will enhance family and community **partnerships** to strengthen the importance of literacy?
2. What **connections** can be made with school and community librarians to support literacy?

**Print me!**

**Reflection:** How will the school/district ensure transparent and **effective communication** and easy access to providing feedback?

**Guiding Question:**

1. What channels and **methods** will be most effective to ensure that all who wish to share perspective are able to do so?

**Print me!**

**Reflection:** How will local/district/state data be utilized to inform **decisions** throughout the implementation of the local literacy plan? What is the cadence in which data will be considered?

**Guiding Question:**

1. What processes need to be in place to ensure **data-driven decision-making** to guide the implementation of the local literacy plan?

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**Reflection:** How often will the effectiveness of the plan be **evaluated**?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. What **indicators** will be used to measure success?
2. How will these **indicators** be identified?
3. How do the **metrics** tie to the purpose of the local literacy plan?

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**Reflection:** How will the local plan be **adapted** and refined as needed?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How can flexibility contribute to **long-term success**?

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**Reflection:** What **key elements** must be included in the final plan?

**Guiding Question:**

1. How can schools/districts ensure the plan is **comprehensive**?

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**Reflection:** What is a realistic timeline for **executing** the plan?

**Guiding Questions:**

1. How will you **prioritize** tasks to meet the goals?
2. What smaller timeline **goals** are necessary for executing the plan?
3. How will the school/district continually support individuals who join the district throughout the implementation timeline to ensure they are adequately equipped with the necessary resources, training, and mentorship to seamlessly integrate into the educational environment and contribute to the district's **goals and objectives**?



# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

\*Photo from Fremont School District 79

This section of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan offers a list of tools and resources designed to support districts, teachers, and families as we all work to enhance literacy education across the state. It is important to note that Illinois is a locally controlled state, and as such, school districts have the responsibility to identify resources that align with their unique needs and state mandates.

The Illinois State Board of Education does not endorse specific curriculum or paid resources. Instead, the tools and resources provided in this list are a compilation of materials that complement the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

It is important to emphasize that this section is a work in progress. ISBE will continue to expand and update it with available resources on the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan [webpage](#).

## Attending to Equity

It is imperative that the tools and resources offered in this section reflect a commitment to fostering educational equity and meet the diverse needs of all students. Every student's journey to literacy proficiency is uniquely influenced by a myriad of factors outside the school's locus of control, including cultural background, learning differences, school setting/geographic location, and socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, ISBE encourages school districts, educators, and parents to select resources that not only align with local educational goals but also take into account the individual needs and identities of students. Inclusivity and diversity should be at the forefront of resource selection, ensuring that all learners have access to materials that resonate with their experiences, affirm their identities, and support the development of literacy in multiple languages. ISBE's aims to empower educators and families to make informed choices that promote equitable educational outcomes for all students.

Districts should consider ISBE's [Equity Journey Continuum](#) as an informational tool to help view their data through the lens of equity. It identifies gaps in student achievement, opportunities, and supports by analyzing data that districts already collect and report to ISBE. The tool makes the data more useful for districts to improve outcomes for students. ISBE developed the tool using national research and examples from other states.

*For ease of access, the resources below are organized by plan section.*

## **The resources listed below can provide additional information, support, and guidance related to the Introduction, Vision, and Purpose.**

The federal [Every Student Succeeds Act \(ESSA\)](#) requires states to assess their learning standards for English language arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. Each state also may have a general assessment for the majority of its students and an alternate assessment for the 1 percent of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. ESSA also requires that Multilingual learners (MLs) be assessed in four domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) each year until they reach proficiency.

From the [Illinois ESSA Plan](#): “In Illinois, we believe that a universal culture of high expectations is fundamental to creating and supporting the conditions that provide the best opportunities for all students. ESSA fosters the conditions for Illinois to implement a holistic, comprehensive, and coordinated system of support that prepares each and every student for academic excellence and postsecondary success. Illinois is using the opportunities provided through ESSA to reduce barriers to learning in order to achieve fair access to high-quality educational opportunities for each and every child.” The ISBE [Assessment Department](#) oversees the assessment of students in Illinois.

The [Illinois Report Card](#) is published annually by the Illinois State Board of Education. It shows how the state as a whole, each school, and every public school district are progressing on a wide range of educational goals. The Report Card offers a complete picture of student and school performance to inform and empower families and communities as they support their local schools.

[My Data Dashboard](#) is a tool that provides administrators and teachers with detailed data related to critical performance metrics. The goal of this tool is to support data-driven decision-making and deepen understandings of how data can be used within the state, districts, schools, and classrooms.

[Public Act 103-0402](#) requires the following: “In consultation with education stakeholders, the State Board of Education shall develop and adopt a comprehensive literacy plan for the State on or before January 31, 2024.”

## **Introduction Workbook Pages**

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## **The resources listed below can provide additional information, support, and guidance related to Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction**

*Supports provided by the Illinois State Board of Education include:*

The ISBE [Standards and Instruction Department](#) is committed to supporting Illinois schools and educators by providing tools, resources, and professional learning on the identification and utilization of high-quality instructional materials to increase student achievement and equitable learning outcomes.

The Standards and Instruction Department also provides guidance pertaining to [advanced learners](#).

The ISBE [Specialized Instruction Department](#) oversees administers programs, operations, and staff within the departments of Early Childhood Development, Multilingual/Language Development, Special Education Operational Support, and Special Education Programmatic Support.

ISBE released a revised edition of [The Dyslexia Guide: A Handbook for Parents, Educators, and Students](#) in

December of 2023. The purpose of this handbook is to provide information and guidance for educational professionals, school leaders, families, guardians, and students themselves on the subject of dyslexia. The handbook provides:

- Guidelines for teachers and parents or guardians on how to identify signs of dyslexia,
- A description of educational strategies that have been shown to improve the academic performance of students with dyslexia, and
- A description of resources and services available to students with dyslexia and their parents or guardians.

