SECTION 1

Vision and Purpose

The Illinois State Literacy Plan serves as a comprehensive roadmap designed to guide and unify literacy efforts across the state. Its purpose is to offer clarity and direction, enabling stakeholders to prioritize and coordinate their initiatives effectively, ultimately improving literacy outcomes for individuals of all ages and backgrounds.

The "Why?"

We acknowledge that in the state of Illinois, equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction is not afforded to many of our students. A significant number of our students' literacy needs are not being met, with some students disproportionately impacted. 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, suicide rates, etc.[1]). The cost of failing our students is vast and requires us, as a state, to come together and ensure that every child has access to literacy. Unfortunately, about 40 percent of Illinois students lack "basic" reading skills, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress. The Illinois Assessment of Readiness shows that 44 percent of students who took the assessment "Did Not Meet/Partially Met" expectations in English language arts. This reality is reversible with effective, grade-level appropriate resources and instruction.[2]

The Illinois State Literacy Plan provides a framework for literacy instruction across the state and provides additional information for consideration pertaining to:

- Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Instruction
- Educator Professional Learning and Development
- Framework for Effective Leadership, Systems of Support, and Implementation Considerations
- Tools and Resources

What is literacy?

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. Additionally, 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. 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.

What are 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 all student's strengths and needs to guide and shape their literacy development.

[1] Yoneda et al., 2021; Haque et al., 2022; Sholikah et al., 2019; Lincoln et al., 2006; Seines et al., 2015; Bailey et al., 2014; Grant, 2014; Holbrook, 2009

[2] King & Davis, 2022

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We believe:

- All learners in Illinois are capable and have a right to equitable access to high-quality, inclusive, and individualized literacy instruction and intervention that address their strengths, needs, and goals.
- Learners have a right to attend schools that build upon individual assets and interests and embrace an approach that honors them as complex individuals within the context of community.
- Learners in Illinois have a right to develop literacy in two or more languages to prepare them to succeed in our global world.
- Learners should have agency and be empowered in their literacy development.

*We value equitable literacy **education** that:*

- Provides explicit, systematic, and structured instruction of reading foundational skills.
- Honors and leverages family and community linguistic, life, and cultural resources.
- Promotes collaboration among educators, families, students, and the community.
- Embraces students' language practices and ways of showing what they know.
- Attends to the relationship between interpretive (viewing, listening, reading) and expressive (representing, writing, speaking) modes of communication.
- Empowers and equips students with skills to make meaning, cultivating individual and collective agency toward continued growth and learning throughout schooling and beyond.
- Supports educators with evidence-based practices, materials, and professional learning.

Evidence-based practices refer to any concept or strategy that is derived from or informed by educational research. If an educational strategy is evidence-based, data-based, or research-based, educators compile, analyze, and use objective evidence to inform the design of an academic program or guide the modification of instructional techniques.

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

- Utilizes evidence-based literacy practices.
- Contextualizes the components of literacy and aspects of language (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse, pragmatics, decoding, comprehension skills, fluency, writing, and oracy) in explicit, authentic, and meaningful ways.
- 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) pertaining to power, equity, and social justice (critical literacy).

*We value equitable literacy **intervention** that provides:*

- Culturally and linguistically responsive scaffolding that supports early identification measures.
- Ongoing support with fidelity for students who struggle with literacy.
- Recurrent, intensive, dynamic, and cohesive support across content areas, instructional contexts, and grade levels as needed.

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

- Serves as a tool to improve and refine instruction.
- 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.
- Considers the linguistic resources of each student.

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SECTION 2

Framework for Effective Evidence-Based Literacy Instruction

Overview

Educators' approach to teaching students to read and write is one of the most debated topics in education in the United States. This debate is referred to as the "reading wars."[3] Over the last several decades, the pendulum has swung from proponents of explicit phonics-based instruction to whole-language approaches.[4] The Illinois State Literacy Plan is grounded in the findings and recommendations from brain-based research on how learners build literacy skills.

Evidence-based literacy practices denote approaches that are derived from or informed by evidence and emphasize the practical application of the findings of the best available current research.

Unlike language development, literacy development is not hard-wired into the child's brain and requires direct purposeful instruction. It is not a natural process.[5]

The **Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework** shown on the next page provides an overview of the developmentally appropriate practices aligned to the components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and oracy. The framework was developed to illustrate the necessary components of a literacy education system that will positively impact student literacy outcomes.

Graphic

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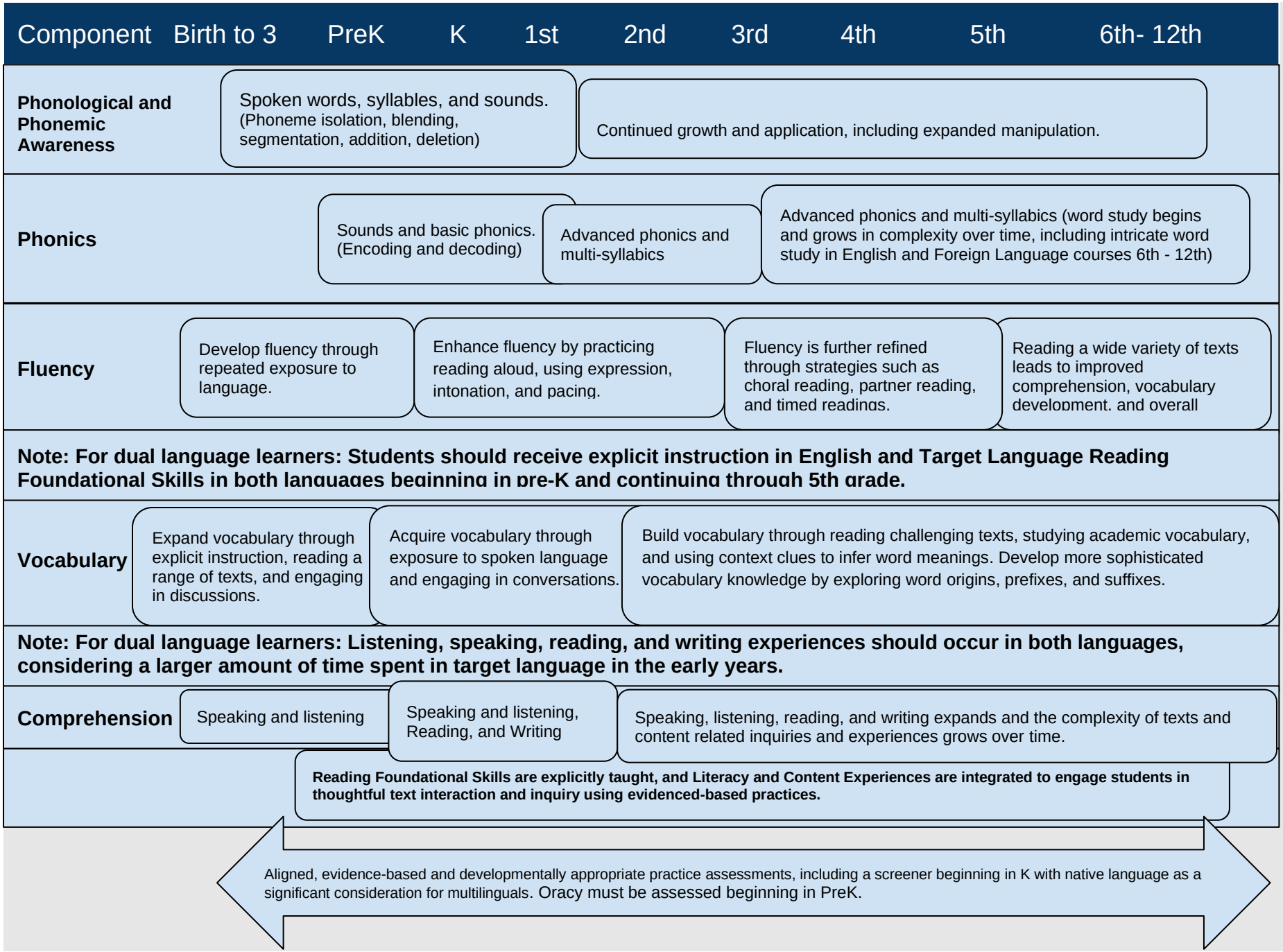
[3] Castles et al., 2018

