READER'S GUIDE

2024 Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

SCHOOL LEADERS

ILLINOIS
STATE BOARD OF
EDUCATION

Reader's Guide: School Leaders

This guide is designed as a companion to the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan to support school leaders in effectively navigating the plan and implementing evidence-based literacy practices within their schools. Tailored specifically ti school-level leadership roles, it outlines key strategies, provides suggested readings aligned with their unique responsibilities, and includes workbook pages for practical application. This resource aims at empowering school leaders to enhance literacy instruction and foster equitable learning environments, ensuring every student has the opportunity to achieve literacy success.

Guide Audience

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

Overview of the Plan

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan establishes a guiding framework to enhance literacy instruction statewide. The plan targets all educational levels, emphasizing equity and inclusiveness while adhering to evidence-based practices. Central to the plan is the commitment to address and rectify persistent literacy disparities. It aims to unify efforts across various educational systems to ensure every student develops proficient literacy skills.

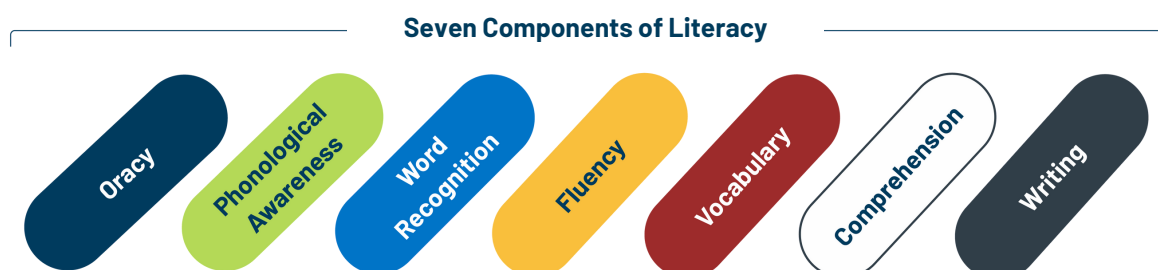The plan focuses on three main goals:

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 encourages local decision-making and adaptability, urging districts to customize their approaches based on specific needs and data within the local context. It's focus is on core, Tier 1 instruction, supplemented by discussions on interventions and differentiation strategies, targeting the literacy needs of Illinois students and working to close educational gaps.

The plan identifies Seven Components of Literacy at the core of every effective literacy program.

Seven Components of Literacy

Oracy · Phonological Awareness · Word Recognition · Fluency · Vocabulary · Comprehension · Writing

The plan contains six sections that guide readers through the careful consideration of creating and implementing a comprehensive literacy program that is systematically aligned.

The **Introduction** articulates the need based on data for a state literacy plan and outlines the vision, purpose, and objectives, serving as the foundational overview of the plan.

Section 1: Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction establishes the core strategies for delivering impactful literacy instruction based on evidence-based practices, across the **Seven Components of Literacy**.

Section 2: Educator Professional Learning and Development details the continuous development and support of educators to ensure the delivery of high-quality literacy instruction, emphasizing educator preparation programs alignment with the plan.

Section 3: Effective Literacy Leadership focuses on the role of leaders in driving high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction, while advocating for collaboration, culturally responsive instruction, and data-informed decision-making.

Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations highlights critical strategies for developing and implementing the literacy plan, through a workbook style format.

Section 5: Tools and Resources provides a list of resources and tools to aid districts, teachers, and families in implementing the literacy plan.

Engaging with the Plan

Below are general tips for engaging with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan as a school leader:

- **Establish a Vision for Literacy**: Craft a clear and compelling vision for literacy that aligns with the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, emphasizing its importance in your school's culture.

- **Promote Professional Development**: Prioritize and facilitate ongoing professional development opportunities for staff.

- **Foster a Collaborative Culture**: Facilitate opportunities for staff to share best practices, challenges, and successes related to the literacy, strengthening the school's collective expertise.