Schools should utilize this handbook to design or revise professional learning, instructional practices, and processes related to effectively serving students with dyslexia and other related disorders. In addition, this handbook addresses the social-emotional needs of children and adolescents with dyslexia and those who struggle to learn to read. The overall intent of this effort is to explain dyslexia by educating and empowering all stakeholders with information and resources to strengthen service provision and increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.

Handbook users may consider utilizing this handbook alone or in conjunction with the [Dyslexia Toolkit](#), which is an ever-evolving collection of additional resources that can be accessed via the [SLD Support Project](#) website. The toolkit is a source of information where one can find websites; books; videos; and other resources, such as podcasts, that supplement the Illinois Dyslexia Handbook.

The ISBE [Multilingual/Language Development Department](#) provides leadership, advocacy, and support to districts, parents, and policymakers by promoting equitable access to language support services for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have been identified as English learners.

[Public Act 103-0362](#) amends the State Board of Education Article of the School Code and provides that the State Board of Education shall deliver a report to the General Assembly on how to incentivize dual language instruction in schools. The Act specifies that the report also shall include (i) expanding dual language programs and instruction; (ii) developing a strategic plan for scaling dual language programs; (iii) possible public-private partnerships to expand dual language programs; (iv) potential funding mechanisms and models, including how to leverage the use of existing state and federal resources and how to sustain funding for dual language programs; (v) how to build the supply of qualified teachers for dual language programs, including potential partnerships with private or nonprofit teacher preparation or development programs and college teacher preparation programs, potential alternative certification routes, exchange programs with other countries, and financial incentives; and (vi) standards for measuring student progress in dual language programs.

The opportunity for MLs to earn the [Seal of Biliteracy](#) recognizes the deep linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge that students bring to our schools and validates the efforts of their teachers, families, communities, and themselves to preserve and even expand their fluency in their home language while also mastering English. Students can earn the Seal of Biliteracy or Commendation in multiple languages. The [annual report](#) on the Seal of Biliteracy program shows a significant increase in the number of different languages Illinois students have mastered – from 38 in 2022 up to 51 in 2023.

Both the Seal and Commendation count toward foreign language course credits at any public college or university in Illinois. The Seal and Commendation on students' resumes prove they will bring extra talent and perspective to any job. Earning the Seal of Biliteracy exempts students who want to become bilingual teachers in Illinois from taking further language proficiency tests toward a Bilingual endorsement. Additional information on how schools

may offer the Seal of Biliteracy in this [program overview](#) and on the [ISBE website](#).

The [Early Childhood Department](#) provides leadership and technical assistance to support state programs serving children from prenatal to age 8 and their families. State Prevention Initiative, Preschool for All, and Preschool for All Expansion grants, and a variety of resources for parents, teachers, and administrators are among services that are provided.

The ISBE [Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Department](#) is a dedicated team of education professionals working to provide high-quality educational programs, resources, and training for all Illinois students, teachers, and administrators. The CTE Department provides a blend of academic and CTE educational guidance, leadership, and technical assistance to local districts and regional staff that is designed to support and enhance opportunities for students to be ready for future careers.

***Additional information and resources for effective evidence-based literacy instruction and practices include:***

The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) is an investment of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) within the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that was established in 2002. The work of the What Works Clearinghouse is managed by a team of staff at IES and conducted under a set of contracts held by several leading firms with expertise in education, research methodology, and the dissemination of education research.

The [Florida Center for Reading Research](#) is a multidisciplinary research center at Florida State University that was established in 2002 by the Governor's Office and the Legislature. [Educators](#) can find resources to support their knowledge and practice to make evidence-based decisions to improve reading outcomes for all learners.

The [University of Florida Literacy Institute](#) (UFLI) is an ongoing effort by University of Florida faculty, students, and staff to improve literacy outcomes for children learning to read. The work of UFLI focuses on two main areas: teacher development and reader development.

The [International Literacy Association](#) is a professional organization with a mission of connecting research and practice to continuously improve the quality of literacy instruction across the globe. Research-based [resources](#) are provided by literacy topic.

The [National Coalition for Literacy](#) is an alliance of the leading national and regional organizations dedicated to advancing adult education, family literacy, and English language acquisition in the United States.

The [National Center on Improving Literacy](#), operated by Boston University's Wheelock College of Education and Human Development with funding from ED, is a partnership among literacy experts, university researchers, and technical assistance providers from the University of Oregon, Florida State University, and RMC Research Corp. Resources are provided for parents/families, schools/districts, and state agencies.

The [Illinois Media Literacy Coalition](#) is a group of educators, practitioners, and scholars dedicated to improving media literacy education in the state of Illinois.

The [Illinois MTSS Network](#) provides high-quality professional learning and coaching for schools and districts in order to develop and sustain a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). MTSS is a framework for continuous improvement that is systemic, prevention-focused, and data-informed, providing a coherent continuum of supports to meet the needs of all learners.

The [Multitiered System of Supports for English Learners](#) provides model demonstration research sponsored by the ED Office of Special Education Programs.

[The Center: Resources for Teaching and Learning](#) is a not-for-profit organization that serves as the umbrella organization for specific programs that address different, but often related, aspects of high-quality education for students who may be at risk of academic failure. This includes students of all ages from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds — English learners, including adults; young children at risk of failure because of poverty, family issues, disabilities, or other circumstances; refugee and immigrant populations; and others.