[4] Flesch, 1986

[5] Lyon, 1998,; Carreiras et al., 2009; Petersson & Reis, 2006; Wang, 2019; Foy & Mann, 2001


Component
Birth to 3
PreK
K
1st
2nd
3rd
4th
5th
6th- 12th
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness
Spoken words, syllables, and sounds. (Phoneme isolation, blending, segmentation, addition, deletion)
Continued growth and application, including expanded manipulation.
Phonics
Sounds and basic phonics. (Encoding and decoding)
Advanced phonics and multi-syllabics
Advanced phonics and multi-syllabics (word study begins and grows in complexity over time, including intricate word study in English and Foreign Language courses 6th - 12th)
Fluency
Develop fluency through repeated exposure to language.
Enhance fluency by practicing reading aloud, using expression, intonation, and pacing.
Fluency is further refined through strategies such as choral reading, partner reading, and timed readings.
Reading a wide variety of texts leads to improved comprehension, vocabulary development, and overall
Note: For dual language learners: Students should receive explicit instruction in English and Target Language Reading Foundational Skills in both languages beginning in pre-K and continuing through 5th grade.
Vocabulary
Expand vocabulary through explicit instruction, reading a range of texts, and engaging in discussions.
Acquire vocabulary through exposure to spoken language and engaging in conversations.
Build vocabulary through reading challenging texts, studying academic vocabulary, and using context clues to infer word meanings. Develop more sophisticated vocabulary knowledge by exploring word origins, prefixes, and suffixes.
Note: For dual language learners: Listening, speaking, reading, and writing experiences should occur in both languages, considering a larger amount of time spent in target language in the early years.
Comprehension
Speaking and listening
Speaking and listening, Reading, and Writing
Speaking, listening, reading, and writing expands and the complexity of texts and content related inquiries and experiences grows over time.
Reading Foundational Skills are explicitly taught, and Literacy and Content Experiences are integrated to engage students in thoughtful text interaction and inquiry using evidenced-based practices.
Aligned, evidence-based and developmentally appropriate practice assessments, including a screener beginning in K with native language as a significant consideration for multilinguals. Oracy must be assessed beginning in PreK.

DEVELOPMENTAL TRAJECTORIES FOR READING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Phonological and phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. This includes blending sounds into words, segmenting words into sounds, and deleting and playing with the sounds in spoken words. Infants and toddlers start developing an awareness 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, allowing them to detect and manipulate individual sounds within words, such as rhyming and blending syllables. This foundation sets the stage for phonemic awareness. Throughout elementary and middle school, students refine their phonemic awareness skills by mastering phoneme segmentation, blending, and substitution. By high school, students should have well-developed phonological and phonemic awareness, enabling them to decode unfamiliar words, improve spelling accuracy, and comprehend complex texts. The developmental trajectory of phonological and phonemic awareness underscores the importance of providing explicit instruction and targeted interventions that support students at each stage, ensuring a solid foundation for reading and language proficiency.[6]

English learners (ELs) who have not developed the oral language that is the foundation for internalizing a language will struggle to isolate and hear the sounds of the language needed to decode text, are challenged in recognizing vocabulary in print, and have more difficulty following the flow and structure and meaning of text. Building oral language is both an EL second language issue and a matter of building opportunities and structures for student talk/discourse into all curriculum for all students. It is how ELs internalize the sounds, structures, and vocabulary in English. Reading involves decoding text sound by sound, so it follows that the ability to home in on hearing the phonemes of language is a basic foundational skill. The act of decoding is more difficult for students who lack the practice and skill of focusing on phonemes. For ELs, this is both a transferable awareness (applies across languages) that speech is composed of sound parts, and it also involves recognizing the language-specific sounds of each language. [7]

Phonics

Phonics instruction is the letter-sound relationship taught in an organized and logical sequence, with many opportunities for cumulative practice. Explicit instruction means that teachers use precise directions for teaching sound-letter relationships. In the early years, children begin to make connections between letters and sounds, recognizing letter shapes and associating them with specific sounds. As students progress through elementary school, they acquire a growing understanding of letter-sound correspondences, including consonant and vowel patterns, digraphs, and blends. With continued instruction and practice, students develop fluency in applying phonics knowledge to decode and spell words accurately. By middle and high school, students should have a solid foundation in phonics, allowing them to tackle increasingly complex texts and expand their vocabulary through decoding and word analysis skills. [8]

[6] Foy & Mann, 2001; Witsken & Koonce, 2017; Schatschneider et al., 1999; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1991; Zheng et al., 2009; Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein, 1989; Cunha & Maynardes, 2020; Manyak, 2008; Westby, 2011; Clemens et al., 2021.

[7] Bruck & Genesee, 1995; Muter & Diethelm, 2001; Gottardo et al., 2016

[8] Mesmer & Griffith, 2005; Campbell, 2020; Ehri et al., 2001

Students who do not have these basic mechanics of reading are unable to make their way through text by piecing together the sounds represented by letters into words, then sentences with meaning. There is variability in how much direct instruction in phonics students need. Predictability and transfer of letter sounds is variable across languages (i.e., some letters represent different sounds in different languages). Explicit cross-language attention is needed for ELs. Where possible, these mechanics should be taught in the child's strongest language. [9]

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text with accuracy, automaticity, and expression sufficient to enable comprehension. Fluency is a key skill to becoming a strong reader because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers are able to accurately decode texts 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, using expression, intonation, and pacing. By middle school, fluency is further refined through classroom strategies, such as choral reading, partner reading, and timed readings, and encouragement to develop independent reading habits. In high school, students continue to develop fluency by reading a wide variety of texts across different disciplines, which contributes to improved comprehension, vocabulary development, and overall reading proficiency.[10]

Recognizing and valuing multilingual students' diverse linguistic backgrounds and cultural experiences is crucial. Providing opportunities for students to maintain and develop fluency in their native language can positively impact their overall language development, including English fluency. Additionally, promoting oral language development through meaningful interactions and opportunities for practice is vital. Teachers should create a supportive and inclusive classroom environment that encourages risk-taking and provides ample opportunities for English language practice. Using culturally relevant and authentic texts also can enhance fluency development for non-native English speakers. Incorporating literature and materials that reflect students' cultural backgrounds and experiences can promote engagement and motivate language development. Furthermore, providing targeted support for vocabulary development and comprehension strategies can help ELs improve their overall fluency. Finally, ongoing assessment and monitoring of ELs' fluency progress are crucial to identify areas of need and informing instructional decisions. Regular formative assessments, such as oral reading fluency checks, can guide teachers in providing targeted interventions and support to promote fluency development in non-native English speakers.[11]

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to words that we use while speaking, comprehending when listening or reading text, or when writing. Vocabulary is important in building background or content knowledge and understanding texts. Infants and toddlers begin to acquire vocabulary through exposure to spoken language and engaging in conversations with caregivers. As children progress through elementary school, they expand their vocabulary through explicit instruction, reading a range of texts, and engaging in discussions. Middle school students develop more sophisticated vocabulary knowledge by exploring word origins, prefixes, and suffixes. In high school, students continue to build their vocabulary by reading challenging texts, studying academic vocabulary, and using context clues to infer word meanings. A robust vocabulary

[9] Reed, 2013; Joseph & Seery, 2004; Ali, 2012; Kosobucki & Moore, 2021
[10] Pikulski & Chard, 2005
[11] Echevarría et al., 2017

repertoire enhances students' ability to comprehend complex texts, express ideas effectively, and engage in higher-level thinking across subject areas.[12]

The words decoded on the page have no meaning for multilingual students who do not have vocabulary development and background knowledge. A robust vocabulary plays a fundamental role in enhancing reading comprehension. Extensive and varied vocabulary needs to be taught to ELs and integrated throughout the curriculum along with the building of background knowledge. [13]

Comprehension

Comprehension is when readers decode the words on the page, understanding and interpreting what they read. Students construct meaning from text. By reading actively and purposefully, skilled readers can learn from and enjoy what they read. Children first develop foundational comprehension skills by listening to stories, engaging in conversations, and making connections to their own experiences. As students progress through elementary school, they acquire strategies for actively engaging with text, such as predicting, visualizing, questioning, and summarizing. Middle school students further enhance their comprehension by analyzing and interpreting more complex texts, identifying main ideas, 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. [14]

Responding to reading through writing can assist students in comprehending text, as reading and writing both involve constructing meaning. Additionally, writing offers the opportunity for students to consider literary elements such as style, word choice, text structure, and organization. Writing enables students to reflect on their reading, organize information, and share their thoughts with others.