- **Leverage Data for Decision-Making**: Use assessment and performance data to guide literacy instruction and interventions. Support staff in interpreting data to inform teaching strategies, differentiate instruction, and identify areas where additional support may be needed. Refer to the **District Literacy Asset Mapping Template** included in the **Getting Started Toolkit** to start a full audit of resources.

- **Advocate for Equity**: Ensure that literacy initiatives are equitable and accessible to all students. Review and adjust literacy practices to address disparities.

- **Engage the Community**: Strengthen partnerships with parents, community members, and organizations to support literacy development beyond the classroom.

- **Monitor and Adjust**: Regularly review literacy initiatives to assess effectiveness and impact on student learning. Be open to feedback and willing to make adjustments as needed.

Sample Roadmap through the Plan

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

One sample roadmap to the Plan specifically for school leaders is:

Workbook

The Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan includes workbook pages at the end of its sections, offering a hands-on approach to apply the concepts presented in the narrative. These workbooks combine reflection tools and action planning to enhance user engagement.

Designed to cater to varied audiences, the first three sections include practical implementation tips, reflective questions, and suggested next steps tailored to address the specific challenges and viewpoints of each audience group. The series is rounded off with **Section 4: Support and Implementation Considerations**, which provides essential guidance on preparing for literacy initiatives. Section 4 is most impactful when completed as a team with other local stakeholders engaged in the work of improving literacy instruction. **All workbook pages are included next in this guide**.

The overarching goal of these workbook pages is to promote a unified and informed literacy approach, encouraging users to align educational insights, evaluate strengths and weaknesses, confront biases, and prepare for future literacy efforts.

The following tips are ways school leaders can maximize the benefits of these pages:

- **Leverage Data to Inform Instruction:** Utilize data-driven insights to tailor the workbook's reflective questions and action plans to the needs of your educational setting. Your expertise in analyzing data can help identify areas of strength and need within the literacy curriculum.

- **Foster a Schoolwide Literacy Culture**: Lead by example in prioritizing literacy across all subjects and grades. Use the workbook to initiate schoolwide projects and discussions that focus on literacy, ensuring every member of your staff understands their role in promoting literacy. Encourage teachers to integrate literacy strategies into their teaching, regardless of the subject, and provide the resources and support they need to do so effectively.

- **Build Capacity Through Professional Development**: Organize regular professional development sessions that are specifically designed to address the literacy goals identified in the workbook. Recognizing and utilizing the diverse expertise within your school can lead to innovative strategies and stronger instructional practices.

- **Promote Cross-Disciplinary Literacy Strategies:** Encourage and facilitate cross-disciplinary planning sessions where educators can share how literacy is integrated into their subjects. By fostering a culture of collaboration across disciplines, you help ensure that literacy development is recognized as a shared responsibility, enriching students' learning experiences across all subjects.

NEXT ➡

School Leaders
WORKBOOK
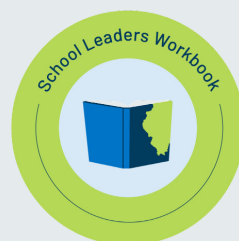
School Leaders Workbook

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.

✓ Appropriate, school-level assessment tools accessible by all students are necessary to drive instruction and monitor whether students are advancing in their literacy skills.

Next Steps

☐ Engage teacher teams in data analysis to understand who is served by current literacy instruction and what gaps exist.

☐ Evaluate current curriculum and intervention materials with teachers and staff and invest in high quality curriculum and resources as needed.

☐ Screen students in their primary language, when valid and reliable screeners are available, in addition to the district's universal screening measures.

☐ Identify criteria to determine if students need interventions in accordance with MTSS.

☐ Build school-level capacity in assessment administration and communication of the assessments with families.

