

# 2024 ILLINOIS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN



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**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

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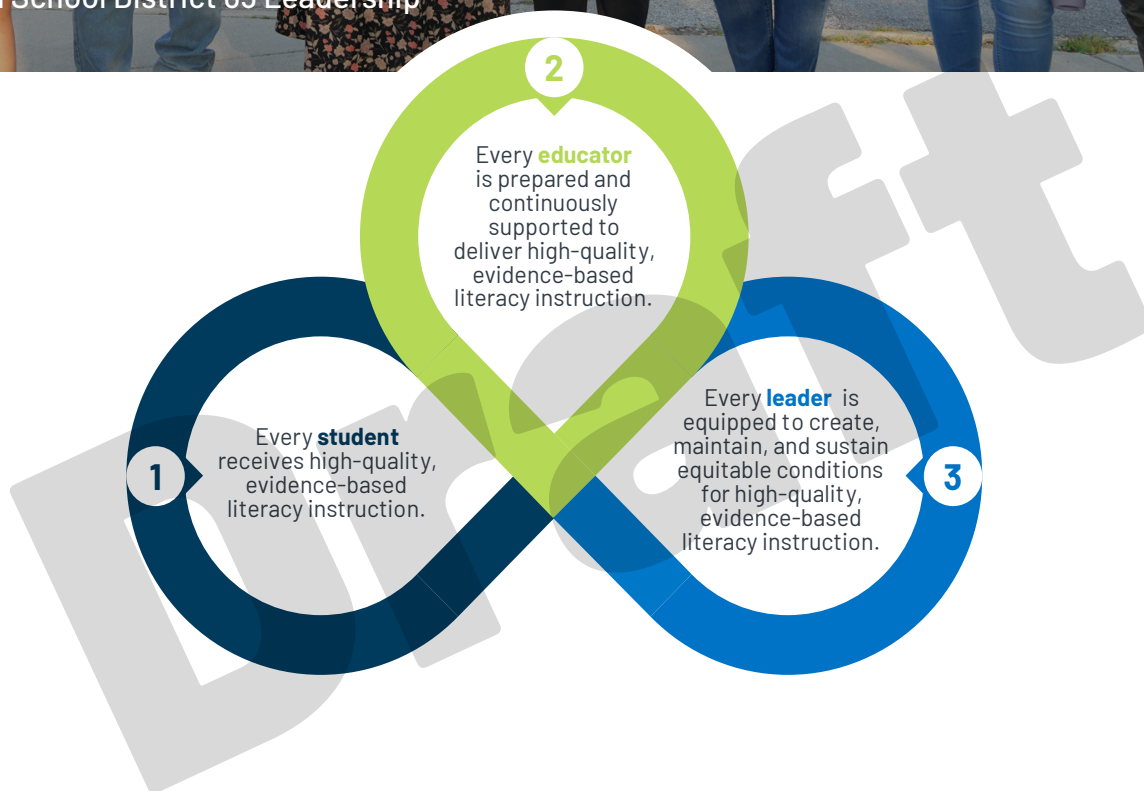
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# VISION AND PURPOSE

\*Photo from School District 65 Leadership



**The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan serves as a roadmap designed to guide and unify literacy efforts across the state. Its purpose is to identify the supports and resources necessary to ensure that every student receives developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction.**

To support this purpose, the plan is structured around the **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.

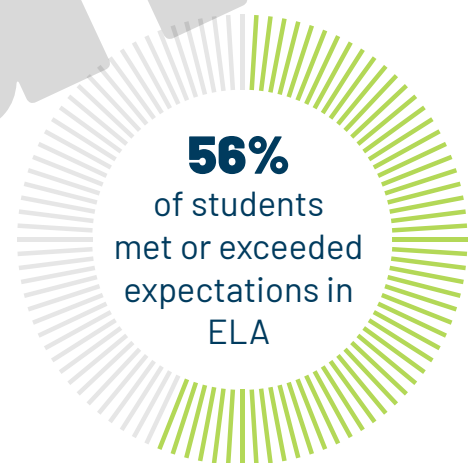
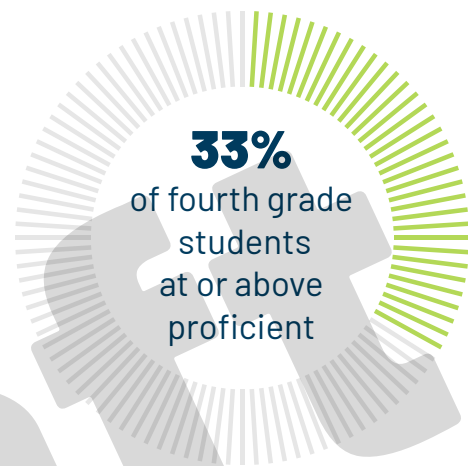
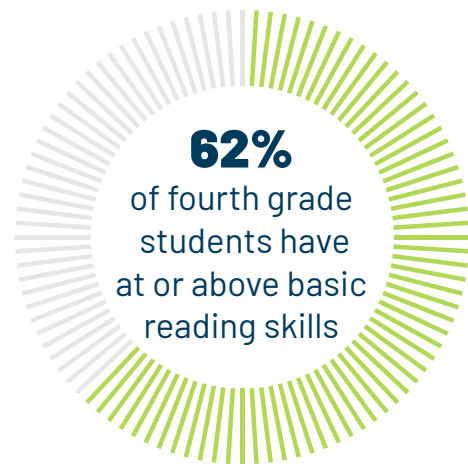
The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan is the **first step** in supporting improved literacy success for all students. This plan will guide the Illinois State Board of Education's future literacy work by offering clarity and direction, empowering stakeholders to effectively prioritize and coordinate literacy initiatives.

### *Why is this plan necessary?*

The Illinois State Board of Education firmly believes in the ability of Illinois educators to provide comprehensive literacy support to every child in Illinois. Literacy access and skills are essential and highly correlated with many social and life outcomes (e.g., salary as adults, incarceration rates, dependence on government assistance, health).<sup>1</sup> Acknowledging existing challenges is our first step toward ensuring that every student in Illinois has access to high-quality literacy instruction.

Current data from the 2022 [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#) underscores these challenges: 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. Furthermore, the Illinois Assessment of Readiness indicates that 44% of students "Did Not Meet/Partially Met" expectations in English Language Arts.

While these statistics are troubling, they also represent an opportunity for improvement through effective, grade-level instruction.<sup>2</sup> As Carol Dweck's work on growth mindset reminds



us, "Test scores and measures of achievement tell you where a student is, but they don't tell you where a student could end up."<sup>3</sup> We firmly believe that all students possess language skills and the potential for literacy success, and we are committed to addressing these challenges professionally to pave the way for brighter literacy outcomes for our students



## The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

provides a framework for literacy instruction across the state and offers additional insights into:

Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

Educator Professional Learning, Development, and Support

Effective Literacy Leadership

Support and Implementation Considerations

Tools and Resources

### Defining Literacy

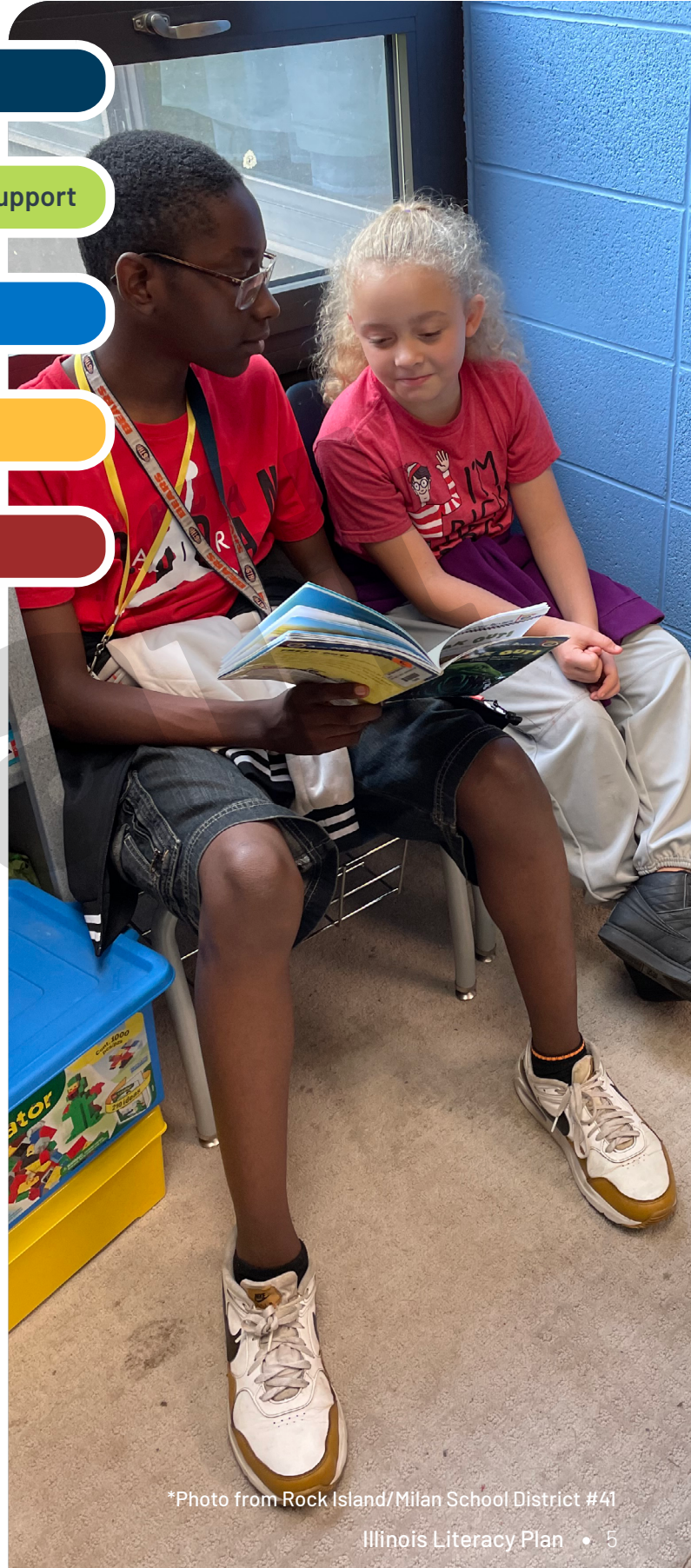
Literacy encompasses a wide range of skills and abilities. It is the ability to read, write, identify, understand, interpret, evaluate, create, and communicate effectively by using visual, auditory, and digital materials across disciplines and contexts.

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.

### Our Values

In Illinois, we value and affirm all learners across our diverse communities. We believe that it is important to recognize and build on every

student's strengths and challenges to guide and shape their literacy development.



\*Photo from Rock Island/Milan School District #41

### **We believe:**

- Every learner is capable and has the right to equitable access to high-quality, inclusive, differentiated, and evidence-based literacy instruction and intervention that addresses their strengths, needs, and goals.
- Every learner has the right to attend schools that build upon individual assets and interests, embracing an approach that honors them as complex individuals within the context of their communities.
- 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.

### **We believe equitable literacy education:**

- Empowers and equips students with skills to make meaning, cultivating individual and collective agency toward continued growth and learning throughout schooling and beyond.
- Provides explicit, systematic, and structured instruction of foundational reading skills.
- Honors and leverages family and community linguistic and cultural resources.
- Promotes collaboration and interdisciplinary partnerships among educators, families, students, and community.
- Embraces students' language practices and ways of showing what they know.
- Leverages the relationship between receptive (viewing, listening, reading) and expressive (representing, writing, speaking) modes of communication.
- Supports educators' implementation of high-quality, evidence-based practices by providing materials, professional learning, and a literacy-focused system of student supports.



- Fosters the joy of reading, encourages student choice, and cultivates independent reading habits.

### **We value equitable literacy instruction that:**

- Utilizes high-quality, evidence-based literacy practices.
- Applies principles of Universal Design for Learning.
- Contextualizes the components of literacy and aspects of language in explicit, authentic, and meaningful ways.
- Recognizes the linguistic knowledge of all students.
- Ensures all learners master foundational skills to read the words on the page as well as the skills to “read between the lines” to analyze and evaluate the meaning of texts (both informational and literary) that examine power, equity, and social justice (critical literacy).

### **We value equitable literacy assessment that:**

- Serves as a tool to improve and refine instruction.
- Provides early, regular, and reliable opportunities for students to demonstrate their literacy skills.
- Is contextualized within the sociocultural experiences of students and is culturally and linguistically responsive.



- Uses multiple modalities that allow students to show what they know.
- Is sensitive to changes in learning over time.
- Reflects the linguistic resources of each student.

**We value equitable literacy supports that provide:**

- Culturally and linguistically responsive scaffolding that supports early identification measures.
- Ongoing, evidence-based support for students who struggle with literacy.
- Recurrent, intensive, dynamic, and cohesive support across content areas; instructional contexts; and grade levels, including accommodation, assistive technology, differentiation, acceleration, extension, curriculum compacting, accessibility, etc.