For multilingual students, comprehension is the goal of reading with background knowledge and vocabulary being key components. Comprehension requires a set of skills that proficient readers utilize as they make their way through text. Without these skills, it is difficult for students to retain information they have already read and put it together to make an overall meaning of what a text is expressing. As students increasingly are expected to engage with longer texts and to use reading to learn content, these comprehension, and meaning-making skills are essential. Comprehension and meaning-making skills transfer across languages, but vocabulary and language structures do not. Explicit teaching about how English works and how it is structured in the text is essential for ELs. It is common for ELs to decode words they do not yet comprehend.

Considerations for English Learners

Outlined below are several additional considerations that are especially important for ELs, though not exclusive to that population.

- **Concepts of Print --** Concepts of print (e.g., directionality, sweep, the structure of books of various genres, the alphabetic principle, how books work, etc.) are necessary, or students will be unable to move through text. Concepts of print also include PURPOSES of print. Some concepts of print

[12] Beck & McKeown, 2007; Yoon et al., 2018

[13] Manirakiza & Hakizimana, 1970; Jun Zhang & Bin Anual, 2008; Van Steensel et al., 2016; Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2011; Gámez & Lesaux, 2015; Sulistyawati et al., 2021; Crosson et al., 2021

[14] National Reading Panel, 2000; Block & Parris, 2008; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Gallagher & Allington, 2009

work differently in different languages (e.g., directionality).[15]

- **English Language Development (ELD) --** Most aspects of learning to read in English become challenging if there is not designated ELD instruction that provides focus on how English works and practice for ELs. It is a struggle to hear and isolate the sounds/ phonemes of English, a challenge to understand the syntax and structure of English text, and difficult to comprehend and make meaning of vocabulary in a language they haven't learned. Designated ELD instruction should prepare ELs to respond to the linguistic demands they are facing in academic and literacy tasks throughout the curriculum. ELD instruction is an essential civil right for English learners and is legally required. [16]
- **Cross Language Connections --** ELs already have a language when they begin learning English and developing literacy in English. Failure to leverage and make explicit the similarities and differences between English and their primary language can result in confusion and errors and denies ELs the power of building on linguistic resources in their first language. The different sounds and sound-letter relationships between English and other languages in both reading and writing can make literacy tasks confounding. This also applies to language structures and syntax. [17]
- **Writing --** The productive practice of turning words and sounds into text (writing) is the reciprocal practice of turning text into sounds and words (reading). Partnering instruction and engagement in the productive and receptive aspects of literacy enhance student strength in both. Conversely, failing to engage students in writing instruction and active writing processes hampers their skill development as readers and limits their understanding of the purposes and motivation for literacy. [18]
- **High-Volume Print Access/Active Engagement with Text --** Access to print and opportunities to engage with books/reading is a basic equity issue and a contributor to when students don't have this access or opportunity to engage with books, they have less motivation to become a reader and their understanding of the purposes of text is limited. As with all skills, the more you do it, the better you become. Limiting students' access to a variety and volume of print gives them less practice. As a matter of both messaging and access, it is important that books be made available in the home languages of students. [19]
- **Print-Immersive, Language, and Content-Rich Environment --** Young children learn from interacting with their environment – playing, interacting, and inquiring. The degree to which the learning environment is content-rich (e.g., tangible, hands-on, visual) to build meaning and is language and print-rich greatly enhances overall learning. Trying to develop literacy in a learning environment that is lacking in print (e.g., no labels, signs, charts, books) limits students' interactions with the purposes of print and denies them the resource of being able to turn to the walls and environment for examples of print and as reference. ELs rely on visual and tangible reminders and supports and scaffolds as context for understanding. The combination of a content-rich environment that includes print labeling and referring to that content is a powerful booster to comprehension and for language and literacy development. This is doubly impactful for Els if it includes print in their home language in addition to English. [20]

[15] Cetin & Bay, 2014

[16] *Lau v. Nichols*, 1974; Calderón et al., 2011; Goldenberg, 2020; Lau, 2012

[17] Verhoeven, 1994; Howard et al., 2014; Sun et al., 2022; Marks et al., 2023; Blair et al., 2022; Bedore et al., 2020

[18] Dostal & Graham, 2021; Weiser & Mathes, 2011; Graham et al., 2018; Goldenberg, 2020; Datchuk et al., 2015; Graham, 2020; Laily, 2018; Collins et al., 2017

[19] Koskinen et al., 2000; House & Rule, 2005; Merga & Mat Roni, 2017

[20] Rashid et al., 2005; Neumann, 2016; Neumann et al., 2009

- **High-Quality, Diverse, and Culturally Inclusive Materials --** Books and curriculum materials matter. If ELs are only exposed to books in which people of their community/ ethnicity/culture aren't represented, they learn that books aren't for people like themselves. This directly impacts motivation and engagement in reading. In addition, if the only books and reading they are exposed to are simple decodable books, they have no opportunity to develop expressive, complex, beautiful language – or to fall in love with the written word. If English learners are only exposed to books in English, it communicates that literacy is a province of the English-speaking world only. Books in home languages strengthen home-school connections and enable ELs to build cross-language awareness.[21]
- **Support for Home Language and Bilingualism --** ELs come to school with a language and with linguistic resources to draw upon in the processes of learning academic content and becoming literate. Enabling students to draw upon those linguistic resources in their primary language is a significant asset. Failure to invite and facilitate the use of the primary language's linguistic resources hampers literacy development. Furthermore, motivation to engage in literacy and academic work can be negatively affected when students receive the message that their language and culture are not affirmed and respected. Research has shown that drawing upon and building cross-language awareness strengthens literacy. An effective filter hinders language and literacy development when students do not feel safe and affirmed. Socio-cultural factors of language status impact motivation to learn.[22]
- **Flexible, Differentiated Instruction Based on Formative Assessment --** The process of learning to read and write can vary greatly among students in terms of skill development and the specific support they require. It is important to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective. Whole group instruction with standardized pacing and fixed timing is less successful compared to differentiated instruction based on ongoing assessments. Applying a standardized approach wastes time for some students and fails to provide personalized scaffolding. ELs often need additional focus on vocabulary and background knowledge compared to monolingual students. Relying solely on decodable books, which often have rigid language structures and lack meaningful content, hinders both second language acquisition and comprehension.