The [Self-Assessment of MTSS Implementation](#) is a needs assessment tool that helps leadership teams understand the status of MTSS implementation at the school level. The tool supports teams to engage in active discussions to identify strengths and challenges in current MTSS implementation. It is designed to help the local system identify current practices, areas of strength, and areas for growth and refinement, and enable faculty and staff to prioritize and focus resources on those areas in need of the most attention or support.

The [Newcomer Toolkit](#), provided by ED, is a comprehensive resource designed to assist educators and community members in supporting immigrant and refugee students, referred to as multilingual learners. This toolkit is particularly valuable for state, local, and school leaders, as well as general education educators who work directly with newcomers.

### [Workbook Pages Section 1](#)

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## **[The resources listed below can provide additional information, support, and guidance related to Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development](#)**

The ISBE [Educator Licensure](#) team processes and issues licenses for teachers, school support personnel, administrators, paraprofessionals, and substitute teachers. It oversees the state's educator preparation programs and all aspects of educator license renewal. The department collaborates with institutions of higher education, Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers, and other stakeholders on licensure initiatives. It researches and implements strategies to address the teacher shortage.

The [Illinois Educator Preparation Profile](#) (IEPP) offers a glimpse into the strength and quality of educator preparation programs across the state. The IEPP is a valuable tool for prospective educators, PK-12 administrators involved in teacher hiring, current higher education faculty and staff, parents, and others interested in learning more about educator preparation programs in Illinois. The IEPP includes program data across several key program performance indicators.

Current educators can find [resources](#) to support professional advancement and the maintenance of their Professional Educator License.

Organizations that provide support to educators include:

- [Illinois Education Association](#) and the [National Education Association](#)
- [Illinois Federation of Teachers](#) and the [American Federation of Teachers](#)
- [Illinois Speech – Language – Hearing Association](#)

The Institute of Education Sciences [Integrating Reading Foundations: A Tool for College Instructors of Pre-service Teachers](#) is designed to assist college instructors build pre-service teacher knowledge of evidence-based strategies to help kindergarten through grade 3 students acquire the language and literacy skills needed to succeed academically. This tool is intended to be used in conjunction with the [Foundational Skills to Support](#)

[Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade practice guide](#), produced by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an investment of the ED Institute of Education Sciences.

## **Workbook Pages Section 2**

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### **The resources listed below can provide additional information, support, and guidance related to Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership**

The [ISBE Department of District and School Leadership](#) partners with stakeholders to foster a robust leadership pipeline that reflects the diversity of our students. The department also supports stakeholders as they recruit, coach, and retain high-quality, equity-minded education leaders who support and reflect the diversity of our students.

The [Regional Offices of Education and Intermediate Service Centers](#) help ensure that every school district has a locally based point of access to numerous supports and services.

Organizations that provide support to administrators include:

- [Illinois Principals Association](#)
  - The [Ed Leaders Network \(ELN\)](#) is grounded in the belief that educational leaders impact student performance. With this foundational belief at ELN's core, multiple state principal associations have partnered together to provide you with high-quality, on-demand professional development to enhance your educational leadership. A dynamic professional networking community also has been created so you can learn and interact with your peers and leadership experts from across the country. ELN's mission is to provide educators with the professional development and capacity-building professional network needed to do what's best for your students and learning community.
- [Illinois Association of School Administrators](#)
- [Illinois Association of School Business Officials](#)
- [Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents](#)
- [Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools](#)
- [Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity](#)
- [Illinois Alliance of Administrators of Special Education](#)

## **Workbook Pages Section 3**

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### **The resources listed below can provide additional information, support, and guidance related to Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations**

[ISBE's Curriculum Evaluation Tool](#) was designed to support best practices and continuous quality improvement, including an emphasis on equity and diversity, and the selection of high-quality instructional materials. ISBE encourages districts to use this tool to help evaluate their curriculum, foster meaningful discussions, and make decisions about the selection of new materials, as appropriate.

[Public Act 103-0402 specifies](#), “The State Board of Education shall adopt and make available all of the following to each publicly funded school district by July 1, 2024: A rubric by which districts may evaluate curricula and select and implement evidence-based, culturally inclusive core reading instruction programs aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan for the State.” Information regarding this tool will be made available on the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan [webpage](#).

The [Prevention Initiative program](#), which is funded by the Early Childhood Block Grant, provides intensive, research-based, and comprehensive child development and family support services for expectant parents and families with children from birth to age 3 to help them build a strong foundation for learning and to prepare children for later school success.

Illinois [Birth to Five Illinois Councils](#) support local stakeholders in coming together to identify the strengths and determine the early childhood needs within their own communities. Ensuring all children and families have access to the services they need requires a wide range of stakeholders – parents and families, school district officials, child care providers, Head Start leaders, early learning advocates, county and municipal officials, and the business community – working together in every community in Illinois to determine what families need to thrive, and then creating new and enhanced services in response. Local leaders may consider utilizing Birth to Five Councils to collaborate to share the importance of early literacy with communities and families.

The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) [Division of Early Childhood](#) administers community-based prevention and intervention programs to strengthen capacity of children, adolescents, women and men to make healthy decisions, utilize support systems, access opportunities, and achieve self-sufficiency. Applicable programs that IDHS oversees include:

[All Our Kids Early Childhood Networks](#) (AOK Networks) promote healthy pregnancies and the positive growth and development of all children birth to 5 and their parents/caregivers by assuring a well-coordinated, easily accessible, equitable, and just system of services and supports that engages parents as partners in making the system work for them. AOK Networks use a data-driven approach to understand disparities and root causes of locally identified priority issues. The goal of the initiative is to improve outcomes for children and families through the implementation of evidence-based strategies that promote an effective local early childhood system.