\*Photo from Yorkville Community Unit School District 115



Acknowledgement of Key Terms

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. 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](#).

We also refer to explicit and systematic instruction throughout this plan. Explicit instruction is evidence-backed instruction that emphasizes clear communication, minimizes cognitive overload, encourages active student participation, offers timely feedback, and enhances long-term retention through purposeful practice techniques.<sup>4</sup> Systematic instruction ensures that foundational skills are introduced prior to more intricate ones, fostering a deeper understanding and proficiency.

Instruction that differs from explicit and systematic approaches, such as constructivist, discovery, or student-led methods, tends to be less effective in building foundational reading skills to a level of automaticity. This is particularly relevant for young students who are learning to read and for struggling readers.

The science of reading represents decades of interdisciplinary research that collectively informs how proficient reading and writing develop and 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. To avoid misunderstandings pertaining to this new term, this plan refrains from referencing the science of reading in favor of describing current understandings of literacy development and evidence-based instruction.

Explicit Instruction .....	Systematic Instruction .....
Evidence-based instruction	Ensures foundational skills are introduced
Emphasizes clear communication, minimizes cognitive overload, encourages active student participation, offers timely feedback	Intricate skills introduced later
	Fosters deeper understanding and proficiency
Enhances long-term retention through purposeful practice techniques	

## What **is** evidence-based instruction?

### ✓ **A Collection of Research to inform instruction**

We are learning more about what research says 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. The research that we're learning about and implementing informs evidence-based instructional practices.

### ✓ **Ever Evolving**

There is new research and evidence all the time. As populations, communities, and approaches evolve, so should practice.

### ✓ **Teaching Based on the Components of Literacy:**

**Phonemic Awareness** - The ability to identify and play with individual sounds in spoken words.

**Phonics** - Explicit and systematic reading instruction on understanding how letters and groups of letters link to sounds to form letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns.

**Fluency** - The ability to read words, phrases, sentences, and stories correctly, with enough speed, and expression.

**Vocabulary** - Knowing what words mean and how to say and use them correctly.

**Comprehension** - The ability to understand what you are reading.

**Writing** - Writing is a method of communication and a form of expression in which language is inscribed on a surface using symbols, characters, or letters.

**Oracy** - Oracy refers to the development and use of oral communication skills, which involve the ability to express oneself, listen actively, and engage in meaningful conversations and discussions.

## What **is not** evidence-based instruction?

### ✗ **A program, an intervention, or a product that you can buy**

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.

### ✗ **Phonics-based programs that drill phonics skills**

Phonics is an integral part of teaching reading based on science, but it is just one of the five big ideas that should be taught so all children can learn to read.

### ✗ **Complete and final**

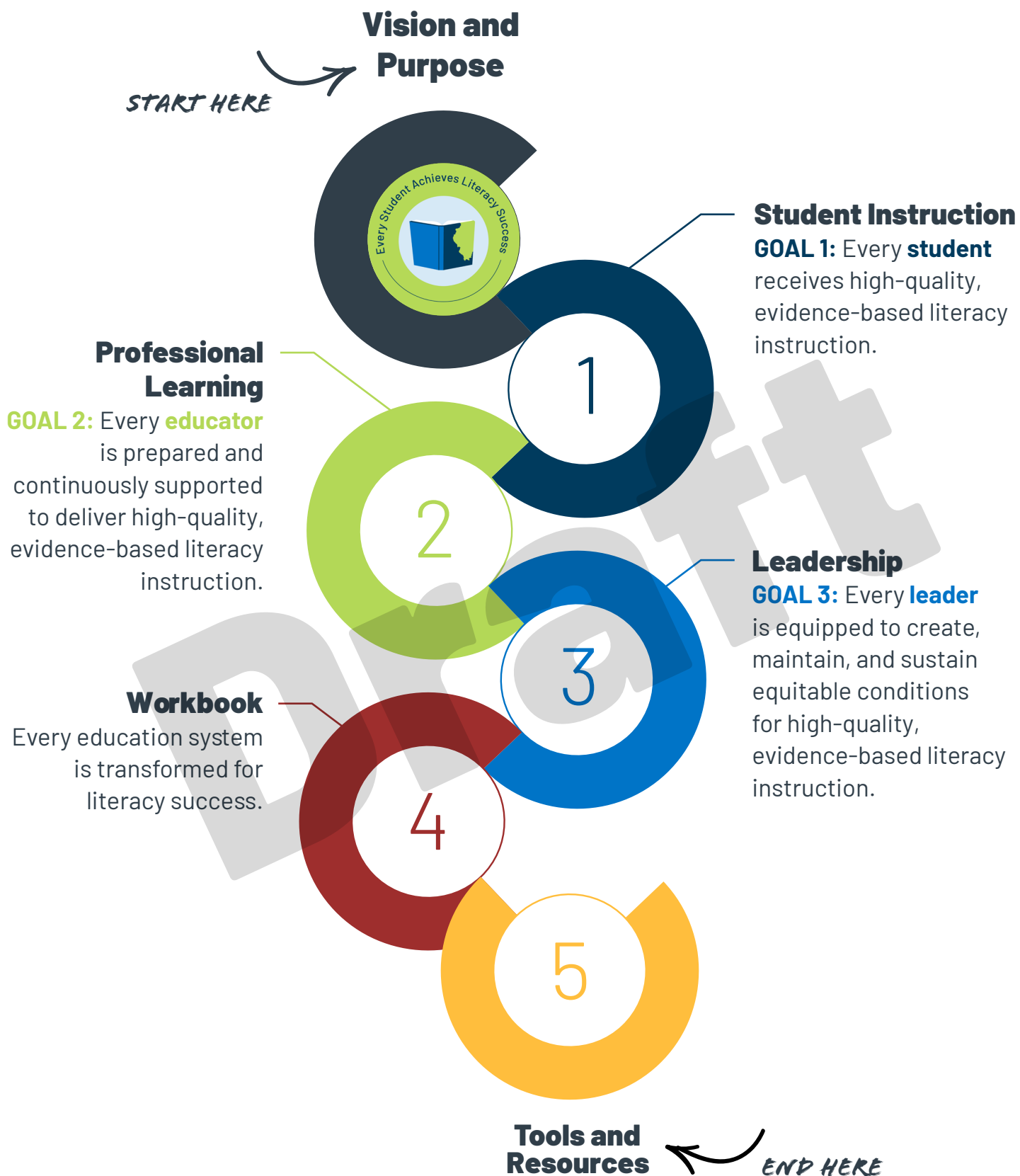
As with any research, it is never complete. We can always know more. More study happens all the time and researchers, teachers, and families can work together to bring the best evidence-based practices into classrooms.



## **Flexibility and Local Autonomy**

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan is a flexible framework, aligned with state standards but adaptable to local contexts. It doesn't prescribe specific methods, materials, or assessments, allowing districts the freedom to tailor their approaches. We recognize that this plan can't address all district-specific challenges. Districts must design local assessment strategies and allocate resources based on their unique demographics and context. This plan serves as a vision — not a comprehensive solution — and districts should develop policies and practices in line with it and the Illinois Learning Standards.

## Your **Journey** Through the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan





**THE LITERACY PLAN BY AUDIENCE |** The Illinois State Literacy Plan

recognizes the need to understand the roles of various stakeholders in education. Each plays a unique role in shaping literacy support, and understanding your role will offer insights on effective implementation and collaboration for positive student outcomes.

**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 at all grade levels.

**Teacher Leaders**

Teacher leaders include school librarians, reading resource teachers, literacy coaches, and specialists who support classroom teachers. They use their expertise and data to guide educators in creating and maintaining literacy-rich environments. The knowledge they gain supporting different grade levels allows them to contribute to a sustainable and vertically aligned curriculum.

**School Leaders**

Principals and assistant principals provide critical support for literacy initiatives by fostering collaborative cultures that align with district and state goals. They play a critical role in impacting student achievement by providing the structures and support necessary to create the collaborative culture needed to implement and sustain a literacy plan in alignment with their district and the state's goals.

**District Leaders**

At this level, the audience consists of superintendents, deputy superintendents, curriculum and instruction 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.

**Regional Leaders**

Regional leadership, including Regional Offices of Education (ROEs), Intermediate Service Centers (ISCs), program coordinators, and education administrators, oversees literacy initiatives at a multi-district level. Teacher educators, professional development providers, and teacher support groups are also part of this level. They ensure effective implementation of state policies, supporting literacy development statewide.

**State Leaders**

State level decision-makers with authority over literacy policies and resources include the Illinois State Board of Education, state education agencies, educator preparation programs, 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.

**Community & Family**

Parents, guardians, family members, caregivers, home school educators, 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's 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.

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# 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.

The landscape of literacy education in the United States has been shaped by ongoing debates, often referred to as the “reading wars.”<sup>1</sup> These debates swing between proponents of explicit phonics-based instruction and advocates for whole-language approaches.<sup>2</sup> In the development of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, we’ve diligently harnessed the latest research findings related to brain-based learning and

the acquisition of literacy skills. Our approach is firmly grounded in evidence-based literacy practices. Our objective is to bridge the gap between research and practice and provide educators with a comprehensive guide to best literacy practices.

Unlike language development, which unfolds naturally and instinctively as individuals engage in their environment, literacy is a skill acquired through direct and purposeful instruction.<sup>3</sup> It necessitates deliberate guidance and structured education to navigate the intricate world of

written language effectively. This understanding highlights the significance of 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.

The Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework, detailed on the following pages, offers a comprehensive overview of developmentally appropriate practices. These practices align with the crucial components of literacy: **phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, oracy, and writing.** The instructional framework is not merely a theoretical construct; it's a practical tool for educators, designed to enhance student literacy outcomes.

Our framework draws inspiration from the National Reading Panel Report.<sup>4</sup> This groundbreaking report identified the essential elements of effective reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, we recognize the ever-evolving landscape of literacy education and have expanded our framework to encompass equally vital domains: oracy and writing. We acknowledge the profound influence of oral communication (oracy) and writing on holistic literacy development.

This comprehensive approach underscores our 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.



PROGRESSION OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT →							
COMPONENTS OF LITERACY	CONCEPTS OF PRINT	Concepts of Print: Infants and toddlers are exposed to board books with colorful pictures and simple text. Parents and caregivers introduce the concept that words and pictures convey meaning.	Preschoolers learn how to hold books, turn pages, and understand that print carries meaning. They may start recognizing some letters.	Kindergarteners begin to recognize letters and understand left-to-right and top-to-bottom reading direction.	Students continue to develop print awareness and letter recognition.		
	PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS	Early exposure to rhymes, songs, and simple wordplay helps develop an ear for the sounds of language.	Children engage in activities like rhyming, clapping syllables, and identifying beginning sounds.				
	PHONEMIC AWARENESS			Students develop an understanding that words are made up of individual sounds (phonemes) and learn to blend and segment individual sounds within words.	Students refine phonemic awareness skills by segmenting, isolating, and substituting sounds.	Students work on more complex phonemic tasks, including multisyllabic words, common spelling patterns, deleting and manipulating phonemes.	
	PHONICS			Early phonics instruction begins with letter-sound relationships; students begin encoding and decoding.	Phonics instruction expands to include more complex letter-sound	Phonics instruction becomes more advanced, covering spelling patterns and word decoding.	While less emphasis is placed on explicit phonics, advanced vocabulary and complex texts continue to reinforce phonics skills; including intricate word study in English and World Language courses.
	FLUENCY	Develop fluency with oral language through repeated exposure to language.		Early fluency skills, such as reading sight words and simple sentences, are developed. Fluency is enhanced by practicing reading aloud, using expression, intonation, and pacing.		Students work on reading fluently with expression and accuracy.	Reading fluency is further developed, with a focus on more complex texts.
							Reading fluency extends to a wide range of academic and literary texts.