NOTES

Reflection Questions

1. Are all student literacy needs being met?

2. Are the school's actions developmentally appropriate and based on evidence?

3. Does the curriculum meet the standards of high-quality, evidenced-based literacy instruction?

4. Are the appropriate assessments used to monitor student progress and determine when students need intervention?

5. Does student data support the school's current literacy strategy?

GOAL 2

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

Implementation Considerations

✓ Literacy development applies to all grade levels and content areas. Be explicit and strategic in building capacity for the different teacher groups and staff who interact with students daily.

✓ All educators within the school need access to appropriate materials and professional learning on high quality, evidence-based literacy practices.

✓ Educators require sustained and appropriate professional learning and development opportunities to hone their skills that demand current evidence-based practice.

✓ Teachers may feel a sense of attachment towards a specific activity or curriculum, and recognizing and understanding that is essential for shifting practices.

✓ Appropriate, school-level assessment tools accessible by all students are necessary to drive instruction and monitor whether students are advancing in their literacy skills.

Next Steps

☐ Train staff to analyze assessment data and allocate time for data review.

☐ Provide funding and time for teachers to attend relevant literacy training.

☐ Provide job-embedded and sustained professional learning.

☐ Form a literacy leadership team with representation from various grade levels and subject areas.

☐ Implement regular classroom observations with a focus on literacy instruction.

NOTES

Reflection Questions

1. How will the structure of professional learning be leveraged or changed to let teachers use their expertise yet also learn about new approaches and ideas?

2. How will literacy leaders within the school be developed and utilized?

3. How are paraprofessionals being upskilled to ensure consistent implementation practices for all students?

4. How can we measure the impact of evidence-based literacy practices on student achievement? How can we measure the impact of professional learning on student achievement?

5. Are resource allocations effectively supporting literacy initiatives?

GOAL 3

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

Implementation Considerations

✓ Leadership should understand the history of literacy achievement in the building.

✓ Leadership has an opportunity to create the conditions for learning, which is key for all students to achieve grade level literacy standards.

✓ As a school builds out their strategy to achieve higher levels of literacy success, they should examine current initiatives and obligations and remove those which have not been successful or are duplicative efforts.

✓ School leaders are crucial in establishing a school-wide commitment to literacy success.

✓ Effective leadership requires a deep understanding of literacy research and best practices.

✓ School leaders play a pivotal role in allocating resources to support literacy initiatives.

Next Steps

☐ Foster relationships and use discussion protocols to analyze the data with staff.

☐ Streamline school efforts to align with improved literacy practices.

☐ Engage in a continuous improvement cycle.

☐ Develop a school-wide literacy plan aligned with the state's goals.

☐ Provide leadership training for teachers and teacher leaders.

☐ Regularly monitor and assess the effectiveness of literacy initiatives within the school.

NOTES

Reflection Questions

1. How will literacy leaders within the school be developed and utilized?

2. Can building level MTSS data be utilized to document student growth?

3. How can the local literacy plan overlap with current initiatives, such as School Improvement Plans?

4. How can I create a school culture that prioritizes literacy as a foundation for all learning?

5. What professional development can enhance my literacy leadership skills?

6. How can I allocate resources to provide teachers with the tools and materials needed for literacy instruction?

Support and Implementation Considerations

These workbook pages provide guidance in the form of suggestions for reflections and discussion at different levels to ensure that every system is aligned to promote literacy success by streamlining and focusing initiatives on literacy. These pages were designed with local literacy teams in mind, and are perhaps most dynamic when completed with a varied group of stakeholders in preparation to developing or revising a local literacy plan.

Additionally, consider the following suggestions:

- **Establish Clear Objectives and Roles**: Ensure that every participant understands the overarching goals of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan and how it relates to your local context. Assign clear roles and responsibilities to group members based on their expertise, interests, and stakeholder perspectives.

- **Foster Open Communication and Collaboration**: Encourage an environment where all participants feel valued and empowered to share their perspectives. Emphasize the importance of constructive feedback and collaborative problem-solving. The diverse backgrounds of community members, families, and educators can offer a wealth of insights into practical, culturally relevant applications of the literacy plan.