AOK Networks are a collaborative effort of the IDHS Division of Family and Community Services; the Illinois State Board of Education; health departments, and other lead agencies representing health, early care and education, human services and other service systems; and local stakeholders who care about the health and well-being of very young children and their parents/caregivers. It is the most comprehensive, long-standing, community-based systems development initiative in the state of Illinois.

AOK Network partners engage in cross-sector, strategic initiatives so that more babies are born healthy, young children are safe, healthy, and developing positively and more children enter kindergarten ready to learn. AOK Networks improve outcomes like these by creating a more connected and coordinated system of services and supports as they address the unique needs, cultures, and strengths of local communities.

[Regional or local health departments](#) may also be a resource for communities.

#### **[Workbook Pages Section 4](#)**

## Glossary of Key Terms

This glossary provides explanations to terms found in the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan. Entries indicated by an asterisk were taken from the International Literacy Association.

Term	Definition
<b>LITERACY</b>	<p>Literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and abilities. It is the ability to read, write, identify, understand, interpret, evaluate, create, and communicate effectively by using visual, auditory, and digital materials across disciplines and contexts.</p> <p>Moreover, literacy is the continuous development of multiple skills. It involves applying these skills in diverse contexts, including academic, workplace, community, and personal settings. Literacy is the bridge that connects students to the experiences of others, building empathy skills. It is a fundamental right, an enjoyable practice, and a vital foundation for lifelong learning, active citizenship, and equitable participation in 21st-century society.</p>
<b>21ST CENTURY SKILLS</b>	<p>Such skills involve the nimble use of strategies and mindsets required to navigate, evaluate, communicate, and collaboratively create online across multiple contexts to accomplish personal, educational, and professional goals. They also include use novel resources, tools, and interfaces in efficient and flexible ways. As noted by Don Leu and other experts, the term new literacies is preferred because the essential aspect of this new world of literacy is that technologies – and the ways they are used – continually change and generate even newer forms of literacy. (See also new literacies.)*</p>
<b>AGENCY</b>	<p>Agency is the capacity to set a goal, reflect, and act responsibly to effect change.</p>
<b>ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLE</b>	<p>Alphabetic principle is the concept that letters or groups of letters in alphabetic orthographies (i.e., written systems) represent the phonemes (sounds) of spoken language.*</p>
<b>ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) (IN LITERACY)</b>	<p>Artificial Intelligence (AI) in literacy involves having the skills and competencies required to use AI technologies and applications effectively. It's about viewing these technologies critically, understanding their context, and questioning their design and implementation. It's also about being able to discern the benefits and challenges of AI while making informed decisions about its use. See <a href="#">What is AI Literacy? A Comprehensive Guide for Beginners</a>.</p>
<b>ASSESSMENT</b>	<p>Assessment refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students. (See also Benchmark Assessment, Diagnostic Assessment, Formative Assessment, Early Literacy Screening, Summative Assessment in <a href="#">The Glossary of Education Reform</a>.)</p>
<b>ASSET-BASED APPROACH</b>	<p>An asset-based approach seeks untapped resources for supporting students whose academic competence needs a boost. Such an approach to instruction asks, "What is present that we can build upon?"*</p>

<b>ASYNCHRONOUS</b>	Asynchronous is a general term used to describe forms of education, instruction, and learning that do not occur in the same place or at the same time. The term is most commonly applied to various forms of digital and online learning in which students learn from instruction — such as prerecorded video lessons or game-based learning tasks that students complete on their own — that is not being delivered in person or in real time. Yet asynchronous learning also may encompass a wide variety of instructional interactions, including email exchanges between teachers; online discussion boards; and course-management systems that organize instructional materials and correspondence, among many other possible variations. See <a href="#">The Glossary of Education Reform</a> .
<b>AUTHENTIC TEXTS</b>	Authentic texts are used in everyday life but not solely or mainly for the purpose of instruction (e.g., novels and children’s literature, hobbyist magazines, newspapers). A text that has been changed to make sentences shorter would not be considered an authentic text.*
<b>BALANCED LITERACY INSTRUCTION</b>	A balanced literacy program includes both foundational and language comprehension instructional features, such as phonemic awareness and phonics (understanding the relationships between sounds and their written representations), fluency, guided oral reading, vocabulary development, and comprehension. An alternative interpretation of balanced literacy is that it mixes features of whole language and basic skills instruction.*
<b>BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT</b>	Benchmark assessment is a process of using a screening tool multiple times across the school year to assess the effectiveness of the core curriculum and identify students at risk for failure.
<b>BIDIALECTISM</b>	Bidialectism is proficiency in using two dialects of the same language.
<b>BILINGUALISM</b>	Bilingualism is the use of at least two languages by an individual. It is a fluctuating system in children and adults whereby use of and proficiency in two languages may change depending on the opportunities to use the languages and exposure to other users of the languages. It is a dynamic and fluid process across a number of domains, including experience, tasks, topics, and time.*
<b>BILITERACY</b>	The ability to read and write proficiently in two languages. A biliterate is a person who is proficient in two different languages.*
<b>BLENDS</b>	A blend is a consonant sequence before or after a vowel within a syllable, such as cl, br, or st; it is the written language equivalent of a consonant cluster. See <a href="#">Foundation Literacy Glossary of Terms</a> .
<b>BRAIN-BASED RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTION</b>	Brain-based research and instruction refers to teaching methods, lesson designs, and school programs that are based on the latest scientific research about how the brain learns, including such factors as cognitive development — how students learn differently as they age, grow, and mature socially, emotionally, and cognitively. <a href="#">See The Glossary of Education Reform</a> .
<b>CLOSE READING</b>	Close reading is a critical analysis of the form, craft, language, and meaning of a text to determine what it says, how it says it, and what it means in order to understand the deepest intentions of the author and the text’s message.*