COMPONENTS OF LITERACY		PROGRESSION OF LITERACY DEVELOPMENT →				
		VOCABULARY	<p>Infants, toddlers, and preschool students acquire vocabulary through exposure to spoken language, texts read aloud, and engaging in conversations with caregivers.</p>		<p>Students build oral and written vocabulary through explicit instruction, listening to and reading a range of connected text sets to build context vocabulary, and engaging in discussions.</p>	<p>Students expand vocabulary through reading challenging texts, studying academic vocabulary, and using context clues to infer word meanings. Students develop more sophisticated vocabulary knowledge by exploring word origins, prefixes, and suffixes.</p>
		COMPREHENSION	<p>Interaction with text begins through listening and interacting with language, both oral and written (through read-alouds).</p>		<p>Reading comprehension strategies are introduced, and students learn to understand interact with text through speaking, listening, reading, writing, and citing text evidence when responding both orally and in writing.</p>	<p>Critical reading skills are honed, and students learn to analyze texts in-depth.</p> <p>Students engage in critical analysis of literature and other texts.</p>
		WRITING	<p>Emergent writing is a child's earliest attempt at written communication. In its earliest stages, writing looks like scribbling and drawing and eventually begins to include letters of the alphabet, invented spelling, conventional spelling, and basic grammar.</p>		<p>Reading and writing acquisitions are enhanced when they are taught in an integrated manner.</p>	<p>Basic writing skills, including sentence and paragraph structure, are developed.</p> <p>Writing skills progress to include argumentative and research writing.</p> <p>Advanced writing skills are essential for essays, research papers, and college applications.</p>
		ORACY	<p>Infants and toddlers begin developing basic oral communication through sounds and responses.</p>	<p>Preschoolers engage in conversation, express feelings, and participate in class discussions.</p>	<p>Kindergarteners learn to speak clearly, follow directions, and engage in storytelling and role-playing.</p> <p>First graders practice structured oral communication, active listening, and presentations.</p>	<p>Students work on more complex speaking tasks, articulation, and nonverbal communication.</p> <p>Students enhance oracy for academic and real-world contexts, including debates, presentations, and persuasive speaking.</p>

## Connection to Illinois Standards

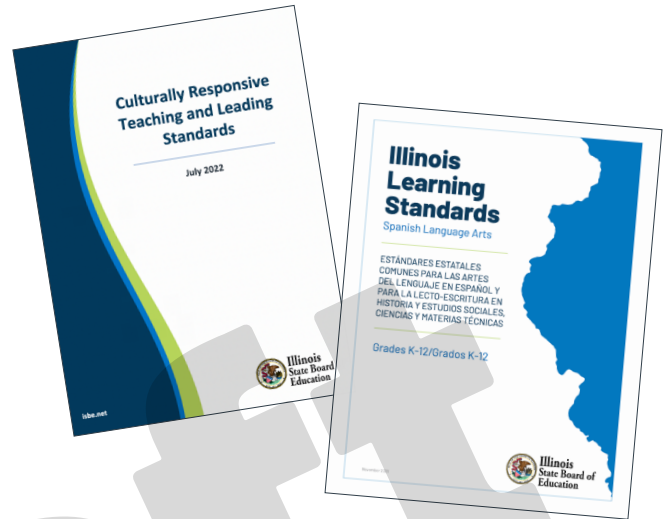
Illinois maintains high-quality learning standards aligned across grade levels. The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan works to support the learning standards and guide literacy instruction and development considerations that span across all grade levels and subject areas. The learning standards connected 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](#)
- 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 teacher 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 beckon 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.



## Attending to Equity in Literacy Instruction

Equity in literacy education stands as an enduring imperative. It ensures that every student, irrespective of their background, abilities, or circumstances, enjoys equal access to high-quality literacy instruction — a pathway to flourish academically. Recognizing and addressing disparities in literacy education is paramount to creating a just and inclusive learning environment.

Prioritizing equity is not solely an educational endeavor; it's a societal commitment. It strives to close achievement gaps, foster diversity, and empower all students to become proficient readers and effective communicators. Equity in literacy education holds the promise of a more equitable society, where everyone has a voice and the tools to succeed.

It's crucial to acknowledge that students progress at different rates. Educators adapt their instruction to meet the diverse needs of learners,

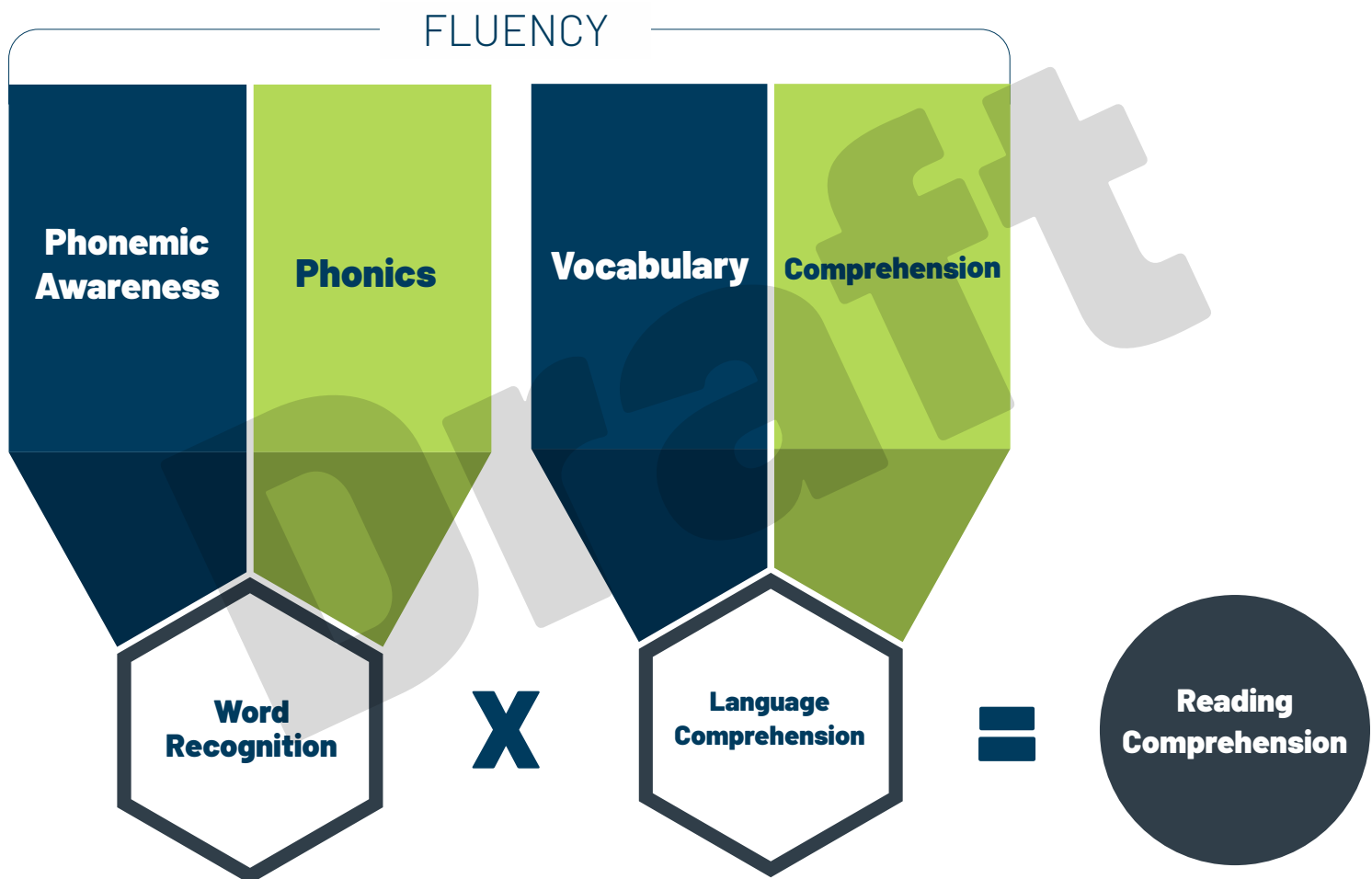
including students with disabilities, multilingual, and bidialectal students, ensuring equitable access to literacy skills development.

## Reevaluating Our Understanding of Reading

### The Simple View of Reading<sup>5</sup>

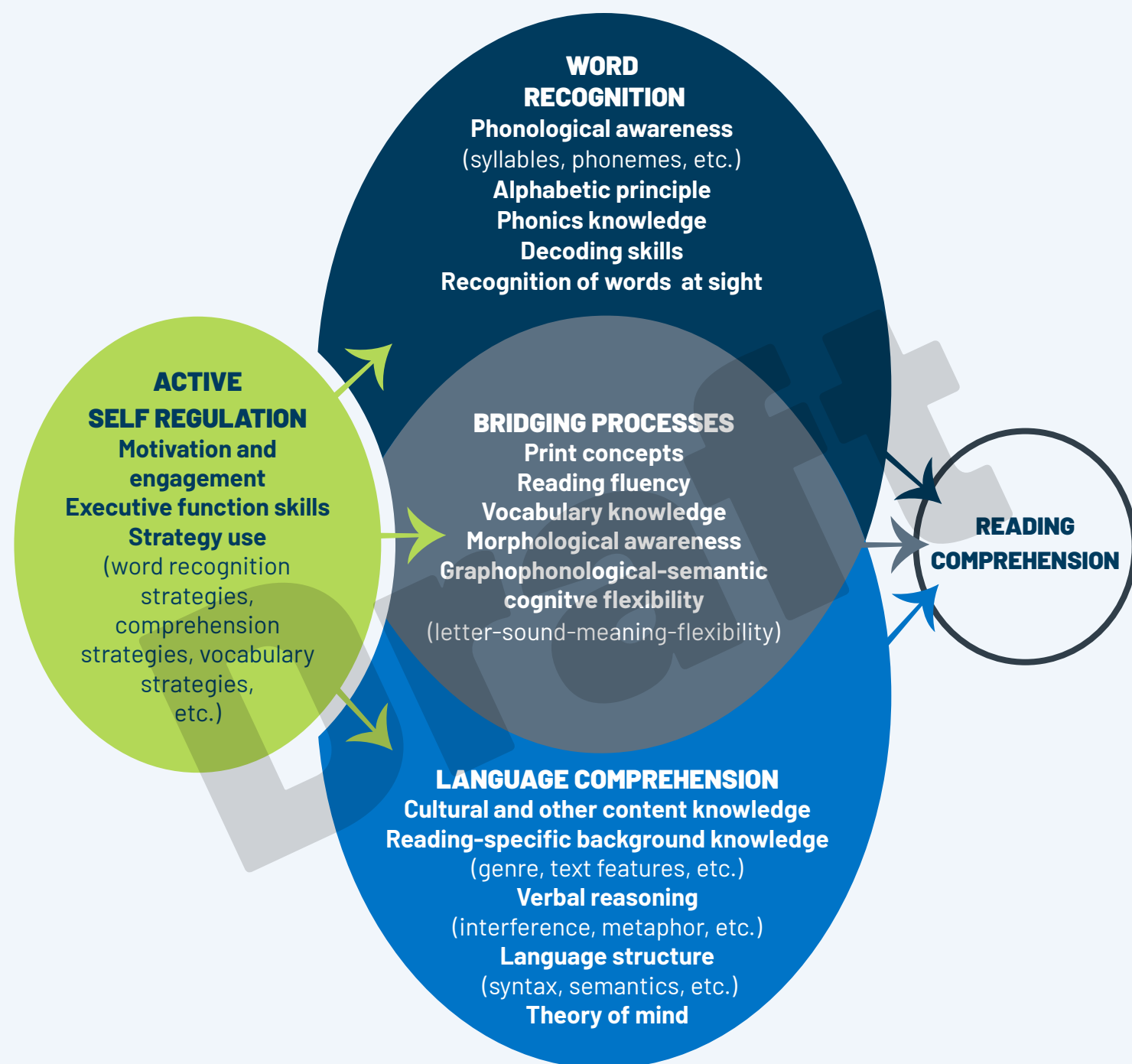
The commonly taught concept of the **“simple view of reading”** marks the roles of decoding (word recognition) and linguistic comprehension in reading. However, recent research has illuminated new insights:

1. Reading difficulties have multifaceted causes beyond decoding and listening comprehension.
2. Decoding and listening comprehension are more intertwined than previously thought, and some skills function to bridge these processes.
3. Additional factors, such as active self-regulatory processes, wield significant influence over reading.





In response to these insights, a revised theory – the “**active view of reading**” – has emerged, expanding upon the simple view. It offers a more comprehensive framework for educators, emphasizing the need to adapt theories and models from the simple view of reading. This adaptive approach guides reading instruction and supports students’ literacy development in classrooms and interventions.<sup>6</sup>



**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). <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/rrq.411>

## The Components of Reading Foundational Skills

It is paramount within literacy instruction to acknowledge and embrace the essential components that underpin proficient reading. These components follow developmental trajectories, guiding learners from foundational skills to advanced levels.

### Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words, including syllables, onset-rime, and phonemes. Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds, known as phonemes, in spoken words. These two types of awareness – phonological and phonemic – together serve as a foundational skill for proficient reading. The process of learning establishes neuropathways in the brain to link sounds of speech to written symbols of letters. This begins with infants and toddlers becoming aware of sounds in their environment, such as recognizing familiar voices and responding to music. As children progress into preschool and early elementary years, their phonological awareness expands, enabling them to detect and manipulate individual sounds within words, including tasks like rhyming and blending syllables. This foundational awareness lays the groundwork for phonemic awareness.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout elementary and middle school, students refine their phonemic awareness skills by mastering phoneme segmentation, blending, and substitution. By high school, students should possess a well-developed phonological and phonemic awareness, empowering them to decode unfamiliar words, enhance spelling accuracy, and comprehend complex texts. This developmental trajectory emphasizes the significance of providing explicit instruction and targeted interventions to support students at each developmental stage, ensuring a solid

foundation for reading and language proficiency.