Considerations for Learners with Special Needs

It should be noted that ***all*** students should receive instruction focused on the areas identified by the National Reading Panel.[23] 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 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 EL with special education needs. These students

[21] Merga, 2020; Darling-Hammond & Adamson, 2013; Vacca et al., 2017; Cummins, 2000; Cloud et al., 2000

[22] Hawkins, 2005

[23] National Reading Panel, 2000

will need additional supports and considerations that may not be needed or appropriate for monolingual English-speaking students with special needs. [24]

Integration of Writing, Spelling, Handwriting, and Oracy with a Focus on 21st Century Skills

Literacy is a complex concept that involves various skills not outlined above, each with its own developmental trajectory. Oracy, the ability to communicate effectively through spoken language, forms the foundation for literacy development. It includes acquiring vocabulary, syntax, and comprehension skills through meaningful conversations and discussions. Through oral interactions, individuals gain a deeper understanding of language structures and semantics. Engaging in conversations nurtures critical thinking, as it requires active listening and coherent responses, fostering confidence in self-expression. Additionally, oracy 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.[25]

Writing is another crucial literacy subskill that involves expressing thoughts and ideas coherently on paper. It encompasses grammar, sentence structure, and organization. Writing complements reading and enhances language understanding. Through writing, individuals can express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions in a structured manner. It fosters critical thinking, as it requires organizing and synthesizing information, while also 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. Ultimately, writing serves as a catalyst for literacy development, enabling individuals to effectively convey ideas and navigate the world of knowledge.[26]

Spelling and handwriting focus on the mechanics of written language. Spelling involves understanding letter-sound relationships and accurately representing words, while handwriting develops fine motor skills and writing fluency. Spelling enables accurate representation of words and builds a foundation for reading and writing. Learning to spell correctly enhances phonemic awareness, word recognition, and vocabulary development. Proper spelling ensures clarity and precision in written expression, promoting effective communication. Handwriting, the physical act of writing by hand, develops fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. It facilitates the formation of letters, words, and sentences, allowing individuals to express thoughts and ideas on paper. Handwriting reinforces understanding of letter shapes, letter-sound relationships, and word formation, contributing to reading fluency and comprehension. Handwriting is also linked to memory retention and cognitive processing. Mastery of handwriting and spelling empowers individuals to become confident writers and readers, navigating the written world accurately and fluently.[27]

Each of these subskills follows a developmental trajectory, with learners progressing from basic skills to advanced levels over time. It is crucial to consider the impact of these skills on overall literacy development and assessment. For example, early writing skills can interfere with an accurate assessment of literacy, highlighting the importance of evaluating overall literacy level, including phonological skills, reading, and spelling, before providing support or instruction. Mechanical writing skills, such as handwriting and spelling, also affect composing fluency and quality. Therefore, a comprehensive teaching

[24] Burr et al., 2015
[25] McDowell, 2015; Hulme et al., 2015; Riley & Burrell, 2007; Cook, 2000; Griffin et al., 2004
[26] Graham & Hebert, 2011; Raoofi et al., 2017
[27] Puranik & Alotaiba, 2012; Kent et al., 2014

approach is essential, emphasizing functional language literacy, contextualized grammar instruction, handwriting/keyboarding skills, and authentic assessment. [28]

In the 21st century, literacy extends beyond traditional reading and writing. Including 21st century skills in literacy education is vital for preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world. These skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, creativity, digital literacy, and global awareness. Integrating these skills into literacy instruction enhances students' ability to analyze information, evaluate sources, and think critically about texts. It empowers effective communication in various mediums, including digital platforms, where multimedia and digital literacy skills are essential. Collaboration and communication skills enable students to work in diverse teams, engage in meaningful discussions, and express ideas effectively. Encouraging creativity fosters innovation and originality in approaching literacy. Developing global awareness allows students to understand different perspectives, engage in cultural competency, and communicate across diverse communities. By incorporating 21st century skills into literacy, educators enable students to become literate not only in traditional reading and writing, but also in the broader sense of navigating and thriving in a rapidly changing, interconnected world.[29]

Understanding the complexity of literacy and its various subskills allows educators to tailor instruction to meet the individual needs and developmental stages of learners, promoting comprehensive literacy development.

Developmental Trajectories for Literacy

Early Literacy: Ages Birth to 3 Years

Language and literacy development begin at birth. It is important to talk and interact with children from birth. Simple language stimulation techniques help babies bond with caregivers and develop critical language and literacy skills.[30]

The focus of early literacy in ages birth to 3 years should be ever-expanding exposure to and interaction with language. The educators for children in this age range include parents and families, caregivers, and childcare professionals.

Resources that deal with a child's language development are available through Illinois Early Intervention.

Pre-K Literacy: Ages 3-5

Emergent literacy can be defined as "the period when infants are beginning to attend to environmental sounds and toddlers are pointing to pictures and scribbling on paper, until the time when children 'break the code' and can put sounds together to read and write words." [31] There are multiple occasions for a child to develop and expand emergent reading skills before they enter school. The goal of emergent literacy is to prepare children for the application and continued expansion of their reading and writing skills in the kindergarten or first-grade classroom setting. This is a critical time in a child's development,

[28] Nicolson & Fawcett, 1997; Graham et al., 1997; Ewing et al., 2022; Kent et al., 2014
[29] *Framework for 21st Century Learning*, 2007
[30] *Activities to Encourage Speech and Language Development*, 2023.
[31] Chall, 1983

and skilled educators and the family unit need to be involved in the integration of both speaking and reading.

Promoting language development during these years is imperative. Educators should promote students' home language by using book sharing, engaging children in language games, and asking open-ended questions with an emphasis to increase vocabulary, knowledge, and development. Additionally, it is important for educators to know and understand early language foundation and development, social and cultural factors that affect literacy development, and the importance of setting appropriate goals for literacy development according to developmental expectations.[32]

Early Elementary Literacy: Grades K-2

The Illinois Learning Standards require explicit, skill-based instruction for reading, speaking, and writing in all subject areas.

It is important to make sure that a student has the basic skills to get the words off the page to comprehend the text to gain knowledge. The National Reading Panel recommendations can be used as a framework to make curriculum and instructional decisions for students in all grade levels.[33]

The K-2 student needs direct, explicit, and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics. Curricula should include alphabetic (including print awareness, phonemic awareness, and phonics) instruction for the K-2 learner.[34]

Upper Elementary Literacy: Grades 3-5

An educator in Grades 3-5 should establish students' understanding of phonics and incorporate phonics instruction in a systematic and explicit manner. Students in Grades 3-5 should engage in word work or regular activities that help students to practice sound/spelling patterns through manipulating, building, and sorting words. Students should have the opportunity to practice both decoding and encoding strategies. Additionally, students should be repeatedly exposed to irregular words through texts, word banks, word walls, or word lists.

Fluency plays an important role in supporting overall reading comprehension in Grades 3-5. Types of instruction to focus on include multisyllabic word reading, prosody (phrasing and expression), and reading connected texts (literary and informational). Additionally, the educator should frequently model fluent reading and offer students opportunities for independent silent reading.

Students in Grades 3-5 should receive explicit instruction on comprehension strategies and when to use them to develop proficiency in reading. Students should understand why the strategies are important. The goal of this type of instruction should remain increased reading comprehension and not knowledge of the strategies. It is helpful to frame considerations for comprehension instruction for readers through the different lenses of before, during, and after reading.

[32] International Reading Association & National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998*; Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading - International Dyslexia Association*, 2014

[33] National Reading Panel, 2000

[34] Spear-Swerling, 2022

Middle Grades Literacy: Grades 6-8

At the middle level, all content area classrooms have a shared responsibility for literacy. Every teacher is a literacy teacher. If a student does struggle with word recognition (decoding) or other foundational literacy skills, then that student should receive intervention ***outside of content area classes*** that is appropriate for their deficit area as shown by diagnostic assessment(s). It is imperative that students with foundational skill deficits in Grades 6-8 receive the appropriate intervention to fill in skill gaps so that they are on their way to skilled, fluent reading.

High School Literacy: Grades 9-12

Educators have a duty to proactively seek innovative ways to collectively minimize hurdles, such as factors that contribute to student disengagement, low graduation rates, and the achievement gap. Their goal is to provide opportunities throughout the school year that support all students in successfully achieving their educational goals. As the importance of developing cognitive and 21st-century skills grows, the teaching of content areas now incorporates the ability to effectively communicate, comprehend, apply critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, process information, and understand and interact with others and the world around them. High-quality and effective literacy instruction executed in inclusive and equitable systems ensures that students prepare to excel socially, emotionally, academically, linguistically, and culturally in the school setting and beyond. The most important goal of the literacy plan is to ensure students develop into broadly literate individuals by engaging with diverse authentic texts from different cultures, genres, and time periods on a variety of topics and themes in multimodal ways (visual, audible, and digital) and integrating technology to learn and grow their knowledge about themselves, others, and the world they interact with.