- **Utilize the Workbook as a Guided Tool, Not a Checklist**: Approach the workbook as a framework for discussion and planning rather than a mere checklist to be completed. Engage deeply with each section, encouraging the group to discuss how the principles and strategies of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan can be adapted and implemented in your local context. This involves critical thinking about the unique needs of your community and how the plan can address them.

- **Incorporate Data and Research**: Make informed decisions by incorporating local literacy data, research findings, and best practices into your discussions and planning. This can involve reviewing local literacy rates, school performance metrics, and community feedback. Use this data to identify priorities and tailor the literacy plan to address specific challenges and opportunities within your community.

- **Plan for Implementation and Monitoring**: Develop a clear action plan for implementing the literacy strategies discussed. This plan should include specific steps, timelines, responsible parties, and metrics for evaluating progress. Engaging varied stakeholders in this ongoing process ensures continued relevance and responsiveness to the community's needs.

The effectiveness of the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan in your local context depends on how well it is adapted to meet the unique needs of your community. By approaching the workbook with a mindset of collaboration, inclusivity, and evidence-based planning, your group can develop a comprehensive and effective local literacy plan.

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

Guiding Questions:

1. How can **strengths** be built upon and challenges addressed?

2. What **evidence-based instructional strategies** need to be incorporated?

3. What programs does the school/district have in place to support the needs of various **learners**, including learners who are from varying cultural backgrounds, multilingual learners, high-incidence special needs learners, advanced learners, and learners from the range of ages and grade levels?

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

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

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Guiding Questions:

1. How can this data inform **literacy improvement** efforts?

2. How do assessment tools align across grade levels to **build** a coherent system?

3. What type of **data** is being collected at each grade level?

4. How can this data **inform** literacy improvement efforts?

5. Does the data **align** with what we know about literacy development?

6. Are benchmark assessments evaluating **key literacy components** for each grade level?

7. Are these assessments identifying students in need or evaluating **student growth** in literacy components?

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

Guiding Questions:

1. How can the school/district involve these stakeholders in **shaping** the local literacy plan?

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

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

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

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

Guiding Questions:

1. How can **diverse expertise** benefit literacy efforts in your school/district?

2. How will outside expertise/experience be identified/used to augment/support the literacy **leadership team** in its work?

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

Guiding Questions:

1. What changes or enhancements are needed for **alignment**?

2. How will the alignment provide insight into necessary professional learning tied to **improved outcomes** for students?

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Questions:

1. How will ongoing training **support** the local literacy plan?

2. What is the cadence for **training**?

3. How might the school/district differentiate **training** based upon staff need, expertise, or topic?

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

Guiding Questions:

1. What strategies will enhance family and community **partnerships** to strengthen the importance of literacy?

2. What **connections** can be made with school and community librarians to support literacy?

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Questions:

1. What **indicators** will be used to measure success?

2. How will these **indicators** be identified?

3. How do the **metrics** tie to the purpose of the local literacy plan?

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

Guiding Question:

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

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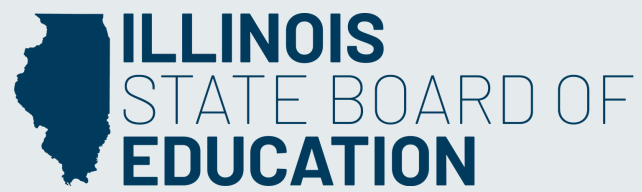
Guiding Question:

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

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

Guiding Questions:

1. How will you **prioritize** tasks to meet the goals?

2. What smaller timeline **goals** are necessary for executing the plan?

3. How will the school/district continually support individuals who join the district throughout the implementation timeline to ensure they are adequately equipped with the necessary resources, training, and mentorship to seamlessly integrate into the educational environment and contribute to the district's **goals and objectives**?

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