Reading relies on the ability to decode text sound by sound, making phonological and phonemic awareness a crucial foundational skill. For multilingual students, this awareness involves recognizing language-specific sounds in addition to transferable awareness that speech is composed of sound parts. Students lacking a strong foundation in oral language skills may encounter difficulties in isolating and discerning the sounds necessary for text decoding. Additionally, they may face challenges in recognizing printed vocabulary and comprehending text structure and meaning.<sup>8</sup>

### Phonics

Phonics instruction encompasses teaching letter-sound relationship in a structured and logical sequence, with ample opportunities for cumulative practice. Explicit instruction involves teachers providing precise guidance on sound-letter relationships. In the early years, children begin to establish connections between letters and sounds, recognizing letter shapes and associating them with specific sounds. As students progress through elementary school, they deepen their understanding of letter-sound correspondences, including consonant and vowel patterns, digraphs, and blends.<sup>9</sup>



Orthographic mapping (OM) is the cognitive process in which connections are established between letters, their associated sounds, and meanings. This process is fundamental for word recognition, spelling, and vocabulary acquisition, as it underpins how children learn to instantly recognize words and store them in their memory. OM unfolds through distinct developmental phases, commencing with basic visual connections and evolving toward more complex grapho-syllabic and grapho-morphemic associations. A solid foundation in phonemic awareness and grapheme-phoneme knowledge is essential to achieve successful OM. Recent studies have indicated that enhancing OM, especially for sight word recognition, can be facilitated by educating beginners on the articulatory aspects of phonemes and incorporating letter-embedded picture mnemonics into grapheme-phoneme instruction.<sup>10</sup>

Continued instruction and practice empower students to become automatic and effortless in applying phonics knowledge to decode and spell words accurately. By upper elementary school, students should possess a solid foundation in phonics, enabling them to tackle more complex texts and expand their vocabulary through decoding and word analysis skills.<sup>11</sup>

All students require direct, systematic instruction in phonics. Without these fundamental reading mechanics, students may encounter obstacles in their ability to meaningfully piece together sounds represented by letters into words and sentences when engaging with text. This can hinder their overall reading comprehension. Cross-language transfer of letter sounds varies across languages, necessitating explicit attention for ELs. Whenever possible, these mechanics should be taught in the child's strongest language.

**“It is paramount within literacy instruction to acknowledge and embrace the essential components that underpin proficient reading.”**

#### **Fluency**

Fluency, the ability to read text accurately, automatically, and with expression to facilitate comprehension, serves as a vital bridge between word recognition and understanding. Fluent readers accurately decode text quickly and read orally with expression. Young children develop fluency through repeated exposure to language and engaging in shared reading experiences. As they progress through elementary school, students enhance their fluency by practicing reading aloud with prosody.<sup>12</sup>

Fluency strategies such as choral reading, partner reading, paired reading, recorded readings, as well as collaborative activities like Reader's Theater and poetry may be utilized as students practice their reading skills through elementary and middle school. In high school, students continue to nurture their fluency by exploring a wide variety of texts across different subjects, contributing to enhanced comprehension, vocabulary growth, and overall reading proficiency.

Recognizing and valuing the diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural experiences of multilingual students is crucial. Providing opportunities for students to maintain and develop fluency in their native language positively impacts their overall language development, including English fluency. Promoting oral language development through meaningful interactions and opportunities for practice is vital. Cultivating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and offers ample opportunities for English language practice is essential. Using culturally relevant and authentic texts can enhance fluency development for non-native English speakers. Additionally, targeted support for vocabulary development and comprehension strategies can aid ELs in improving their overall fluency. Regular formative assessments, such as oral reading fluency checks, are crucial for monitoring the progress of ELs' fluency and informing instructional decisions.<sup>13</sup>

### **Vocabulary**

Vocabulary encompasses the words people use to communicate orally and in print. It plays a vital role in building background knowledge and comprehending texts, facilitating readers' understanding of what they read. Infants and toddlers begin acquiring vocabulary through exposure to spoken language and conversations with caregivers. As children progress through elementary school, they expand their vocabulary through explicit instruction, exposure to various texts, and participation in discussions.<sup>14</sup>

Upper elementary and middle school students further enrich their vocabulary by exploring word origins, prefixes, and suffixes. Morphology refers to "the knowledge of meaningful word parts in a language (typically the knowledge of prefixes, suffixes, and/or roots and base words)."<sup>15</sup> In high school, students continue building their vocabulary by reading challenging

texts, studying academic vocabulary, and using context clues to infer word meanings. A robust vocabulary repertoire enhances students' ability to comprehend complex texts, express ideas effectively, and engage in higher-level thinking across subject areas.

Multilingual students, in the process of building their vocabulary and expanding their background knowledge, may find that the words they decode on the page are more meaningful when connected to their growing linguistic and cultural awareness. A strong vocabulary is essential for enhancing reading comprehension for all students, and explicit vocabulary instruction should be integrated throughout the curriculum. It is also important to consider vocabulary and the development of background knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

### **Comprehension**

Comprehension is the ability to actively and purposefully engage with text, and the ultimate goal of reading is to understand and interpret what is read. Children initially develop foundational comprehension skills by listening to stories, engaging in conversations, and connecting text to their own experiences. As students progress through elementary school, they acquire strategies for actively engaging with text, including predicting, visualizing, questioning, and summarizing.<sup>17</sup>

Middle school students further enhance their comprehension skills by analyzing and interpreting more complex texts, comparing main ideas across texts and authors, and making inferences. By high school, students refine their critical reading skills, evaluate multiple perspectives, and synthesize information from various sources, preparing them for advanced academic and real-world reading demands.

The primary reading goal for students is comprehension. While background knowledge

and vocabulary are key components of comprehension, it also relies on a set of skills that proficient readers use to extract meaning from text. Without these skills, students may struggle to retain information they have read and make overall sense of a text's message. These skills transfer across languages, but vocabulary and language structures vary. Therefore, explicit teaching about the structure of the English language in text is essential for ELs

### **Oracy**

Oracy, the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language, lays the foundation for literacy development. It includes acquiring vocabulary, understanding syntax, and developing comprehension skills through meaningful conversations and discussions. Engaging in conversations nurtures critical thinking, as it requires active listening and coherent responses, fostering confidence in self-expression. Oracy also promotes social interaction, empathy, and cultural understanding. Developing strong oral skills provides a basis for acquiring reading and writing abilities, facilitating the transfer of knowledge between communication modes and enhancing overall literacy proficiency.<sup>18</sup>

### **Writing**

Writing is a critical literacy skill that involves expressing thoughts and ideas coherently in print. It encompasses grammar, sentence structure, and organization. Writing complements reading and enhances language understanding. Writing enables individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions in a structured manner, fostering critical thinking and promoting vocabulary expansion, sentence construction, and grammar proficiency. Writing encourages reflection, self-expression, and creativity, deepening understanding of language and improving written and verbal communication. Writing serves as a catalyst for literacy development, enabling individuals

to effectively convey ideas and navigate the world of knowledge. Engaging students in both productive (writing) and receptive (reading) aspects of literacy enhances their skills in both areas.<sup>19</sup> Neglecting writing instruction can impede students' development as readers and limit their understanding of the purpose and motivation for literacy.<sup>20</sup>

### **Integration of Spelling, Handwriting, and 21st-Century Skills**

Literacy is a complex concept that involves various skills not outlined above, each with its own developmental trajectory.

### **Spelling**

Proficient spelling is a crucial part of literacy, as it has a significant impact on how written language functions. Spelling involves understanding how letters correspond to the sounds in words. When students spell, they connect the sounds they know (phonemes) to the letters in a word (spellings) using the part of their brain that processes spoken language. This skill is essential for accurately representing words and reading them correctly, bridging the gap between spoken and written language.<sup>21</sup>

However, the importance of spelling goes beyond word formation. It's a versatile skill closely tied to literacy. It not only helps with constructing words but also greatly expands one's vocabulary. A rich vocabulary, in turn, is vital for comprehending text deeply and extracting precise meanings. Good spelling ensures that when you write, your expression is clear and accurate, making it a critical aspect of effective communication. In summary, spelling isn't just a part of literacy; it forms the foundation upon which language proficiency is built.<sup>22</sup>

### **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>23</sup>

### Encoding and Decoding

Reading and writing are intricate processes that hinge on fluency, intertwining decoding and encoding skills. To engage in reading, it is essential to perform word decoding, which involves sounding out words. Conversely, when it comes to spelling, encoding words is necessary. To clarify, spelling entails breaking down the sounds within a word and aligning the corresponding letters with those sounds. Both encoding and decoding processes encompass the integration of auditory and visual processing elements. While decoding may seem simpler, simultaneous practice in pronunciation and spelling enhances decoding proficiency. This connection of skills extends beyond decoding and encoding, encompassing phonological awareness, vocabulary, grammar, text comprehension, tonal

nuances, and textual elements.

The process of literacy development involves learners advancing from basic skills to more advanced ones as they progress over time. Each subskill, from decoding to grammar, follows a unique developmental trajectory, significantly influencing overall reading and writing competence. However, assessing literacy, especially in early stages of complex content development, poses a nuanced challenge. To gauge literacy effectively, one must consider all components, including phonemic awareness, reading prowess, spelling accuracy, legible handwriting, and precise spelling. A well-rounded teaching approach that covers language mechanics, contextual grammar teaching, improving handwriting or typing skills, and using real-world assessments helps learners become confident in mastering literacy.<sup>24 25</sup>

### 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



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 components 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>26</sup>

[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. For more information, please refer to ISBE's [Media Literacy](#) webpage.

### **Considerations for Learners**

Our goal is clear and universal: To equip all students with the skills, strategies, and knowledge they need to become proficient readers and writers. However, the path to achieving this goal is multifaceted, and the diverse needs of students demand a nuanced approach. This section delves into the considerations that apply to a broad spectrum of learners, emphasizing that quality literacy instruction is not a one-size-fits-all endeavor.

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.

### **High-Quality, Diverse, and Culturally Sustaining Materials:**

The selection of books and curriculum materials plays a pivotal role in shaping students' perceptions of literacy. Exposure to materials that reflect their community, ethnicity, and culture fosters a sense of belonging and motivation in reading. Additionally, providing access to books in students' home languages strengthens connections between home and school, enabling cross-language awareness.<sup>27</sup>

### **Concepts of Print:**

Students must grasp fundamental concepts of print, including directionality and the structure of various genres. Recognizing the purposes of print is equally vital. Teachers should acknowledge that certain concepts of print may differ across languages and be mindful of these variations.<sup>28</sup>

### **High-Volume Print Access/Active Engagement with Text:**

Access to print materials and opportunities to engage with books and reading are essential. The more students engage with reading, the better they become at it. Making books available in students' home languages is essential, as it promotes engagement and motivation.<sup>29</sup>

### **Print-Immersive, Language-Rich, and Content-Rich Environment:**

Creating an environment rich in content, language, and print materials significantly enhances learning. Visual and tangible reminders support ELs' comprehension, especially when content includes print in their home language in addition to English.<sup>30</sup>

### **Support for Home Language and Bilingualism:**

Encouraging students to draw upon their primary language's linguistic resources is advantageous. Recognizing that all students come equipped with language skills is essential. Fostering cross-language awareness strengthens literacy. A supportive and affirming environment is essential to motivate students to engage in literacy and academic work.<sup>31</sup>

### **Flexible, Differentiated Instruction Based on Formative Assessment:**

Literacy development varies among students. Differentiated instruction rooted in ongoing assessment ensures personalized support. This approach is particularly critical for ELs and students with disabilities, addressing their unique needs, such as vocabulary development, and fostering language acquisition and comprehension. Differentiated instruction supports an inclusive learning environment catering to diverse strengths and requirements.

### **Further Considerations for English Learners: The Significance of Oracy and Vocabulary**

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>32</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 ELs when implemented effectively. It emphasized that two critical adjustments must be made to cater to the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners: (1) examining cross-language connections and transfers, and (2) fostering oral language proficiency.

The research unequivocally demonstrated that instruction must be adapted to align with the specific requirements and backgrounds of ELs. 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 native 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>33</sup>

Additionally, consider the following:

### **English Language Development (ELD):**

Dedicated ELD instruction is essential to facilitate learning to read in English. This instruction should focus on how English functions and provide ELs 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>34</sup>

### **Cross-Language Connections:**

ELs 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 sound-letter relationships and language structures is crucial.<sup>35</sup>

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

It should be noted that **all students** should receive instruction focused on the areas



identified by the National Reading Panel.<sup>35</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 have the skills necessary to be good readers. Additionally, some students may be dually identified as ELs 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>37</sup>

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

### **Considerations for Advanced Learners**

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan recognizes the importance of catering to the unique needs of advanced learners in our educational system. We emphasize the implementation of strategies such as acceleration, extension, enhancement, and curriculum compacting to 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, we aim to create a supportive learning environment where all students, regardless of their level, can thrive and continue their literacy journey with enthusiasm and confidence.

### **Progression of Literacy Development**

Literacy is not a static skill but a dynamic journey that unfolds over the course of a lifetime. Each stage of development presents unique challenges and opportunities to build the foundation of reading, writing, and communication abilities. Whether guiding the earliest interactions with language or nurturing advanced critical thinking and communication skills, this exploration of developmental trajectories equips us with the knowledge to foster lifelong literacy proficiency. Following are brief overviews of literacy skills by different age bands. See the [Literacy Progressions](#) resource for more detailed information.