<b>COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS</b>	College and career readiness is the academic preparation that would be sufficient to allow a student to participate successfully in postsecondary education or a career without the need for remedial academic support.*
<b>COMMUNITY LITERACY</b>	Community literacy involves the development of literacy and learning skills for any individual or group of individuals outside of the formal education system. It is learning that happens in the context of home and community, and it happens as a collective approach.*
<b>COMPREHENSION</b>	Comprehension is making meaning of what is viewed, read, or heard. It includes understanding what is expressed outright or implied as well as interpreting what is viewed, read, or heard by drawing on one's knowledge and experiences. Comprehension may also involve application and critical examination of the message in terms of intent, rhetorical choices, and credibility.*
<b>CONTENT-AREA LITERACY</b>	Content-area reading is what students do to learn content in subject areas, such as mathematics, history, science, and literature. It also involves instruction in the reading and study strategies that can be used across the content areas to help students make sense of their subject area texts.*
<b>CONTEXT CLUES</b>	Context clues are hints that are provided by an author to support readers as they connect them to their prior knowledge to interpret its vocabulary and message.*
<b>CRITICAL LITERACY</b>	Critical literacy is the ability to actively read texts in a manner that promotes a deeper understanding of socially constructed concepts, such as power, equality, and justice in human relationships.*
<b>CROSS-LINGUISTIC TRANSFER</b>	When students can connect what is learned in one language and apply it to new situations in the other language they are making a cross-linguistic transfer. See <a href="#">The Bridge: Making Cross-Linguistic Connections</a> .
<b>CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION</b>	Culturally responsive education is the deliberate recognition and inclusion of all forms of student diversity as a pool of resources from and toward which curriculum, instruction, and all aspects of school policy should be designed. In practice, it means the alignment of curriculum and instruction with students' backgrounds, life experiences, and cultures.*
<b>CURRICULUM</b>	Curriculum is the overall design of instruction or opportunities provided for learning. A curriculum may include materials and textbooks, planned activities, lesson plans, lessons, and the total program of formal studies or educational experiences provided by a teacher or school. (Note: Definitions of curriculum vary widely because of alternative perceptions held by theorists about the nature and organization of formal schooling; adj. curricular.)*
<b>CURRICULUM-BASED MEASUREMENT</b>	Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) reflects a systematic set of procedures through which data regarding student skill development in basic areas of achievement are obtained. Assessed by fluency metrics that assess students' command and accuracy at math computation, reading of connected text, and writing serve as central domains in its application in the educational setting. CBM can serve both formative and summative purposes and are useful in monitoring student progress and making subsequent educational decisions about instructional content and strategies.

<b>DECODABLE TEXT</b>	Decodable text is reading material that is designed to prompt beginning readers to apply their increasing knowledge of how the alphabetic system works. Decodable texts are progressively sequenced, primarily incorporating words that consist of previously taught letter-sound patterns (e.g., the letter p represents the sound /p/) and spelling-sound (e.g., the pattern igh represents the long i sound, as in the words light, bright, night) correspondences, along with selected high-frequency irregularly spelled sight words. (Note: Some words are temporarily irregular because the spelling-sound correspondences have not yet been taught.)*
<b>DECODING</b>	Decoding (reading): (1) Using one or more strategies to identify a printed word and its meaning; (2) using knowledge of the logic of the written symbol system (especially letter-sound relationships and patterns in alphabetic orthographies) to translate print into speech. Encoding involves translating speech into print using this knowledge.
<b>DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT</b>	Diagnostic assessments are tests that can be used to measure a variety of reading, language, or cognitive skills. They can be given as soon as a screening test indicates a child is behind in reading growth, but they will usually be given only if a child fails to make adequate progress after being given extra help in learning to read. They are designed to provide a more precise and detailed picture of the full range of a child's knowledge and skill so that instruction can be more precisely planned. See the <a href="#">Reading Rockets Glossary</a> .
<b>DIBELS</b>	The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) is a set of assessments designed to measure reading fluency and early literacy skills of elementary students.*
<b>DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION</b>	Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching that includes planning and executing various approaches to content, process, and product. It is used to meet the needs of student differences in readiness, interests, and learning needs.
<b>DIGITAL LITERACIES</b>	Digital literacies encompass the socially mediated ways of generating and interpreting online content through multiple modes (e.g., still and moving images, sounds, gestures, performances). Being digitally literate requires readers and writers to examine how the texts they consume, produce, and distribute online advocate for certain views while silencing other ideas. The American Library Association refers to digital literacy as "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills."*
<b>DIGRAPHS</b>	A digraph is a combination of two letters representing one sound (e.g., /sh/, /ch/, /th/, /ph/, /ea/, and /ck/). See the <a href="#">Reading Rockets Glossary</a> .
<b>DIRECT INSTRUCTION</b>	Direct instruction is a teaching technique used to explicitly teach a specific skill or set of information. The approach expects teachers to follow a specific script to teach reading skills one at a time. Initially developed by Bereiter and Engelmann in the late 1960s, the approach of direct instruction for special education students the approach has expanded to include general education.*