Literacy at the high school level is explicitly taught in the English language arts, Spanish language arts, or English language development block. However, considerations of students' needs advocate for a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to integrating literacy across the curriculum in every content area.
Reading needs to be part of the different disciplines throughout the school day. The level of complexity when learning concepts embedded in biology or history texts requires students to capture the grammatical and syntactical nuances of language as well as its usage in different contexts.

ASSESSMENT TO SUPPORT LITERACY

Universal Screening

Universal screening for literacy skills is essential. This process allows the school or district staff to identify the number of students on track, at risk, or in need of acceleration as well as signal systematic instructional issues. Universal screeners should be brief gauges of the overall academic well-being of students, allowing educators to intervene at the earliest indication of need. The screening process is very important, so only measures with proven measures of reliability and validity should be used.

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. It provides data that help school teams determine if the core curriculum is meeting the needs of the majority of students in a school district and whether enhancements are needed in the core curriculum, instruction, and/or educational environments. Universal screening also guides decisions about which students may require

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additional assessment and/or supplemental or intensive intervention and instruction beyond what is provided through core programming.

Universal screening is important in helping to determine if further assessment is necessary to support student learning. More information pertaining to universal screening, assessments, and the process by which a specific learning disability may be identified may be found in The Dyslexia Guide.[35]

Benchmarking

Benchmark assessment is the 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. Students performing below the 20th percentile nationally should be pulled for further assessment to identify and pinpoint deficit skill areas.

Assessment of students follows the Response to Intervention/Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (RtI/MTSS) plan developed for Illinois. Optimally, all students should be part of benchmark assessments three times per year; generally, these benchmark assessments take place at the beginning, middle, and end of the year.

Diagnostic Assessments

Educators must determine the specific needs of the students who are not making progress from universal instruction. The use of a diagnostic assessment helps to identify specific skills and deficit area(s). Following the determination of specific needs, a problem-solving approach should be applied to identify intervention(s) that matches the area of needed growth. Throughout and after intervention strategy implementation, follow-up with a progress monitoring tool should be utilized to determine if the intervention is successfully meeting the learner's needs.

Progress Monitoring

The impact of specific interventions should be monitored at least every two weeks to determine efficacy. Progress monitoring should include a standardized procedure to monitor student performance and progress toward an identified target. The rate of improvement should be monitored and considered as an indicator of student progress.

More intensive intervention should be prescribed for students who demonstrate an inadequate response to targeted interventions. The progression of intervention should increase in time, intensity, and frequency and should continue to be monitored for progress regularly.

Formative and Summative Assessment

The objective of formative assessment is to measure student learning as it takes place, allowing for instruction to be adjusted, and identify any misconceptions and learning gaps in a timely manner. The objective of summative assessment is to evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparison against the standard. Core instruction should be monitored by both formative and summative assessments to measure student learning.

[35] Illinois State Board of Education Division: Division of Special Education Services, 2019

Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) encompass a comprehensive approach to address the diverse academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students. Within an MTSS framework, Response to Intervention (RtI) serves as a specific process to identify students with academic difficulties that may require additional support.[36]

Student support is provided in tiers, identified by student need, and driven by the results of the assessment.

In this framework, Tier 1 involves whole-class instruction with high-quality, universally designed core instruction that is culturally and linguistically responsive. Tier 2 provides small-group supplemental instruction using evidence-based interventions to address specific academic needs, while Tier 3 offers intensive, individualized instruction based on data and can be delivered in small groups or individually. Tier 3 interventions are implemented after Tier 1 and Tier 2 supports are in place. It is important for all levels of support to incorporate evidence-based practices, cultural responsiveness, and fidelity of implementation[37]. It should be noted that Tier 3 interventions occur within general education and are distinct from special education.

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[36] *Center on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support*, n.d.
[37] American Institutes for Research , 2023

Section 3

Educator Professional Learning and Development

Overview

Professional learning and development for educators is an essential component when considering strategies to employ to improve literacy outcomes for Illinois learners. This section considers educators and professional learning audiences from various perspectives: classroom teachers, preservice teachers, school leaders, external consultants, professional development providers, instructional coaches, and faculty at higher education institutions. The goal is to establish intentional, comprehensive, and coordinated approaches that promote equitable and positive literacy outcomes for all learners.

The primary goal for professional learning should be to develop a deep understanding of the continuum of language and literacy development and create literacy-rich environments. Classroom and preservice teachers should be equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach concepts explicitly and in a manner that aligns with children's developmental needs, fostering the authentic application of learned skills. School leaders involved in curriculum development and evaluating teachers need to possess a thorough understanding of the creation of literacy-rich environments. External consultants, professional development providers, and instructional coaches should build upon this knowledge and skills and provide evidence of successful implementation within a Pre-K through Grade 12 setting. Faculty at higher education institutions, responsible for teaching language and literacy methods or assessments courses, including those related to English learners (ELs) and special education approvals and endorsements, should align their instruction with the literacy framework. Moreover, they should incorporate practical experiences or research-based practices within their courses. This can be achieved through their own teaching experiences with children or through research and observations conducted as part of their institutional work.[38]

Key Considerations for Development of Professional Learning:

1. Ensure instructors have current knowledge and understand philosophies of educators in the field.
2. Align educator professional learning needs to the components found within the Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework.
3. Identify the most effective mechanisms (e.g., on-demand/live webinars/face-to-face, book studies, etc.) for ensuring equitable and meaningful training across the landscape of adults that will teach language and literacy to children and higher education faculty that teach courses relevant to literacy instruction.
4. Integrate evidence-based literacy practices within an inquiry context and content-rich approach.

[38] Pittman et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020; Powell & Bodur, 2019; Hallinger & Kulophas, 2020

5. Ensure educators understand evidence-based environmental components across the ages and stages (e.g., sound walls, anchor charts, literacy centers, etc.).
6. Ensure that all ESL/bilingual preservice and in-service teachers have access to appropriate training for equitable implementation.
7. Consider the necessary support and training, including universal common training, district-based training, assistance from state grant programs, participation in a base-level training on the Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework, aligned district or level training, a centralized resource hub, external presenters, or coaches, and a comprehensive two- to five-year training plan with coaching and assessments.
8. Incorporate informal language, dialects, short-hand language, and text types within literacy instruction.
9. Identify ways in which family literacy events can be adapted or redesigned to match the Illinois Literacy Instructional Framework.

Differentiated Training Strategies for Educators:

There are different strategies for training in-service educators that depend on the urgency, budget, and willingness of teachers to participate:

- **Strategy 1**: Online, asynchronous -- Modules are prepared that learners work through on a self-paced basis. Brief learning checks should be included that document some minimum level of learning attainment. As modules are completed, an incentive could be "badges" where completion of some predetermined "suite" of modules earns the learner a badge. Modules would progress across the curriculum.
- **Strategy 2**: Synchronous/asynchronous hybrid -- This is a hybrid of synchronous, "networked" sessions in combination with asynchronous learning. The learner would attend an online session with an instructor and others from across the state for a one-hour session on a specific topic. Learners then asynchronously complete a module on the topic. This strategy repeats across the suite of topics until completed.
- **Strategy 3**: Live/hybrid/asynchronous mix -- Learners would meet in person in a location for one day. An instructor(s) would overview the course and then conduct a class on the first module. Learners return home and then basically engage in Strategy 3. At the end of the course, learners meet again in person to finish the last module and receive acknowledgment for completing the course.

Strategies 2 or 3 will create the best engagement from 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.

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Learning outcomes for students in teacher preparation programs

Part 1: Background

- Understand education as an evolving and changing discipline based on knowledge of psychological, sociological, and linguistic foundations of reading and writing processes.
- Know the cognitive processes employed in skillful speaking, listening, reading, and writing.
- Possess knowledge of language development and reading acquisition and variations related to cultural and linguistic diversity.
- Understand developmentally appropriate practice in alignment with Illinois and national standards, as appropriate.
- Be aware of the diverse and historical perspectives that have influenced the field of literacy development in reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and listening.