#### **Early Childhood (Birth through Prekindergarten)**

The period from birth to prekindergarten is crucial for laying the foundation of language and literacy development. It starts with interactions between caregivers and infants, fostering bonding and early language skills. Exposure to board books, colorful pictures, and simple text introduces the concept that words carry meaning. Rhymes, songs, and wordplay help develop an ear for language sounds. The focus here is on building

oral communication skills and nurturing the joy of language.

### **Early Elementary (Kindergarten through 2nd grade)**

Emergent literacy takes center stage in these early years of formal education. Children transition from recognizing environmental sounds to breaking the reading code. Key practices include explicit phonics instruction, fluency development, and letter recognition. Children learn to decode and encode words, recognizing the connection between letters and sounds. Emphasis is placed on building a strong foundation for reading and writing, including comprehension, vocabulary, and oral language.

### **Upper Elementary (3rd grade through 5th grade)**

This stage marks a progression into more advanced literacy skills. Students refine their phonics skills, enhance reading fluency, expand vocabulary, and delve deeper into text comprehension. Critical reading skills are honed, and students learn to analyze texts at a more profound level. The focus shifts toward reading proficiency, comprehension, and vocabulary growth.

### **Middle Grades (6th grade through 8th grade)**

Literacy becomes a shared responsibility across content areas in middle school. Fluency with complex texts, vocabulary development, critical analysis, and advanced writing skills are cultivated. Students work on decoding multisyllabic words, analyzing texts critically, and crafting sophisticated written responses. Literacy is integrated into various subjects, emphasizing its importance across the curriculum.

### **High School (9th grade through 12th grade)**

High school continues to emphasize literacy skills, encompassing communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving across all subjects. Multimodal literacy and 21st-century skills

become essential. Reading, writing, and analysis are integral to success in advanced coursework. Students engage in complex tasks, both in content areas and in broader literacy contexts. Literacy is integrated into diverse subjects and formats to prepare students for a rapidly evolving world.

### **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 for literacy skills is foundational. 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 need. We emphasize that the screening process's of a student's academic well-being, enabling educators to intervene at the earliest signs of



integrity relies on the use of measures with proven reliability and validity.

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 data 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. Universal screening also guides decisions about which students may require additional assessments or supplemental or intensive intervention beyond what the core program provides.

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

### **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. 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 benchmark 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**

Monitoring the impact of specific interventions should occur 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. We emphasize that 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

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is a proactive comprehensive approach to provide targeted assistance to students who require additional support in literacy instruction and intervention. It addresses students' diverse needs while providing essential support to educators. This system is designed to 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 as a means 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.

### Key Components of MTSS in Literacy Instruction and Intervention:<sup>38</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 level of struggle.
- **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.
- **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.
- **Tier 3 – Small Group Interventions:** 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 evidence-based strategies at every tier of support to guide instruction and intervention.
- **Data-Driven 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, 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.

### **Classroom Practices in Alignment with Evidence-based instruction:**

- Explicit and systematic phonics instruction
- Phonemic awareness
- Decodable readers
- Oral reading fluency assessments and diagnostic skills assessments
- Knowledge building and vocabulary

### **Classroom Practices not in Alignment with Evidence-based instruction:**

- Three-cueing system: identifying words by meaning, structure, or visually matching
- Guided reading
- Leveled readers
- Running records
- Miscue analysis
- Balanced literacy models
- Reading workshop
- Embedded/implicit phonics
- Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA), Informal Reading Inventory (IRI), or Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI)





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



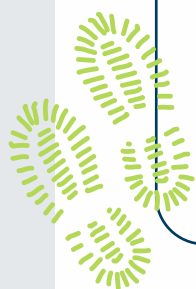
### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ 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.



**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?

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 1**

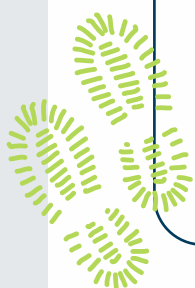
Every **student** receives high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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.
- ✓ 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.



## 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?
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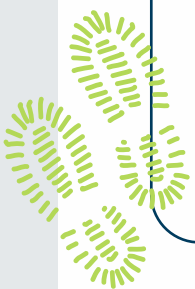
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- ✓ Classroom environments should be rich with evidence-based literacy practices.
- ✓ Effective collaboration between all levels ensures the integration of evidence-based literacy practices within classroom instruction.
- ✓ Curriculum and access to resources must be equitable and implemented with fidelity.
- ✓ Literacy instruction should combat the barriers that may exist outside the classroom.
- ✓ 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.




## 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?

NOTES:





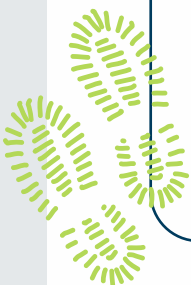
**GOAL 1**  
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### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ 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.
  - ☐ Access 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.
- 

**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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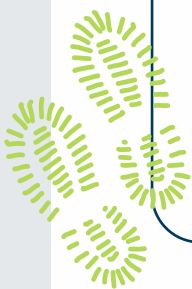
### Implementation Considerations



- ✓ Differing support may be needed across regions.
- ✓ 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.

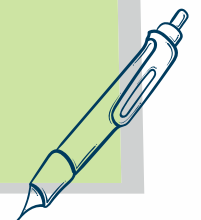




**Reflection Questions**

- 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?**

**NOTES:**





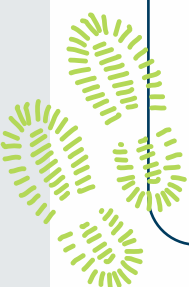
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### Implementation Considerations

- ✓ 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 state 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.

**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?**

**NOTES:**



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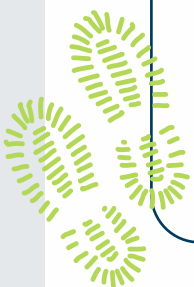
### Implementation Considerations



- ✓ 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.



**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 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?**

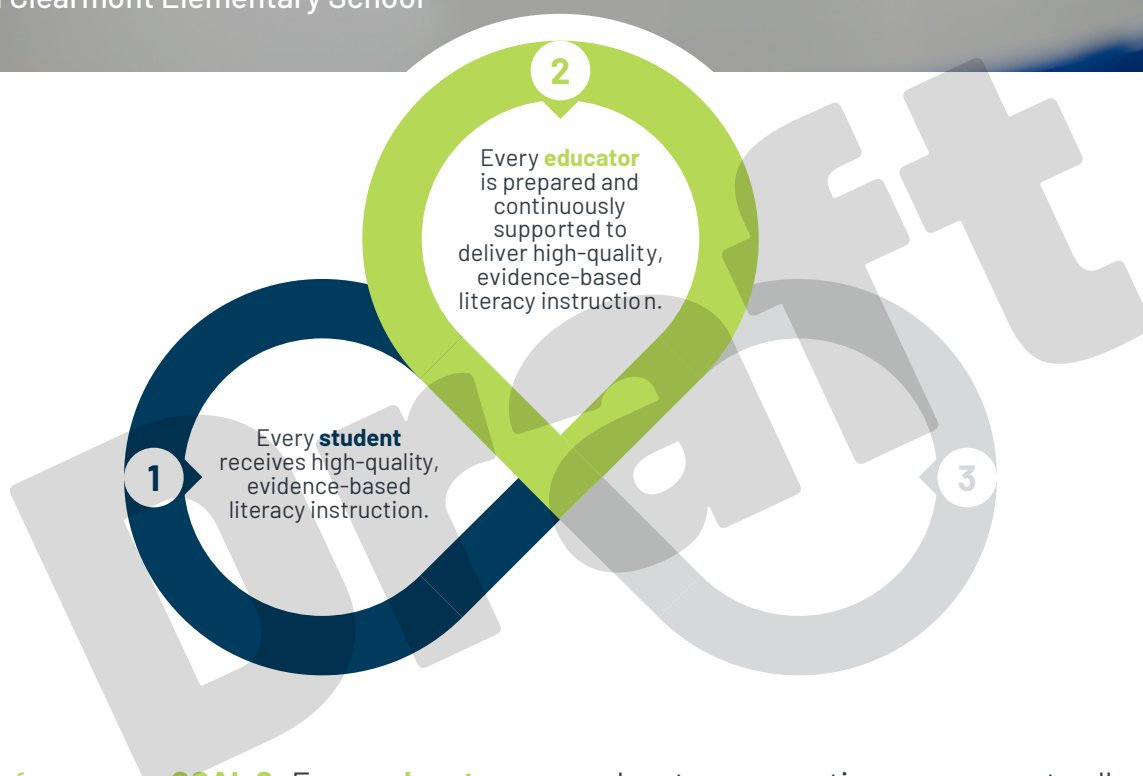
**NOTES:**





# 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.

## Overview

The cornerstone of improving literacy outcomes for Illinois learners hinges upon the professional learning and development of educators. A comprehensive approach is imperative to achieve this goal. It must address the holistic landscape of professional learning, which encompasses both in-service educators and those in

educator preparation programs at colleges and universities.

The commitment here lies in establishing intentional, comprehensive, and coordinated approaches aimed at fostering equitable and positive literacy outcomes for all Illinois learners. This approach recognizes the vital roles played by various educators and professional learning audiences, such as classroom teachers, pre-service teachers, school leaders, external consultants, professional development providers,

instructional coaches, and faculty at institutions of higher education.

At its core, professional learning in literacy seeks to cultivate a deep understanding of the continuum of language and literacy development, along with the creation of literacy-rich environments. This vision necessitates alignment at every system level:

- **Classroom and pre-service teachers** 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**, responsible for curriculum development and teacher evaluation, possess a thorough understanding of creating literacy-rich environments.
- **External consultants, professional development providers, and instructional coaches** build upon this knowledge and provide evidence of successful implementation across Pre-K through Grade 12 settings.
- **Faculty at institutions of higher education** align their instruction with the literacy framework and incorporate practical experiences or research-based practices into their courses.

In addition to addressing the professional learning of in-service educators, this section delves into the critical role of educator preparation programs in colleges. It explores how these programs can be tailored to align with literacy goals, emphasizing curriculum design, preparing teachers for diverse learners, and integrating assessment and accountability measures.

Ultimately, the aim is to foster the development of a robust and interconnected ecosystem of educator professional learning and development. This ecosystem empowers every educator, from aspiring teachers in colleges to experienced professionals in the field, to deliver evidence-based literacy instruction effectively.<sup>1</sup>

## Attending to Equity

This section is unequivocally committed to addressing equity throughout every facet of professional learning for in-service educators. Equitable access to high-quality professional development opportunities is essential for fostering inclusive and effective literacy instruction. Educators from all backgrounds who serve diverse students need equal access to the resources, strategies, and support necessary to excel in their roles. By prioritizing equity, we aim to narrow the literacy achievement gap and create a more inclusive and empowering educational landscape for all learners across Illinois.



\*Photo from Affinity Group at Naperville District 203



\*Photo from Literacy Summit 2020

## Teacher Preparation Education and Training Importance of Preparing Future Educators

The preparation of future educators is pivotal to our mission of improving literacy outcomes for Illinois learners. While we may not directly oversee educator preparation programs in colleges and universities, we recognize the

crucial role these institutions play in shaping the educators who will work in our elementary and secondary schools. Our commitment is to collaborate and provide guidance to ensure that the preparation of future educators aligns with our state's literacy goals.

We support the following considerations in the design and implementation of educator preparation programs and courses:

- **Alignment with literacy framework:** We encourage our higher education partners to align their educator preparation programs with the literacy framework and the objectives outlined in this plan. By doing so, we aim to create a cohesive and unified approach to literacy instruction, from the classroom to teacher preparation institutions.
- **Inclusion of evidence-based practices:** We invite educator preparation programs to incorporate evidence-based practices into their curricula. 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. We encourage educator preparation programs to equip future educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to address the unique needs of these diverse learners. This includes training in multicultural education, multilingual learner support, and culturally responsive teaching practices.

### Preparing Teachers for Diverse Learners

We recognize the importance of cultural and linguistic diversity in our classrooms and encourage educator preparation programs to provide training that equips future teachers to work effectively with students from various

backgrounds. This includes understanding and respecting cultural differences, fostering an inclusive classroom environment, and tailoring instruction to meet the needs of all learners. Given the increasing number of English learners and multilingual students in our schools, educator preparation programs should emphasize strategies for supporting multilingual learners. 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

An emphasis is placed on robust evaluation processes within educator preparation programs because the importance of evaluating teacher candidates' readiness to effectively teach literacy has been recognized. These assessments are designed to gauge candidates' knowledge of literacy instruction and their ability to apply it in real-world classroom settings.

Furthermore, there is an encouragement for educator preparation programs 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.

Another consideration for existing educator preparation programs to examine is the alignment to the [Standards for Endorsement in Elementary Education](#), which provide specific literacy standards for elementary teachers to guide the content of educator preparation programs that are preparing elementary teachers to facilitate literacy development.<sup>2</sup> These standards address seven domains of learning that cover instruction, assessment, instructional methods, the needs of all learners, and a supportive environment for literacy learning. The following graphic provides a brief overview of these standards for endorsement.