<b>DISCIPLINARY LITERACY</b>	Disciplinary literacy is the use of specialized information and organizational patterns, language, vocabulary, syntax, text features, and ways to interpret, evaluate, and convey evidence and information within a particular discipline. It is an approach that identifies and teaches the specialized reading and writing skills, text features, and foci needed to successfully comprehend material in a particular discipline. (See content-area literacy.)*
<b>DISCOURSE</b>	Spoken or written communication about ways of being and doing (e.g., how one dresses, behaves) and the language (dialect, register, national or regional language) one uses are components of a person's discourse. Discourse often manifests itself in the form of influences or moves that constitute group understandings of what is acceptable, desirable, or permitted in a particular domain, such as the field of education.*
<b>DUAL LANGUAGE</b>	Dual language is a form of education in which students are taught literacy and content in two languages.
<b>DUAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM</b>	A dual language program also is known as two-way immersion or two-way bilingual education. These programs are designed to serve both language minority and language majority students concurrently. Two language groups are put together and instruction is delivered through both languages.
<b>DYSLEXIA</b>	Dyslexia is a language-based disability that affects both oral and written language. It also may be referred to as reading disability, reading difference, or reading disorder.
<b>EARLY INTERVENTION</b>	Early intervention includes a range of targeted services designed to identify reading difficulties that might interfere with learning. Providing early intervention services helps children acquire these missing skills and knowledge and increases their chances for future learning success. (Note: Early literacy intervention may be something different, as it may not mean cognitive or health risk factors but reading difficulty.)*
<b>EARLY LITERACY SCREENING</b>	Early literacy screening is a short process to identify or find students who need help in reading. Screening assessments can help capture each child's reading and language strengths and weaknesses in key early stages of development. See also <a href="#">Literacy Screening</a>
<b>EMERGENT LITERACY</b>	Early reading and writing behaviors (e.g., scribble writing and pretend reading); knowledge (e.g., a book is a source of a story or information); and attitudes (e.g., question asking about neighborhood signs) are demonstrated by individuals as precursors of conventional literacy. Emergent literacy is a term is often used to characterize those aspects of literacy that develop without any formal instruction but rather through a stimulating environment. The concept reflects an appreciation for the notion that literacy development begins well before formal instruction.*
<b>ENCODING</b>	Encoding (writing) involves translating speech into print using one's alphabet, phonemic awareness, and letter-sound knowledge to spell words through writing.
<b>ENGAGEMENT</b>	Engagement is the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional activities and processes of literacy that enable individuals to gain pleasure, knowledge, and self-realization from text interactions.*

<b>ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT</b>	English language development means instruction designed specifically for English learners to develop their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.
<b>EQUITY VS. EQUALITY</b>	Equity and equality are two strategies used in an effort to produce fairness. Equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone the same. Equality aims to promote fairness, but it can work only if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same help.*
<b>EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES</b>	Evidence-based practices refer to individual practices (e.g., single lessons or in-class activities) or programs (e.g., year-long curricula) supported by scientific evidence. This evidence exists within a continuum of rigor, in which some well-studied practices are highly supported while others may be promising or emerging.
<b>EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION</b>	Explicit instruction is teaching that is direct and step-by-step, including explaining and showing a student how to do something. See <a href="#">Learning Literacy Glossary</a> .
<b>FLUENCY</b>	Fluency is the ability to act (speak, read, write) with ease and accuracy. Research indicates that oral reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, with sufficient speed, prosody, and expression. It is an essential component of reading because it permits the reader to focus on constructing meaning from the text rather than on decoding words.*
<b>FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>	Formative assessment is the continuing study of student learning in an instructional program as it moves toward its goals and objectives by monitoring the learning progress of its participants. Diagnostic testing and various formal and informal assessment procedures can be used to identify needed adjustments to the teaching and learning activities.*
<b>FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS</b>	Foundational reading skills, including oracy, alphabet knowledge, phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge, and reading fluency, are core reading processes necessary for proficient word reading and comprehension.
<b>FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE</b>	A funds of knowledge are the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being.*
<b>GENRE</b>	Genre is a recognized category of writing, music, film, games, and artistic expression. Knowing the characteristics or features of a genre is foundational to communicating within it (e.g., frequent use of figurative language would be considered a hallmark of poetry or literary expression).*
<b>GUIDED READING</b>	Guided reading is small-group reading instruction for students who are grouped by their assessed instructional reading level. The focus of instruction is on specific comprehension, phonics, and fluency needs. Differentiated instruction is provided to students in small groups based on their assessed instructional reading level.
<b>GUIDED ORAL READING</b>	In guided oral reading, students read out loud, to a parent, teacher or other student, who corrects their mistakes and provides them with other feedback.

<b>HOME LANGUAGE</b>	Home language is the language that a person learned as a child at home (usually from his or her parents). Children growing up in bilingual homes can, according to this definition, have more than one mother tongue or native language.*
<b>ILLITERACY</b>	Illiteracy is the inability to read or write using the conventions of written language (phonics, encoding, decoding, comprehension, etc.).*
<b>INCLUSION</b>	In education, inclusion is the placement of students of all abilities in the same classroom. The term captures, in one word, an all-embracing societal ideology that involves securing opportunities for students with disabilities to learn alongside their peers without disabilities in general education classrooms.*
<b>LANGUAGE LEARNING</b>	Language learning is the act of understanding spoken language. It is a term associated with Stephen Krashen's (1977) monitor theory of second language instruction. He contrasts language learning with language acquisition. For Krashen, language learning is a conscious and deliberate learning of the various components of language, such as grammar and vocabulary. It is what often occurs in classrooms where second languages are taught. Language acquisition, on the other hand, is what typically occurs when young children are exposed to the language or languages of their community and they become native speakers of these languages.*
<b>LISTENING</b>	Listening is the act of understanding spoken language.*
<b>LANGUAGE ACQUISITION</b>	Language acquisition is the process by which humans obtain competence in the use of language.*
<b>LITERACY SCREENING</b>	Literacy screening is a type of assessment that identifies students who are not meeting grade-level learning goals used to identify those who may be at risk of reading difficulties and dyslexia.
<b>MEDIA LITERACY</b>	Media literacy is the ability to compose and analyze content using all forms of communication. It is an expanded notion of literacy that provides a framework for evaluating message, meaning, and the relationships between medium, audience, information, and power.*
<b>MORPHOLOGY</b>	Morphology is the study of structure and forms of words, including derivation, inflection, and compounding (e.g. the adjective is morphological).*
<b>MOTIVATION</b>	Motivation is the goals, values, beliefs, and dispositions that energize behavior, elicit cognitions, and regulate literacy processes and learning.*
<b>MULTILINGUALISM</b>	See Bilingualism.