Part 2: Reading Instruction

- Define the reading foundational skills and describe to stakeholders how they are integrated into their literacy block and overall teaching plan/framework.
- Possess a repertoire of evidence-based instructional strategies, including technology-based and play-based practices, for learners at differing stages of development and from differing cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Know the critical elements of a comprehensive literacy curriculum that adheres to evidence and research-based principles of instruction, including the use of multi-sensory strategies.
- Use a wide range of curriculum materials in effective reading instruction.
- Understand literacy acquisition from a developmental perspective that reflects the different stages of listening, speaking, viewing, reading, and writing development.
- Understand and be able to apply appropriate scaffolds, supports, and evidence-based practices to support the language and literacy development of multilingual learners across inclusive settings, including biliteracy for dual language learners. This must include knowledge of the WIDA Can Do Descriptors.[39]
- Implement RtI/MTSS aligned to the literacy framework, including appropriate screeners/assessments/progress monitoring.
- Implement small groups, whole group, individual, and center-based instruction with fidelity.
- Apply the literacy framework concepts and guidelines within an inquiry-based and content-integrated learning environment.

Part 3: Assessment

- Use a wide range of assessment tools and practices that range from individual and group standardized tests to individual and group informal classroom assessment strategies, including technology and play-based assessment tools.
- Provide native language assessment when appropriate, including for ELs, especially when considering a child for additional services beyond Tier 1 implementations.

[39] WIDA, 2016

- Use assessment information to place students along a developmental continuum according to instructional or student need.
- Plan, evaluate, and revise effective instruction to meet the needs of all students, including those at varying stages of development and those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Communicate the results of assessments to other educators, administrators, parents, and policymakers.
- Ensure that Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and assessments to measure goals are explicitly aligned to the literacy framework in combination with the individual child identified in the IEP.

Part 4: Literacy Environment

- Create developmentally appropriate learning environments using and reflecting students' interests, reading abilities, and backgrounds.
- Use the environment as a second teacher, including the use of supports that are aligned to the literacy framework and are developmentally appropriate.
- Books, technology-based information, print, and non-print materials representing multiple levels should reflect a broad array of interests, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Understand how to develop a 90- to 120-minute literacy block outline/schedule that aligns with the literacy framework and provides opportunities for explicit reading foundational skills alongside content-rich experiences.

Part 5: Professional Dispositions:

- Develop and display positive dispositions related to language and literacy skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) and the teaching of those skills by working with colleagues to observe, evaluate, and provide feedback on each other's practice and instruction.
- Become involved in professional organizations to strengthen the professional attitudes needed by reading teachers, reading specialists, and English language arts teachers.
- View families as a child's first teachers and partners in literacy instruction and seek to develop a shared understanding of literacy across the school community.

Professional Development Prioritization

Professional development should begin with early elementary education 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 4, Framework for Effective Leadership, Systems of Support, and Implementation Considerations.

The Standards for Endorsement in Elementary Education provide specific literacy standards for elementary teachers to guide the content of teacher preparation programs that are preparing elementary teachers to facilitate literacy development.[40] These standards address seven domains of learning that

[40] *Standards for endorsements in elementary education*, 2021

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.

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The Language and Literacy Curriculum

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 foundational literacy skills;
f. Research-based strategies to support struggling readers; and
g. Developmentally appropriate literacy assessments.

Foundational Knowledge

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

Using Research-Based Instructional Approaches

a. Decoding and Fluency;
b. Reading Comprehension;
c. Writing;
d. Speaking and Listening; and
e. Vocabulary.

Using Materials, Texts, and Technology

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

Monitoring Student Learning through Assessment

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

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

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

Constructing a Supportive Language and Literacy Environment

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

Section 4

Framework for Effective Leadership, Systems of Support, and Implementation Considerations

Overview

This section outlines how communities: families; teachers; and school-, district-, regional-, and state-level leadership can collaborate to support literacy development across the state. It explores the various roles and responsibilities of each level of leadership; how they can work in synergy to create a comprehensive system of support for literacy development; and how leaders can cultivate a culture of literacy within our schools, provide the necessary resources and professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their literacy instruction, and support literacy development across the state. Due to the very localized design of the Illinois school system, the implementation considerations and reflection questions serve as a starting point for each Local Education Agency to consider when reviewing the state-level literacy plan and crafting its own localized literacy plan.

Goals for the Section

This section of the Illinois State Literacy Plan aims to support the achievement of three primary goals.

Goal 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.

This goal recognizes that literacy skills are essential for success in all academic areas and beyond. Achieving grade-level literacy skills ensures that all students have a strong foundation for future learning and success. To achieve this goal, leaders must provide support for evidence-based instruction, comprehensive assessments, and interventions for struggling learners.

Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

This goal recognizes that educators play a critical role in supporting students' literacy development. Leaders must ensure that educators have access to professional learning opportunities, ongoing coaching, and support to implement evidence-based literacy practices. This goal also includes the need for leaders to prioritize the use of data to inform instructional decisions and regularly monitor student progress.

Goal 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

This goal recognizes that there are often numerous initiatives and programs in place to support literacy development, which can be overwhelming for educators and may not be aligned with each other. Leaders must work to eliminate unnecessary initiatives and streamline efforts to ensure that resources are targeted and effective. This goal also emphasizes the need for collaboration among stakeholders, including educators, families, and community partners, to create a unified vision for literacy development.

Each audience identified in this section has a unique role in supporting the achievement of each of the stated goals. It is essential for all levels of leadership to work together to provide comprehensive support.

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State, regional, district, school, and teacher leaders all have critical roles to play in promoting literacy development and ensuring that all students achieve grade-level literacy skills. The following section will delve into the specific actions that each of these leadership audiences can take to support the goals of the State Literacy Plan.

Attending to Equity

We appreciate the ongoing commitment of districts to adopt state and local 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 State Literacy Plan with an asset-based mindset, recognizing the collective responsibility of ALL educators to help every student achieve literacy upon graduation.

Guiding Questions by Audience Level

State Level

Who is in this role: At this level, the audience consists of decision-makers who have the authority to implement policies and allocate resources that impact literacy instruction and support in the state's education system. This includes, but is not limited to, ISBE, other state education agencies, the governor and legislators, and other stakeholders in education policy and funding. Overall, the audience for state-level leadership includes those who have the authority and responsibility to make decisions and implement policies that impact literacy development and instruction at the state and local levels of the education system.

Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Ongoing research continues to change the landscape • Localized contexts must be considered • Literacy is not only an "elementary school problem"	• Shifting instructional practices require significant investments at many levels • Professional learning must consider socio geographic needs of teachers and learners • State leaders must be proactive in addressing obstacles related to funding and resources	• 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

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Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their effort to support each goal.

Reflection Questions -- Goal 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.

- How has equity been made central to literacy plan implementation efforts?
- How can state leaders meet the diverse needs of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from marginalized and disenfranchised communities?
- What stakeholders are at the table during the creation of the State Literacy Plan? Are these numbers proportional to those who will be implementing the plan?
- How will the state ensure a comprehensive and inclusive perspective is used to attend to student learning?
- How can state leaders ensure that all schools and districts have access to high-quality, evidence-based literacy curricula and materials?
- How can state leaders ensure that assessments are aligned with state standards and provide timely, actionable data to inform instruction and intervention?
- How can state leaders promote equitable access to literacy resources and opportunities across the state, particularly in areas with high rates of poverty or other systemic barriers to literacy development?
- How can state leaders engage families and community partners in supporting students' literacy development and creating a culture of literacy throughout the state?
- What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

- How can state leaders provide ongoing, high-quality professional learning opportunities that are accessible and relevant to educators in all regions of the state?
- How can state leaders ensure that all educators have access to the latest research and evidence-based practices related to literacy instruction and assessment?
- 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?
- 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?
- 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?
- How will the state define successful implementation of literacy practices, monitor school progress, and provide support when deemed necessary?
- As best practices and evidence-based research continues to evolve, how will ISBE ensure the State Literacy Plan considers longitudinal and current best practices?
- What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

- How can state leaders ensure that all literacy initiatives and programs align with the state's goals and priorities for literacy development?
- How can state leaders support schools and districts in prioritizing and focusing their efforts on the most effective literacy strategies and initiatives?