## The Seven Domains of Learning

### The Language and Literacy Curriculum

1.

- a. Teaching and learning theory;
- b. Developmental sequence of language and literacy skills;
- c. Appropriate Illinois learning standards;
- d. Components and evaluation of a comprehensive curriculum
- e. Role of early, systematic, and explicit teaching of foundationl literacy skills;
- f. Research-based strategies to support struggling readers; and
- g. Developmentally appropriate literacy assessments.

### Foundational Knowledge

2.

- 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.

### Using Research-Based Instructional Approaches

3.

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

### Using Materials, Texts, and Technology

4.

- 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 responseive texts; and
- f. Technology to support literacy instruction

### Monitoring Student Learning Through Assessment

5.

- 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.

### Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

6

- 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.

### Constructing a Supportive Language and Literacy Environment

7.

- 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.



## Considerations for Aligning Teacher Preparation Programs to the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

The following considerations serve as a strategic guide for aligning educator preparation programs with the overarching goals and principles of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.<sup>3</sup>

### Course Content Improvement

- Assess courses for the comprehensive coverage of the seven literacy components outlined in Section 1, pinpointing opportunities for enhancement.
- Consider consistency in instruction across various sections of a course.
- Explore strategies for enhancing existing courses to incorporate a greater emphasis on evidence-based reading instruction.
- Refine lecture topics and assignments to center on the fundamental components of reading instruction outlined in Section 1.

### Quality of Course Materials and Instruction:

- Guarantee that practice opportunities enable candidates to apply every facet of effective reading instruction across a variety of student demographics.
- Use high-quality, evidence-based materials.
- Remove instruction that contradicts evidence-based practices from the curriculum.

### Faculty Development and Hiring Practices:

- Explore supplementary training opportunities for existing faculty members who may require further familiarity with the evidence-based reading practices.
- Ensure that reading instructors who are hired are prepared to provide instruction on evidence-based practices.

### External Collaboration and Expert Review:

- Harness professional networks to establish connections with experts in evidence-based reading instruction.
- Extend invitations to reading specialists to assess course syllabi and materials.

Consider referencing the ISBE Illinois Educator Preparation Profile (IEPP) webpage, which offers a glimpse into the strength and quality of educator preparation programs across the state, in addition to this plan. 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.

## Professional Learning for In-Service Educators

Professional learning emerges as a pivotal focus in the pursuit of advancing literacy outcomes for all Illinois learners. This section addresses the distinct realm of professional learning tailored for in-service educators, which includes teachers, school and district leaders, professional learning providers, and more. Our approach to professional learning is firmly anchored in the delivery of high-quality, job-embedded experiences meticulously aligned with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan. The paramount objective is to bolster educators at every juncture of their professional journey in recognition of the dynamic nature of effective literacy instruction.

### Differentiated Professional Learning Training Strategies for Educators

Educators are diverse, with varying needs and preferences. Therefore, professional learning strategies should cater to the diverse audience encompassing teachers, school and district leaders, professional learning providers, and more. There are different strategies for professional learning for in-service educators that depend on the urgency, budget, and willingness of teachers to participate.

#### Strategy 1: Online, Asynchronous

- Prepare 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.
- Have modules span the curriculum, offering a comprehensive approach.

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

- Blend synchronous online sessions with asynchronous learning for flexibility.
- Participate in online sessions with instructors and peers for real-time engagement.
- Complete modules on the topic at your convenience.
- Repeat strategy across a suite of topics to ensure comprehensive coverage.

### **Strategy 3: Live/Hybrid/Asynchronous Mix**

- Combine in-person and online elements for a blended approach.
- Attend in-person sessions, fostering a sense of community and initial learning.
- Engage in further learning and implementation remotely.
- Conclude the course with another in-person session to acknowledge completion.

The use of Strategies 2 or 3 will result in increased engagement by teachers.

Cohorts should be formed based on grade level. Instruction for each module should incorporate initial learning plus implementation to bring the new knowledge “into the classroom.” Each class then builds on what was learned during the week’s implementation. 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 can be achieved by a common

curriculum with instructors participating in weekly meetings with each other to debrief on the past week and discuss the upcoming implementation for the next week.



### **Effective Professional Learning Systems**

Professional learning should make strategic efforts to ground instructional methods in evidence-supported approaches. The objective is to empower educators with the knowledge and skills necessary for the effective application of evidence-based practices in their instructional contexts. Professional learning experiences, which are a blend of theoretical insights and practical applications, equip educators with the tools needed to implement these practices, fostering literacy growth in their students.

Additionally, tailoring professional learning, including formats and delivery methods, to meet the diverse needs of the target audience is a powerful lever to improving literacy outcomes.

- **Teachers:** These professional learning needs center around cultivating a deep understanding of the continuum of language and literacy development, while concurrently creating literacy-rich environments within their classrooms.
- **Pre-Service Teachers:** The focus here is on equipping future educators with the essential knowledge and skills required to explicitly teach literacy concepts, ensuring alignment with

children's developmental needs.

- **School Leaders:** Professional learning for school leaders involves the development of expertise in curriculum development and the ability to foster literacy-rich environments throughout educational institutions.
- **Professional Development Providers:** These providers must build upon their foundational knowledge to offer evidence-based professional learning experiences, thereby supporting educators in their literacy instruction journey.
- **Instructional Coaches:** The key emphasis is on extending their expertise to effectively support educators in implementing evidence-based literacy practices within their classrooms.
- **Higher Education Faculty:** The primary focus for these educators lies in aligning their instruction with the literacy framework, integrating research-based practices, and ensuring the robust design of their curriculum to prepare future teachers effectively.

Provision of various avenues for professional learning ensures that equitable access and meaningful development opportunities are available for educators committed to advancing literacy instruction. Furthermore, prioritizing equitable access to professional learning opportunities tailored to the unique needs of diverse learners is paramount. Focused learning in evidence-based practices that best support ELs, multilingual students, neurodiverse learners, and so on is imperative. Emphasis on equity in professional learning empowers educators to deliver on the goal of inclusive and effective literacy instruction to all students, irrespective of their own language backgrounds.

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

Our focus on professional learning is rooted in a commitment to see measurable improvements in literacy instruction. We believe that when educators are supported with high-quality, job-embedded professional learning, the positive impact on student outcomes is undeniable.

Considerations for in-service educators participating in professional learning include:

- Developing a deeper understanding of the Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework.
- Mastery of evidence-based literacy practices
- The ability to create literacy-rich environments in their classrooms.
- Implementation of diverse and inclusive instructional strategies.
- Effective use of assessment tools and data to inform instruction.
- Building positive dispositions toward language and literacy skills.
- Collaborative engagement within professional learning communities.
- A commitment to ongoing reflection and improvement in literacy instruction.

### **Professional Development Prioritization**

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 considered when considering grade- or age-level content for professional learning. Additional information for consideration may be found in Section 3: Framework for Effective Literacy Leadership.



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**GOAL 2**

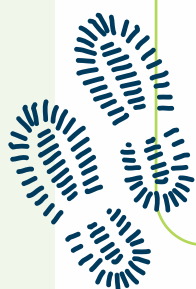
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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.

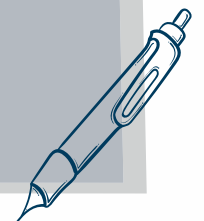




**Reflection Questions**

- 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 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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 2**

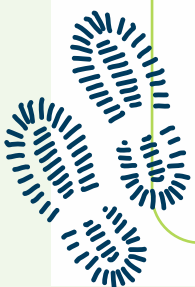
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

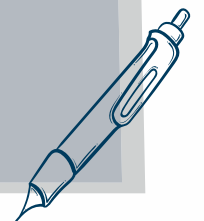
- ☐ Connects with experts in the field to share strategies that will enhance instruction and provide opportunities for teacher growth in mindset and practice.
- ☐ Organize and lead literacy-focused workshops or PLCs.
- ☐ Provide ongoing coaching and feedback to teachers.
- ☐ Collaborate with school leaders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



**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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 2**

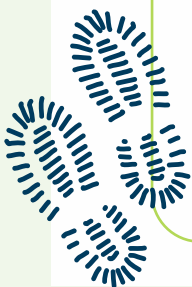
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

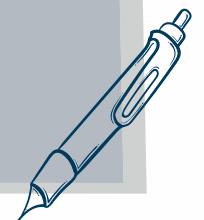
- ☐ Train staff to analyze assessment data and allocate time for data review.
- ☐ Provide funding and time for teachers to attend relevant literacy training.
- ☐ Provide job-embedded and sustained professional learning.
- ☐ Form a literacy leadership team with representation from various grade levels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



**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?**

**NOTES:**





**GOAL 2**

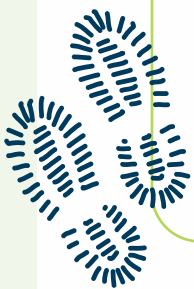
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

- ☐ Build school capacity through professional development, funding, and creating a safe space for planning and continuous improvement in literacy instruction.
- ☐ 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. Include topics such as systematic phonics instruction, direct instruction, explicit instruction, five components of reading, adolescent literacy, writing development and instruction, language learners literacy development, reading intervention, assessment, and structures for continuous improvement.
- ☐ 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.



## 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 state 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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 2**

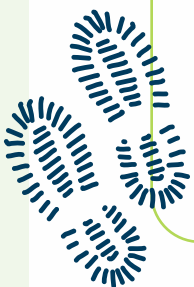
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

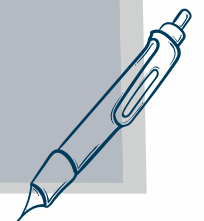
- ☐ Research and apply for funding to support professional learning for administrators and teachers across your region.
- ☐ Assist districts in developing their own professional learning and embedded on-the-job training using district coaches.
- ☐ Share messaging plans with regional leaders to help maintain 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 or policy changes that promote evidence-based literacy instruction at the state level.



## Reflection Questions

1. How can regional coordination enhance the impact of literacy initiatives?
2. Do 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?

NOTES:



**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 about appropriate professional learning that can be leveraged to support initiatives in the State Literacy Plan.
- ☐ Establish and fund ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities that are accessible and relevant to educators in all regions of the state. This could include online courses, in-person workshops, and coaching and mentoring programs, all of which should be designed to provide educators with the latest research and evidence-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment.
- ☐ Promote professional learning opportunities through established networks.
- ☐ Provide support to districts and schools in prioritizing and 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.
- ☐ Develop a statewide literacy assessment and reporting system.
- ☐ Engage in regular dialogue and collaboration with educational stakeholders to refine literacy initiatives.





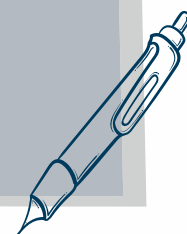
**Reflection Questions**

- 1. How can state funding be strategically allocated to maximize literacy impact?**
- 2. Are state-provided resources and guidance effectively supporting districts and regions?**
- 3. What statewide data can be collected and analyzed to assess literacy outcomes?**
- 4. How can collaboration with educators, researchers, and advocates enhance state-level literacy efforts?**
- 5. How can state leaders provide ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities that are accessible and relevant to educators in all regions of the state?**
- 6. How can state leaders ensure that all educators have access to the latest research and evidence-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment?**
- 7. How can state leaders support educators in applying evidence-based practices to meet the diverse needs of all learners, including those with disabilities, English learners, and students from marginalized and disenfranchised communities?**

## Reflection Questions

8. 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?
9. How can state leaders use data and assessment to guide educators in making instructional decisions, identifying areas of need, and monitoring progress toward literacy goals?
10. As best practices and evidence-based research continues to evolve, how will ISBE ensure the State Literacy Plan considers longitudinal and current best practices?
11. What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?

NOTES:



**GOAL 2**

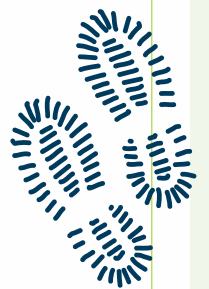
Every **educator** is prepared and continuously supported to deliver high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

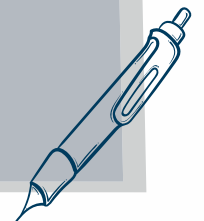
- ☐ Provide learning opportunities for parents and community members to share the reasoning behind a literacy plan and provide ways to support their children at home.
- ☐ Participate in training sessions and workshops to better understand and support students with diverse needs.
- ☐ Collaborate with local childcare centers, libraries, or after-school programs to share expectations on what literacy skills need to be developed prior to kindergarten. Work with these community members to develop literacy programs that students can access all year (e.g., summer, winter breaks, before or after school).
- ☐ Organize community literacy events, book drives, or reading programs.
- ☐ Establish parent and caregiver workshops on supporting literacy development.
- ☐ Collaborate with local schools to create literacy-focused family engagement programs.
- ☐ Attend school board meetings and advocate for strong literacy policies.
- ☐ Participate in local literacy task forces or committees to contribute to evidence-based instruction efforts.