<b>MULTILITERACIES</b>	Multiliteracies are part of an instructional framework that supports an awareness of how new communications media are shaping the way we use language in a highly diverse and globally connected world. Its four components are (1) learning that takes place in the same context in which it is to be applied; (2) interactive teaching and learning that involves both instructors and students; (3) questioning what counts as “truth” for whom under what conditions, and with what consequences; and (4) transformed practice, which equates to applying what was learned in the three previous components.*
<b>MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT</b>	A Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a proactive and preventative framework that integrates data and instruction to maximize student achievement and support students social, emotional, and behavior needs from a strengths-based perspective. MTSS offers a framework for educators to engage in data-based decision making related to program improvement, high-quality instruction and intervention, social and emotional learning, and positive behavioral supports necessary to ensure positive outcomes for districts, schools, teachers, and students. See <a href="#">Multi-Tiered Systems of Support</a> .
<b>NEURODIVERSITY</b>	Neurodiversity is an understanding and a recognition that not all brains are the same or work the same way.
<b>NEUROSCIENCE</b>	Neuroscience is the study of how the brain and nervous system are developed and how they work.
<b>NEWCOMER</b>	The term newcomers refers to PreK-12 students born outside the United States who have arrived in the country in the last three years and are still learning English. The term newcomer families refers to the families or guardians of these students. Some newcomers may arrive in the United States voluntarily (e.g., to reunite with families or to work), while others are forced to leave their home countries due to violence or war (e.g., refugees).
<b>NORM-REFERENCED</b>	Norm-referenced describes an assessment that is designed to compare a student’s score to a representative sample.
<b>ORACY</b>	Oracy is the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language.
<b>ORTHOGRAPHY</b>	Orthography is the study of the nature and use of symbols in a writing system. It also can be thought of as standardized spelling according to established usage in a given language or a conventional writing system in a given language.*
<b>PHONEMIC AWARENESS</b>	Phonemic awareness is the ability to detect and manipulate the smallest units (i.e., phonemes) of spoken language (e.g., recognition that the word cat includes three distinct sounds or phonemes represents phonemic awareness). Individuals with phonemic awareness can blend phonemes to form spoken words, segment spoken words into their constituent phonemes, delete phonemes from spoken words, add phonemes, and substitute phonemes. *
<b>PHONICS</b>	Phonics is an approach to teaching reading that emphasizes the systematic relationship between the sounds of language and the graphemes (i.e., letters or letter combinations) that represent those sounds. Learners apply this knowledge to decode printed words. *

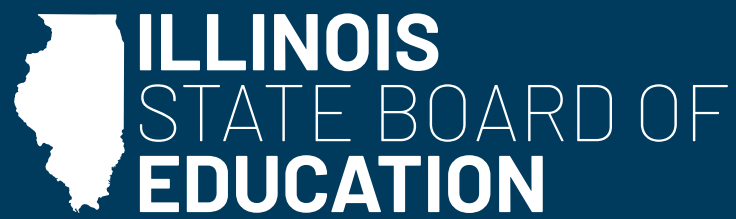
<b>PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS</b>	Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words. Examples include being able to identify words that rhyme, recognizing alliteration, segmenting a sentence into words, identifying the syllables in a word, and blending and segmenting onset-rimes. The most sophisticated – and last to develop – is called phonemic awareness.
<b>PRAGMATICS</b>	In linguistics, pragmatics is the study of the choices of language persons make in social interaction and of the effects of these choices on others.
<b>PRINT CONCEPTS</b>	Print awareness (also called concepts of print) is the understanding that print carries meaning, that books contain letters and words. Print awareness also includes an understanding of what books are used for and how a book “works” – how to turn pages, how to find the top and bottom of a page, and how to identify the title and the front and back covers. See <a href="#">Basics: Print Awareness</a> .
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Professional development is ongoing learning provided to teachers and staff pertaining to specific strategies and skills and often based on a grade level/building/district student learning goal.*
<b>PROFICIENT</b>	A proficient level represents solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter. See <a href="#">Achievement Levels</a> .
<b>PROGRESS MONITORING</b>	Progress monitoring is administered frequently throughout instruction. An assessment is used to determine whether students are making adequate progress and to determine whether instruction needs to be adjusted. See the <a href="#">Reading Rockets Glossary</a> .
<b>PROSODY</b>	Prosody is a pattern of stress or intonation in language, such as the rising intonation at the end of a question in English. It is an important feature of oral reading.*
<b>READINESS</b>	Readiness is a culturally situated cut point at which a learner is considered equipped to engage in a particular activity/process and/or specific content.*
<b>READING</b>	Reading is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension.*
<b>READING LEVEL</b>	A student's reading level is determined from an assessment, usually a running record or an informal reading inventory. The level is an attempt to match children with books that are optimal for effective small-group or individual instruction.*
<b>READING/ LITERACY SPECIALIST</b>	A reading/literacy specialist is a teacher who has specialized preparation in literacy and is highly qualified to teach struggling readers.
<b>RELUCTANT READER</b>	A reluctant reader lacks interest in reading or in learning to read.*