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- 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?
- 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?
- What obstacles exist that prevent us from achieving this goal?

Next Steps for State Leadership

- Research and apply for federal funding to support Illinois educators with the development and implementation of local literacy plans.
- Provide clear guidance on acceptable rubrics in which districts can use when selecting high-quality materials to support the implementation of the literacy plan.
- Collaborate with teacher preparation programs to ensure they are aligning longitudinal and current evidenced-based practices when providing literacy instruction to preservice teachers.
- Provide guidance about appropriate professional learning that can be leveraged to support initiatives in the State Literacy Plan.
- Create model implementation plans that include sample goals, milestones, and timelines.
- Coordinate across state agencies to ensure evidenced-based best practices pertaining to early childhood literacy are being implemented.
- State-level leaders should provide access to reviews of literacy curricula and materials that demonstrate alignment with state standards and evidence-based practices. State-level leaders also can prioritize the selection of materials that meet the diverse needs of all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from historically marginalized backgrounds. State leaders can effectively monitor student progress and provide timely, actionable data to educators to inform instruction and intervention. This system should ensure that assessments are aligned with state standards and provide data that is accessible and meaningful to educators.
- State leaders can identify areas of need and target resources and interventions to support students in high-poverty areas or those facing other systemic barriers to literacy development. For example, leaders can invest in the creation of free, high-quality literacy programs; expand access to libraries and digital resources; and provide additional support for English learners and students with disabilities.
- Leaders can also engage families and community partners in supporting literacy development by promoting family engagement strategies and partnering with community organizations to provide literacy resources. This can include providing training and resources for families to support literacy development at home, hosting literacy events in the community, and partnering with local businesses and organizations to promote literacy.
- To address obstacles, leaders can work to build partnerships and coalitions with stakeholders across the state, including educators, families, community organizations, and policymakers, to advocate for increased funding and support for literacy development.
- Leaders can also work to communicate the importance of literacy development and the benefits of evidence-based practices to all stakeholders and provide resources and support to help schools and districts make the necessary changes.
- State leaders should 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.

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- State leaders can require professional learning opportunities to be aligned to the latest research and evidence-based practices. State leaders can promote professional learning opportunities through established networks.
- State leaders can provide resources and training on how to differentiate instruction for English learners, students with special needs, and students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Leaders can also promote the use of technology and assistive technology to support these students' literacy development. State leaders can provide access to the appropriate data needed for districts to identify the students of special populations and their unique needs most effectively, including guidance on universal screeners and data sets that are available through state assessments.
- State leaders should 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.
- State leaders can create guidance and provide resources that align the State Literacy Plan with existing mandates. Provide examples of how local districts can prioritize the literacy plan while braiding it into existing mandates.
- State leaders can 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.
- Leaders also should 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.
- State leaders should engage in ongoing evaluation and refinement of programs to ensure they remain effective and relevant.
- State leaders can also 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. This can involve leveraging technology and other tools to increase efficiency and transparency in communication and reporting.

Regional Leaders

Who is in this role: Regional leadership includes individuals and organizations with direct responsibility for overseeing the implementation of literacy initiatives, such as ROEs and ISCs, program coordinators, and other education administrators at a multi-district level. Additionally, professional development providers and special interest groups that support the work of teachers are part of this level of leadership. These individuals are responsible for ensuring that state-level policies and initiatives are implemented effectively and in a way that supports literacy development for all students across the state. ROEs and ISCs are essential offices that partner with ISBE to support local school districts.

Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

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GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Differing support may be needed across regions. • 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. • Students in most need of literacy support will benefit from prioritizing the commitment to equity.	• Regional Offices 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-12 teachers • Shared services can be explored to support the growth of literacy expertise in Illinois.	• 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.

Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their effort to support each goal.

Reflection Questions -- Goal 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.

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

Reflection Questions -- Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

- Do regional leaders have the capacity to offer the in-depth support that may be necessary for some districts?
- How will regional leaders sustain ongoing professional learning?

Reflection Questions: Goal 3 -- Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

- How will regional leaders communicate and update the districts in your region regarding the State

Literacy Plan?
- How will regional leaders identify localized support needed across districts?

Next Steps for Regional Leadership
- Research and apply for funding to support professional learning for administrators and teachers across your region.
- Create a needs assessment to give to districts as a way to help the design and deepen their understanding of the instructional shifts that need to take place.
- Offer guidance for districts who need help with selecting and or purchasing high-quality literacy materials that support the implementation of the State Literacy Plan.
- A regional scan to identify existing expertise and partnerships would be a strong step toward truly meeting the goal of all students growing and achieving literacy.
- As Illinois' commitment to literacy continues to deepen, special attention must be given to alternative education students to specifically support their unique needs to improve their skills and achievement in literacy. Literacy skills are foundational to College and Career Readiness, and students in alternate settings must be included in the regional commitment to the State Literacy Plan.
- Continue to build connections with all the districts in your region.
- Work with districts to develop literacy belief statements that help districts articulate their own philosophical beliefs based on research through multiple lenses of literacy learning.
- Assist districts in developing their own professional learning and embedded on-the-job training using district coaches.
- Provide facilitated collaboration opportunities across your region to increase cross-district support.
- This structure lends itself to supporting the State Literacy Plan because it seeks feedback and input to ultimately serve its purpose to support literacy throughout the state.
- Leveraging existing statewide communication structures and relationships, the Literacy Plan will fulfill the intended purpose of a living document that supports the transformation of literacy access and growth in the state.
- Share messaging plans with regional leaders to help maintain a consistent focus on literacy.

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District Leaders

Who is in this role: 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.

Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Evaluate how the current system supports the teaching of literacy and identify areas that may contributing to inequitalble outcomes. • Consider the local contex of student data & demographics, size, set up [elementary district vs high school district], language needs, geographic needs, etc. to establish a plan that will be beneficial for all learners • All districts, regardless of grades served, need to consider how a literacy plan could help improve their student achievement. • Student data should guide instruction throughout the school year as part of the district assessment plan and MTSS system. • Idenfitying quality Tier 1 and intervention curricula will be necessary.	• 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. • Professional learning and curriculum may look different for different grade bands, the district needs to consider how to support all its educators in the best way possible. • This work is not designed to be done in a silo.The district's role to achieve this goal is to take a collaborative, incremental approach for full scale implementation.	• 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.

Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their effort to support each goal.

Reflection Questions -- Goal 1: All students achieving grade-level literacy skills.

- What are the school district's philosophical beliefs regarding preK-12 literacy development?
- What do the current structures and data indicate about the district's beliefs and the implementation of support for teaching and learning?
- How can data be utilized to present a comprehensive overview of the reading proficiency of preK-12 students?
- What insights does the data provide about the effectiveness of the literacy curriculum, instruction, and outcomes? How do the literacy data outcomes vary across different racial, linguistic, and special populations?
- What notable achievements can be identified within the district's practices?
- What plans does the district have to enhance student outcomes in literacy? What evidence-based strategies are being employed? Which strategies are being excluded?
- What resources are allocated to ensure that all students in Grades 6-12 can read and receive the necessary support?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

- How are educators involved in the planning process and how is feedback obtained from local stakeholders by school districts?
- Does the district provide support to teachers with a high-quality curriculum? How is professional learning offered to facilitate the implementation of the evidence-based curriculum?
- What measures are taken to support schools in initiating and maintaining impactful literacy initiatives?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

- Where is overlap evident in the current systems and structures?
- What demonstrates effectiveness in our current systems and structures and what can be eliminated?
- How are openness and transparency demonstrated in the actions of district leaders?

Next Steps for District Leaders

- Research and apply for grant funding when it is available through the state.
- Establish a local literacy plan aligned with the needs and beliefs of the community. District leaders should develop student-centered goals and evidence-based strategies.
- Engage in efforts to evaluate and address ineffective initiatives. Map current processes and assess their impact on student progress (e.g., Process Mapping Protocol, High Tech High Graduate School of Education). Address communication gaps, inconsistent messaging, and policies that hinder language learners.
- Assess year-over-year data to understand student achievement and identify successful schools. Disaggregate data by race, language learners, and diverse learners. Review curriculum implementation and its fidelity.
- Implement assessment systems to identify students in need of intervention, starting from early first grade. Provide support to schools in developing Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Avoid excessive testing and value diverse assessment methods.
- Build school capacity through professional development, funding, and creating a safe space for

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planning and continuous improvement in literacy instruction.