**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?**

**NOTES:**





# FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE 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.

## Overview

Leadership across all levels of the educational system plays 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 leadership capacity, encompassing leaders at every level. The aim is to empower leaders to champion evidence-based literacy instruction effectively.

## Attending to Equity

At the core of our commitment to literacy success lies an unwavering dedication to equity. We acknowledge persistent disparities in literacy outcomes and firmly resolve to confront these disparities head-on. Our strategic approach to enhancing leadership capacity is anchored



in principles of **fairness, inclusivity, and justice**. Leaders across all echelons must prioritize equity in their decision-making, recognizing the distinct needs of diverse students and working to dismantle systemic barriers to literacy achievement. Our commitment to equity mandates the acknowledgment of the multifaceted identities and experiences of students, fostering a learning milieu where all voices resonate with significance.

We appreciate the ongoing commitment of districts to adopt state and local equity-focused initiatives, and we aim to provide them with clear, explicit, and evidence-based guidance. Our focus is on supporting educators in implementing these changes, and we encourage all stakeholders to approach the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan with an asset-based mindset, recognizing the collective responsibility of ALL educators to help every student achieve literacy upon graduation.

## **Mastery of Literacy Instructional Knowledge and Skills**

Leadership capacity 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.

- 1. Informed Decision-Making:** Leaders equipped with a deep understanding of Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction are poised to make well-informed decisions. They can decipher the intricate science of literacy instruction, discern between effective and less effective pedagogical practices, and navigate the web of research findings. In doing so, they not only lead their teams with confidence but also align their decisions with evidence-based practices, thereby optimizing the chances of literacy success for all students.
- 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.

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



\*Photo from  
East Aurora School District



environment that fosters both academic success and linguistic development among multilingual students.

**3. Visionary Leadership:** Leaders well-versed in literacy instruction are not only custodians of the present but also architects of the future. They can craft a vision for their institutions that centers on literacy excellence. This vision is not vague or abstract; it's grounded in a deep understanding of the processes and practices that underpin literacy success. Such visionary leadership can inspire and mobilize teams to work cohesively toward the shared goal of improving literacy outcomes through the use of coordinated Support and Implementation Considerations.

**4. Continuous Improvement:** The field of literacy is dynamic, with new research and practices emerging regularly. Leaders who possess an understanding of literacy instruction recognize the need for continuous learning and improvement. They set a precedent for a culture of ongoing professional development and growth within their institutions. This commitment to continuous improvement ensures that their leadership remains relevant and effective in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

In essence, the importance of leaders acquiring a deep understanding of literacy instruction lies in their ability to effectively lead, support, and inspire those within their purview. It is the key to unlocking the potential for improved literacy outcomes and, in turn, a brighter future for all students. Leadership without this foundational knowledge is like a ship without a compass – it may set sail, but its direction and destination remain uncertain.<sup>2</sup>

### **Leadership Levers to Promote Literacy Success**

Leaders who want to cultivate an environment

conducive to evidence-based literacy instruction should apply the following levers as they apply to the specific local system in which they are operating.



**“Leadership without this foundational knowledge is like a ship without a compass – it may set sail, but its direction and destination remain uncertain.”**

### **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 youth. Family engagement is fostered 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 are inclusive of diverse school-communities that are rich in language, culture, and school experiences. They are responsive to student and family needs.

### **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 luminaries, researchers, and educators – both internal and external to their respective institutions. Encourage cross-pollination of ideas and practices to enrich the collective consciousness of literacy instruction..

### **Strengthen Data-Informed Decision-Making Skills:**

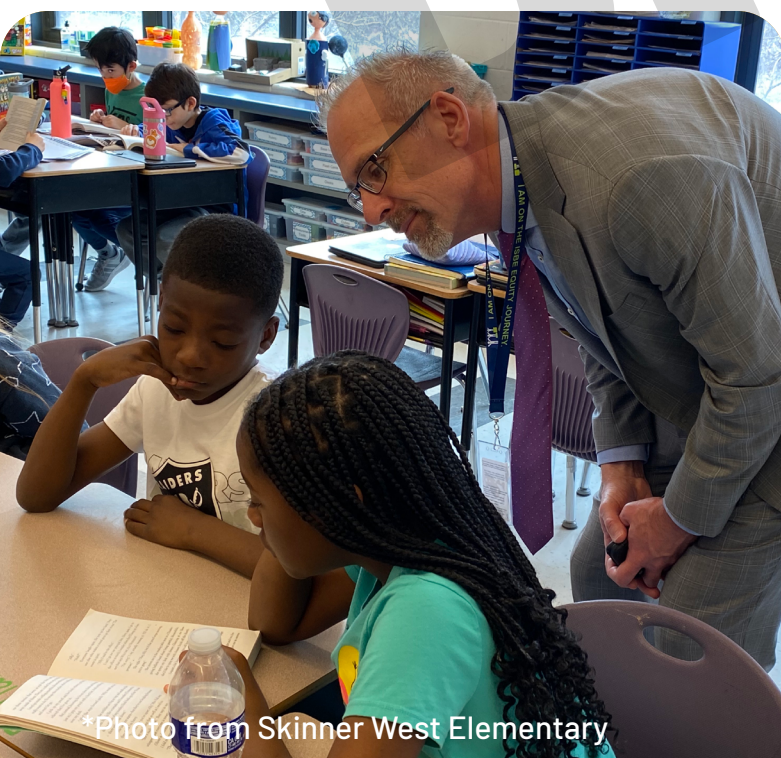
Equip all educators with the aptitude to judiciously analyze literacy data. Promote insights derived from data-driven methodologies to guide decisions relating to curriculum, pedagogy, and interventions, thereby ensuring the equitable availability of requisite support to all students.<sup>3</sup>

### **Undertake Equity Appraisals:**

Conduct comprehensive equity assessments aimed at identifying and rectifying inequities in literacy outcomes across different student groups. This examination should encompass the scrutiny of existing policies, resource allocation paradigms, and pedagogical strategies.

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

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



\*Photo from Skinner West Elementary





\*Photo from Community Consolidated School District 89

### **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>

In summary, a deep understanding of literacy instruction is essential for effective leadership in education. It enables leaders to make informed decisions, provide tailored support, and inspire a vision of literacy excellence. This knowledge is crucial for navigating the dynamic world of literacy, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and ensuring positive outcomes for all students. By applying specific strategies, leaders can create an environment where literacy is a transformative force, contributing to a more equitable and inclusive education system.

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**GOAL 3**

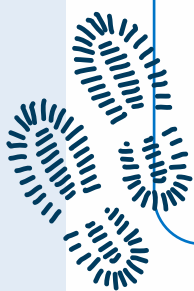
- Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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.



## 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?

NOTES:





**GOAL 3**

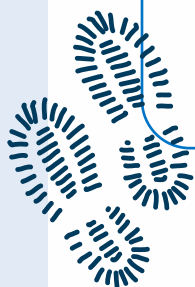
Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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.
- ✓ Mentors and collaboration with teachers are essential components of teacher leaders' roles in shaping literacy conditions.

**Next Steps**

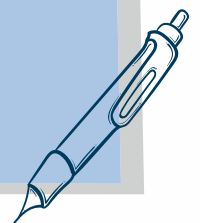
- ☐ School administrators can hire certified teacher leaders who are specialists in their field and create systems of support for classroom teachers and students.
- ☐ Facilitate professional learning communities focused on literacy improvement.
- ☐ Seek opportunities for leadership training and development.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



## 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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 3**

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



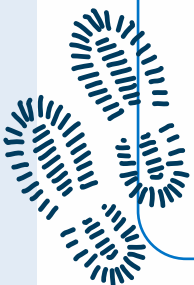
### Implementation Considerations



- ✓ 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

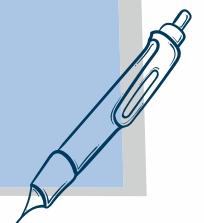
- ☐ Foster relationships and use discussion protocols to analyze the data with staff.
- ☐ Streamline school efforts to align with improved literacy practices.
- ☐ Engage in a continuous improvement cycle.
- ☐ Develop a school-wide literacy plan aligned with the state's goals.
- ☐ Provide leadership training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



## 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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 3**

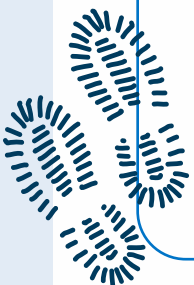
Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**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**

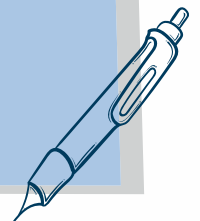
- ☐ Build leadership capacity within schools.
- ☐ Establish principal support groups.
- ☐ Consider piloting implementation to learn what works best.
- ☐ Initiate a Request for Proposal process with curriculum providers.
- ☐ Collaborate with school leaders to develop district-wide literacy benchmarks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



**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?**

**NOTES:**





**GOAL 3**

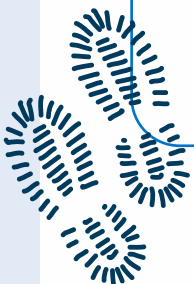
Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Stakeholder understanding of the state literacy plan may differ. Explicit should be consistent across all 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**

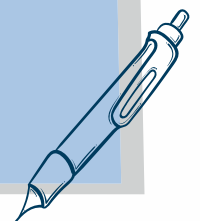
- ☐ Organize regional conferences or workshops focused on literacy best practices.
- ☐ Foster partnerships between districts and community organizations to expand literacy resources.
- ☐ Advocate for state-level support for regional literacy initiatives.



**Reflection Questions**

- 1. How will regional leaders communicate and update the districts in your region regarding the State 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?**

**NOTES:**



**GOAL 3**

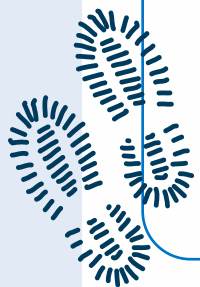
Every **leader** is equipped to create, maintain, and sustain equitable conditions for high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

**Implementation Considerations**

- ✓ Varying levels of understanding and acceptance of the State 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 practices. This could include providing training on how to analyze and interpret data, as well as using data to inform instructional decisions. Leaders can also support the development and implementation of effective assessment practices that align with state standards and provide timely, actionable data.
- ☐ Establish clear criteria and standards for evaluating literacy initiatives and programs to ensure they align with state priorities and goals for literacy development. This can include identifying evidence-based practices and strategies.
- ☐ 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.



**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. How can state leaders streamline reporting and communication processes to reduce burden and duplication, and ensure that all stakeholders have access to the information they need to support literacy development?**
- 5. What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?**

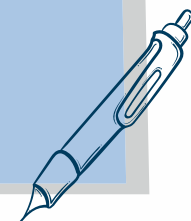
## Reflection Questions

**6. How can state policies and regulations better support literacy development at all levels?**

**7. How research and evidence-based practices should guide statewide literacy initiatives?**

**5. How can I engage with other states to learn from their successful literacy programs?**

*NOTES:*



**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.

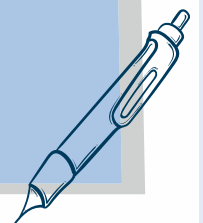




**Reflection Questions**

- 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?**

**NOTES:**





# SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT AND IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

\*Photo from Diamond Lake School District 76

This section focuses to ensure that every system is aligned to promote literacy success by streamlining and focusing initiatives on literacy.

## Overview

Our primary goal in this section of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan is crystal clear: To ensure that every system within our education framework is aligned and dedicated to promoting literacy success for all students at every grade level. We recognize that literacy is the foundation upon which all other learning is built, making it imperative that we streamline and focus our initiatives on literacy instruction. By doing so, we empower our 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 their current practices, recognizing the importance of alignment in literacy education, and providing actionable strategies to bring about positive change.

## Attending to Equity

We prioritize equity by recognizing that literacy success cannot be achieved without addressing

systemic disparities. Aligning the entire system to prioritize the elimination of barriers and biases that hinder access to quality literacy instruction and resources is necessary. We understand that students come from diverse backgrounds, each with unique needs and challenges. This commitment means actively working to provide additional support and resources to those who need it most, ensuring that every child, regardless of their background, can reach their full literacy potential. Thoughtful reflection and action can enable us 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

Consider the following questions from your specific role and what leverages exist that can implement change and transform the system in which you operate.

The reflections and guiding questions below are provided as a resource to build upon the previous context built through the preceding stakeholder reflections from the end of previous sections.

## Assessing Your Current Literacy Landscape

- Reflection: What are the **strengths** and **weaknesses** of our current literacy programs?

- Guiding Question: How can we **build** on our strengths and address our weaknesses?

## Analyzing Student Data

- Reflection: What patterns or trends do you notice in **student performance** data?

- Guiding Question: How can data inform our **literacy improvement** efforts?

## Identifying Stakeholders

- Reflection: Who are the key **stakeholders** in our literacy initiative?

- Guiding Question: How can we involve these **stakeholders** in shaping our literacy plan?

## Defining Your Vision and Mission

- Reflection: What do you envision for literacy **achievement** in your school/district?

- Guiding Question: How can a clear vision and mission **guide** your literacy plan?