<b>RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION</b>	Response to Intervention is a three-tiered approach designed to address the learning needs of all students. The first tier of support — classroom instruction — aims to provide all students with high-quality teaching. Those who do not make sufficient learning progress are then provided additional intervention teaching and, perhaps, special education depending upon their response to the intervention.*
<b>RUBRIC</b>	A rubric identifies the expectations of a given task and provides examples of differing levels of achievement, with scoring on a categorical scale (e.g., 1–4). One is often used by teachers and students to provide specific feedback.*
<b>SCAFFOLDED READING</b>	Scaffolded reading entails students reading a text with the guidance or support of a teacher who gradually withdraws to transfer increasing responsibility to the student.
<b>SCIENCE OF READING</b>	Science of reading is a term that, in the broadest sense, refers to a corpus of peer-reviewed research on how we learn to read and develop as readers. The International Literacy Association defines science of reading as a convergence of accumulated and evolving findings from research regarding reading processes and reading instruction (pedagogy) and how the two are implemented across contexts that interactively bridge cultural, social, biological, psychological, linguistic, and historical bases of learning.*
<b>SEMANTICS</b>	Semantics is the study of meaning in language, the analysis of the meanings of words, phrases, sentences, discourse, and whole texts. In semiotics, semantics can also denote the study of the relationships between signs and their objects.*
<b>SKILLS-BASED UNIVERSAL SCREENER OR SKILLS-BASED ASSESSMENT</b>	Skills-based universal screener or skills-based assessment is a brief (less than 5 minutes), informative tool used to measure academic skills in one of six general areas (basic reading skills, reading fluency, reading comprehension, math calculation, math problem-solving, written expression). Skills-based assessments can be used for screening and weekly or biweekly progress monitoring.
<b>SPEAKING</b>	Speaking is the act of communicating by producing oral-aural language.*
<b>STANDARDS</b>	Standards are the learning goals promulgated by a state documenting what students should know or be able to do at each grade level.
<b>STANDARDS-BASED ASSESSMENT</b>	Standards-based assessment is an assessment, often adaptive in nature, that provides information regarding students' mastery of grade-level standards. Standards-based assessments can be used for tri-annual screenings but should not be used for weekly or biweekly progress monitoring.
<b>STANDARDIZED ASSESSMENT</b>	Standardized assessment is developed using standard procedures and administered and scored consistently for all test takers.
<b>STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION</b>	Standards-based instruction is a system of instruction identifying a progression of learning goals and objectives for students to master as they progress through the grades. Curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned to these goals.*

<b>STRUGGLING READER</b>	Struggling readers exhibit problems with decoding, comprehension, or both.*
<b>SUMMARIZING</b>	Summarizing is to give a brief statement of the main points in a text.*
<b>SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>	A summative assessment is the final evaluation, usually quantitative, of the degree to which the goals and objectives of a program have been attained. Different types of evidence, as the final test score of students and the statistical analysis of program results, may enter into summative evaluation. (See formative assessment.)*
<b>SYNCHRONOUS LEARNING</b>	<p>Synchronous learning is a general term used to describe forms of education, instruction, and learning that occur at the same time, but not in the same place. The term is most commonly applied to various forms of televisual, digital, and online learning in which students learn from instructors, colleagues, or peers in real time, but not in person. For example, educational video conferences, interactive webinars, chat-based online discussions, and lectures that are broadcast at the same time they delivered would all be considered forms of synchronous learning.</p> <p>Digital and online learning experiences can also be asynchronous (i.e., instruction and learning occur not only in different locations, but also at different times). For example, prerecorded video lessons, email exchanges between teachers and students, online discussion boards, and course-management systems that organize instructional materials and related correspondence would all be considered forms of asynchronous learning.</p>
<b>SYNTAX</b>	Syntax is the pattern or structure of word order in sentences, clauses, and phrases, or the rules for determining how a language will be used to formulate a thought. *
<b>SYNTHESIZE</b>	Synthesize is to mentally combine ideas to form a theory, system, or representation.*
<b>TRANSLANGUAGING</b>	Translanguaging is the process whereby multilingual speakers use their multiple ways of expressing themselves in an integrated communication system. A well-known example of translanguaging is present in South African classrooms but also elsewhere in the world where people who are informed about cultural diversity and the use of multiple languages see translanguaging as an asset, not a deficit.*
<b>TRIGRAPHS</b>	A trigraph is a combination of three letters that represent one sound (phoneme) in a word (e.g., the three-letter combination igh in light is a trigraph). See <a href="#">Trigraphs and Quadgraphs/Tetragraphs</a> .
<b>UNIVERSAL SCREENING</b>	Universal screening is the systematic assessment of all students within a given class, grade, school building, or school district on critical academic and/or social-emotional indicators.
<b>VISUALIZATION</b>	Visualization is the process, or result, of mentally picturing objects or events that are normally experienced directly. Visualizing can be an effective reading strategy for increasing reading comprehension.*

<b>VOWEL</b>	In English, the vowels are a, e, i, o, and u are the speech sounds made without stoppage or friction of the air flow as it passes through the vocal tract and the most prominent sounds in a syllable (as /ō/ in "Joan.")*
<b>WHOLE-LANGUAGE</b>	Whole language is an educational philosophy that stresses "using children as educational informants" and building curriculum from that base. Whole language developed from studies of readers' miscues as they read whole texts as well as what young children knew about language prior to going to school. As a curricular approach, it advocates meaning making by using authentic texts such as children's literature (rather than basal texts) as the core of reading and setting aside uninterrupted time for personal writing each day. From a cross-curriculum perspective, it advocates inquiry-based learning in which students' inquiry questions become the focus of instruction and where the disciplines are seen as perspectives that students might take in exploring topics of interest. Child-centered advocates were some of the first educators who picked up on this approach to instruction and are often credited with having coined the term itself.*
<b>WRITING</b>	Writing is the process of recording language graphically by hand or other means, as by letters, logograms, and other symbols.





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