## Setting Specific Goals

- Reflection: What specific literacy **goals** are most critical for your students?

- Guiding Question: How will you measure **progress** toward these goals?

## Building a Collaborative Team

- Reflection: Who should be part of your literacy leadership **team**?

- Guiding Question: How can **diverse** expertise benefit your literacy efforts?

## Curriculum Alignment

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

- Guiding Question: What **changes** or enhancements are needed for alignment?

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## Instructional Strategies

- Reflection: Are there **innovative** instructional **strategies** you can incorporate?

- Guiding Question: How can these strategies **engage** students **effectively**?

## Assessment and Progress Monitoring

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

- Guiding Question: How can assessment data **guide** instructional **adjustments**?

## Resource Allocation

- Reflection: How can you allocate resources strategically for **maximum impact**?

- Guiding Question: What resources are essential for **successful** implementation?



## Professional Development

- Reflection: What **professional development** opportunities do your educators need?

- Guiding Question: How will ongoing training **support** your literacy plan?

## Family and Community Engagement

- Reflection: How can you actively involve **families** and the **successful** in literacy?

- Guiding Question: What strategies will enhance family and community **partnerships**?

## Communication Plan

- Reflection: How will you ensure transparent and effective **communication**?

- Guiding Question: What channels and **methods** will be most effective?

## Data-Driven Decision-Making

- Reflection: How will you use **data** to inform decisions throughout the plan?

- Guiding Question: What **processes** can ensure data-driven decision-making?

## Evaluation and Reflection

- Reflection: How often will you **evaluate** the effectiveness of your plan?

- Guiding Question: What indicators will you use to **measure success**?

## Adjusting Your Plan

- Reflection: Are you open to **adapting** and refining your plan as needed?

- Guiding Question: How can **flexibility** contribute to long-term success?

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## Finalizing Your Literacy Plan

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

- Guiding Question: How can you ensure your plan is **comprehensive**?

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## Finalizing Your Literacy Plan

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

- Guiding Question: How will you **prioritize** tasks to meet your goals?

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## Commitment to Literacy

- Reflection: What is your personal commitment to **improving** literacy?

- Guiding Statement: Your dedication is crucial; together, we can **transform** literacy outcomes.



# TOOLS AND RESOURCES

\*Photo from Fremont School District 79

## Overview

This section of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan offers a list of tools and resources designed to support districts, teachers, and families in their efforts 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, and we will continue to expand and update the 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 our commitment to fostering educational equity and meet the

diverse needs of all students. We recognize that every student's journey to literacy proficiency is unique, influenced by a myriad of factors, including cultural background, learning abilities, and socio-economic circumstances. Therefore, we encourage school districts, educators, and parents to select resources that not only align with their educational goals but also take into account the individual needs and identities of their 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 and facilitate their literacy development. We aim to empower educators and families to make informed choices that promote equitable educational outcomes for all students.

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

## 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 may also 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 English learners (ELs) 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 Assessment Department](#) oversees the assessment of students in Illinois.

The [Illinois Report Card](#) is released annually by the Illinois State Board of Education. It shows how the state, and each school and 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 to allow for data-driven decision-making and a deeper understanding of how data can be used within the state, districts, schools, and classrooms..

[Public Act 103-0402- Literacy and Justice for All Act](#) - 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.”

## Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

Supports provided by the Illinois State Board of Education include:

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

The [Specialized Instruction](#) center 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.

[Multilingual 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.

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

[College and Career and CTE](#) 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 and Innovation 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 college and career.

**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 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 \(FCRR\)](#) 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 [International Literacy Association \(ILA\)](#) 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](#) (NCIL), operated by Boston University's Wheelock College of Education and Human Development with funding from the United States Department of Education, is a partnership among literacy

experts, university researchers, and technical assistance providers from the University of Oregon, Florida State University, and RMC Research Corporation. Resources are provided for parents/families, schools/districts, and state agencies.

The [Illinois MTSS Network \(IL MTSS-N\)](#) 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.

[Multitiered Systems of Supports for English Learners](#) provides model demonstration research sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education.

The national public media literacy initiative, [Reading Rockets](#) offers information and resources pertaining to how youngsters learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. This resource provides information on reading instruction and presents "what works" in a way that parents and educators can understand and use.

[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.

[Workbook pages](#)



## Educator Professional Learning, Development, and Support

The [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 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 \(IEA\)](#) and the [National Education Association \(NEA\)](#)
- [Illinois Federation of Teachers \(IFT\)](#) and the [American Federation of Teachers \(AFT\)](#)

[Workbook pages](#)

## Effective Literacy Leadership

[District/School Leadership](#) The 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 \(ROEs\) and Intermediate Service Centers \(ISCs\)](#) 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 \(IPA\)](#)
  - [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 has also 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 \(IASA\)](#)
- [Illinois Association of School Business Officials \(Illinois ASBO\)](#)
- [Illinois Association of Regional School Superintendents \(IARSS\)](#)
- [Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools \(AIRSS\)](#)
- [Superintendents' Commission for the Study of Demographics and Diversity](#)

[Workbook pages](#)

## Systems of 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- Literacy and Justice for All Act](#) "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](#).

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## Key Terms

This glossary provides explanations to terms found in the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

Exhibit 1. Table Exhibit

Term	Definition
<b>LITERACY</b>	<p>Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, evaluate, create, compute, and communicate effectively through using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context.</p> <p>Literacy is the ongoing development of multiple skills and involves the ability to apply these skills in diverse contexts, including academic, workplace, community, and personal settings, and to adapt and transfer these skills across different disciplines, cultures, languages, and technologies.</p> <p>Literacy is a fundamental right, a practice of enjoyment, and an essential 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>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>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 the knowledge of the logic of the written symbol system (especially letter-sound relationships and patterns in alphabetic orthographies).
<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) that are considered effective based on scientific evidence. Researchers will typically study the impact of the resource(s) in a controlled setting e.g., for example, they may study differences in skill growth between students whose educators used the resources and students whose educators did not) before deeming a program or practice "evidence-based." See <a href="#">Research v Evidence What does it really mean?</a>

<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>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>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 helps teachers identify students who are not meeting grade-level learning goals. Screening assessments check for warning signs to see if students have reading difficulties, including dyslexia. Screening can provide valuable information to teachers to help struggling readers or those who are likely to struggle in the future.
<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>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 FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS</b>	Foundational skills are the building blocks of reading. The goal is to help students comprehend the texts they read. Students must develop proficiency with print concepts, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency skills that will help them better understand texts.
<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>RESEARCH-BASED</b>	Such practices were developed based on the best research available in the field. This means that users can feel confident that the strategies and activities included in the program or practice have a strong scientific basis for their use. Unlike evidence-based practices or programs, research-based practices have not been researched in a controlled setting. See <a href="#">Research v Evidence What does it really mean?</a>
<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>	Reading a text with the guidance or support of a teacher is called scaffolded reading. It is the provision and gradual withdrawal of teaching support through modeling, questioning, feedback, and so forth for a student's learning growth across successive attempts, thus transferring more and more 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>SPEAKING</b>	Speaking is the act of communicating by producing oral-aural language.

<b>STANDARDS</b>	Standards are the learning goals or what students should know or be able to do at each grade level. States have identified a set of competencies (known as the Common Core State Standards) expected of students across the grade levels for literacy in fiction and informational reading as well as in writing, speaking, and listening.
<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>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," according to ILS. (The adjective is syntactic(al).)
<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>WHOLE- LANGUAGE</b>	<p>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.*</p>
<b>WRITING</b>	<p>Writing is the process of recording language graphically by hand or other means, as by letters, logograms, and other symbols.</p>

\*Entries taken from the International Literacy Association

Draft

# EARLY CHILDHOOD

BIRTH THROUGH PRE-KINDERGARTEN

*Building the  
Foundation for  
Language and  
Bonding*

Language and literacy development begin at birth, focusing on interaction with caregivers. Exposure to rhymes, songs, and wordplay builds language skills.



## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

### Oral Interaction:

Engage in frequent conversations with children to build vocabulary and language skills.

### Reading Aloud:

Read board books with colorful pictures, emphasizing the connection between words and images.

### Rhymes and Songs:

Use rhymes, songs, and simple wordplay to develop an ear for the sounds of language.



## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

### Observation:

Observe children's responsiveness to sounds, words, and their ability to make connections and meaning.

### Vocabulary Tracking:

Keep track of vocabulary growth and development and word recognition milestones.

### Language Milestones:

Monitor progress in reaching language development milestones.



## INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

### Language-Rich Environment:

Create environments rich in language, with books, music, and verbal interaction.

### Parental Involvement:

Encourage parents to engage in dialogues with their children and provide access to age-appropriate books.

### Early Intervention:

Identify children who may need additional support and provide early intervention resources.

# EARLY ELEMENTARY

KINDERGARTEN THROUGH 2ND GRADE

*Foundations of  
Phonics and  
Early Reading*

Emergent literacy prepares children for formal reading and writing. Letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and basic fluency are introduced.



## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

### **Phonics Instruction:**

Provide direct instruction on letter-sound relationships and decoding skills.

### **Fluency Development:**

Promote fluency through repeated reading, sight word practice, and simple sentence reading.

### **Letter Recognition:**

Teach letter recognition and introduce phonemic awareness activities.



## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

### **Phonemic Awareness:**

Assess children's ability to blend and segment sounds within words.

### **Letter Recognition:**

Evaluate letter recognition skills.

### **Fluency Checks:**

Monitor fluency progress by assessing the reading of sight words and sentences.



## INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

### **Explicit Phonics Instruction:**

Provide explicit and systematic phonics instruction tailored to individual needs.

### **Reading Interventions:**

Offer targeted reading interventions for struggling readers.

### **Differentiated Instruction:**

Tailor instruction based on assessment data, providing support where needed.



# UPPER ELEMENTARY

3RD GRADE THROUGH 5TH GRADES

*Fluency,  
Vocabulary, and  
Text  
Comprehension*

Advanced phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills are refined. Critical analysis of texts and vocabulary growth are emphasized.



## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

### Multisyllabic Word Work:

Engage students in activities that practice sound/spelling patterns with multisyllabic words.

### Vocabulary Expansion:

Promote advanced vocabulary growth through reading challenging texts and word study.

**Critical Reading:** Develop critical analysis skills by encouraging students to delve deeper into texts.



## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

**Fluency Assessment:** Assess fluency with complex texts and multisyllabic words.

### Vocabulary Knowledge:

Evaluate students' understanding of advanced vocabulary.

### Reading Checks: Comprehension

Assess students' comprehension skills and written responses to texts.



## INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

**Advanced Phonics Support:** Provide interventions that focus on multisyllabic word decoding.

### Targeted Vocabulary Instruction:

Offer specialized instruction to expand students' advanced vocabulary.

**Deeper Text Comprehension:** Implement strategies to support students in analyzing texts at deeper levels.

# MIDDLE GRADES

6TH GRADE THROUGH 8TH GRADES

*Content Literacy  
and  
Advanced Skills*

All content areas share responsibility for literacy. Fluency in complex texts, vocabulary growth, critical analysis, and advanced writing skills are developed.



## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

**Multidisciplinary Literacy:** Integrate literacy skills into all content areas, emphasizing fluency and analysis.

**Critical Reading:** Hone critical reading skills by engaging with complex texts and analytical tasks.

**Advanced Writing:** Develop advanced writing skills for essays, research papers, and presentations.



## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

**Diagnostic Assessments:** Identify skill gaps through diagnostic assessments for targeted support.

**Reading Fluency Checks:** Assess students' fluency with complex texts.

**Written Responses:** Evaluate written responses to texts for comprehension and analysis.



## INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

**Foundational Skill Gaps:** Provide targeted interventions for students with foundational skill gaps.

**Differentiated Literacy Instruction:** Tailor instruction to meet individual students' literacy needs.

**Support for Complex Tasks:** Offer assistance and strategies for complex reading and writing tasks.

# HIGH SCHOOL

9TH GRADE THROUGH 12TH GRADES

*Multidisciplinary  
Literacy and  
Real-World Skills*

Explicit literacy instruction continues, emphasizing communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills across all subjects. Multimodal literacy and 21st-century skills are crucial.



## INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

**Integration of Literacy:** Integrate literacy skills into all content areas, emphasizing communication and critical thinking.

**Multimodal Literacy:** Promote literacy across various mediums, including digital platforms and multimedia.

**21st-Century Skills:** Develop skills like critical thinking, problem-solving, and digital literacy.



## ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

**Diagnostic Assessments:** Identify skill gaps for targeted interventions.

**Multimodal Assessments:** Evaluate students' ability to apply literacy skills in various formats.

**Complex Literacy Tasks:** Assess critical reading, analysis, and written communication skills.



## INTERVENTION SUPPORTS

**Targeted Literacy Support:** Provide interventions tailored to specific literacy skill gaps.

**Differentiated Instruction:** Tailor literacy instruction based on individual student needs.

**Complex Literacy Task Support:** Offer strategies and guidance for handling complex reading and writing tasks.





# Illinois State Board of Education