- Identify quality curriculum as a top priority.
    - Provide funding for comprehensive quality curriculum purchases.
    - Collaborate with schools to ensure vertical alignment and progression in literacy skills and content knowledge.
    - Review the current curriculum using an approved rubric.
    - Initiate a Request for Proposal process with curriculum providers.
- Secure evidence-based professional development providers.
    - Utilize state and national professional organizations for support.
    - 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 learner's literacy development, reading intervention, assessment, and structures for continuous improvement.
- Build leadership capacity within schools.
    - Provide training on supporting implementation, evaluating instructional materials, and monitoring fidelity of use.
    - Establish principal support groups.
    - Consider piloting implementation to learn what works best[41].
- Create short- and long-term plans aligned with a strategic vision. Allow flexibility for schools to choose professional learning paths. Ensure professional learning opportunities are aligned with the strategic plan.
- Maintain open and consistent communication with families and community members. Provide opportunities for feedback on classroom shifts.
- Implement the literacy plan in phases with clear measures of progress. Set goals and evaluation criteria to provide schools with clarity.

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[41] Bransford. J., Brown, A.L. & Cocking R.R., 1999 (Eds.) How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience and School. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press for National Research Council

School Leaders

Who is in this role: At this level, the audience consists of principals, assistant principals, and individuals who have any title that conveys supervisory responsibilities for the day-to-day operations of the school. Principals and assistant principals play a critical role in impacting student achievement.[42] School leaders provide 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.[43]

Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

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[42] Allensworth, E.M & Hart H., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2008

[43] *Lead for Literacy | Shining a Light on Literacy*, 2023

GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Engage in a continuous improvement cycle. • Provide appropriate materials and professional learning for educators on using evidenced-based quality curriculum. • Leaders should understand the history of literacy achievement in the building. • Identify curriculum gaps and ensure curriculum includes systematic phonics, direct and explicit instruction, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and is sequential in building skills from simple to complex. • Ensure schools have the appropriate assessment tools to know if their students are learning how to read and advancing in their literacy skills. This includes having a universal screener, utilizing curriculum unit assessments, monitoring progress with both formative and summative assessments. Assessments must meet the needs of students who are English Learners.	• Educators require sustained and appropriate professional learning and development opportunities to hone their skills that are demanding of current evidence-based practice. • Recognize the attachment some teachers may feel towards a specific activity or curriculum. • Literacy development applies to all grade levels and content areas. Be explicit and strategic on building capacity for various teacher groups and staff who interact with students on a daily basis. • 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.

Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their effort to support each goal.

Reflection Questions -- Goal 1: All students achieving grade-level literacy skills.

- Does student data support the school's current literacy strategy?
- Are all student needs being met?
- Are the school's actions developmentally appropriate and based on evidence?
- What are the school's needs and how does its vision of literacy align with the state's vision for literacy achievement?
- Does the curriculum meet the standards of high-quality, evidenced-based literacy instruction?
- Are the appropriate assessments used to monitor student progress and determine when students need intervention?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

- How will the structure of PD be leveraged or changed to let teachers use their expertise yet also learn about new approaches and ideas?
- How will literacy leaders within the school be developed and utilized?
- How are paraprofessionals being upskilled to ensure consistent implementation practices for all students?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

- Can building-level MTSS data be utilized to document student growth?
- How can the local literacy plan overlap with current initiatives, such as School Improvement Plans?

Next Steps for School Leaders

- Research and apply for grant funding when it is available.
- Utilize student data for decision-making.
- Ensure the literacy plan addresses all educational roles and grade levels and recognize that literacy differs for different grade levels and educational roles.
- Train staff to analyze assessment data and allocate time for data review.
- Analyze year-over-year data and further disaggregate it by race, language learners, and special populations to understand who is served by current literacy instruction and what gaps exist.
- Foster relationships and use discussion protocols to analyze the data with staff.[44]
- Engage teacher teams in data analysis to identify root causes.
- Evaluate current Tier 1 curriculum and intervention materials with teachers and staff.
- Implement a comprehensive middle and high school curriculum that supports students' reader identities, content understanding, knowledge of the world, problem-solving strategies, metacognition, and knowledge of disciplinary discourses and practices.[45]
- Screen students in their primary language, when valid and reliable screeners are available, in addition to the district's universal screening measures. Schools must identify criteria to determine if students need Tier 2 or Tier 3 interventions in accordance with Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. Caution should be exercised to prevent excessive testing of students and prioritize the effective use of diverse assessment methods, including oral presentations and projects.

[44] *Protocols*, 2019

[45] Greenleaf et al., 2023

- Address diverse needs and inequities in learning outcomes. Culturally relevant teaching can improve the literate lives of all students by helping students become intellectual leaders, apprenticing literacy skills in a learning community, legitimizing their real-life experiences and using their questions to help broaden the idea of literacy, and having high expectations of students – engaging in a collective effort against the status quo.[46]
- Develop a literacy vision aligned with local needs and the Illinois State Literacy Plan.
- Align the school budget with goals and seek support from the district and community.
- Invest in high-quality Tier 1 curriculum and interventions as necessary.
- Approach literacy curriculum and instruction changes with honesty and vulnerability.
- Provide job-embedded and sustained professional learning.
- Build school-level capacity in assessment administration and communication of the assessments with families.
- Provide professional learning opportunities for school leaders and educators.
- Streamline school efforts to align with improved literacy practices.

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[46] Ladson-Billings, 1994

Teacher Leaders

Who is in this role: Educators in a teacher leader role could include, but are not limited to, school librarians, reading resource teachers, literacy coaches, advanced academics specialists, speech pathologists, EL teachers, or other educational leaders who support classroom teachers. Certification requirements for these specialist positions prepare teacher leaders with more pedagogical resources to support student learning. Additionally, teacher leaders frequently work with students throughout their entire time in the school environment. The knowledge they gain supporting different grade levels allows them to contribute to a sustainable and vertically aligned curriculum. Teacher leaders use knowledge, expertise, student data, and support structures to guide teachers in creating and maintaining literacy-rich learning environments that will foster student literacy success.

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Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Enusure early childhood classroom environments are rich with experiences for phonological awareness and shared reading experiences. • Support childhood classroom environments are well-supported with a variety of teacher leaders as collaborative partners and advocates for student learning. • Develop the capacity of teacher leaders to help educators shift instructional practices. • Equitable access to similar resources such as sound literacy curricula, subject specialists, and school libraries and librarians is essential to ensure all students achieve grade level literacy skills. • Implementation curriculum equitably and with fidelity to combat the barriers that may exist outside the classroom environment.	• Evidence-based literacy practices should include components of phonological awareness (letter sounds), examples of rich text in a shared reading lesson, instruction on letter recognition, embedded experiences to build background knowledge, cross-curricular content extension and connection experiences, and opportunities to create independence for young learners/readers. • Teacher leaders and educators are equipped to make instructional decisions that are data-based, student-centered, and consistent vertically when evidence-based literacy practices are delivered with fidelity within grade level bands. • The newest reading research in literacy pedagogy should guide professional development and instructional decisions.	• Within and outside of the classroom, students must have access to high-quality literacy resources including physical materials. To do this, 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.

Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their efforts to support each goal.

Reflection Questions -- Goal 1: All students achieving grade-level literacy skills.

- What are the essential components in early childhood classroom environments?
- How does a literacy-rich classroom sound?
- How does a literacy-rich classroom look?
- How does equitable implementation across all populations look?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence-based literacy practices.

- What tools and systems (instruction, curriculum, interventions, data, etc.) are in place to assess if the curriculum and related resources are of high quality?
- What professional development experiences equip educators to make evidence-based literacy decisions?

Reflection Questions -- Goal 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.

- How can teacher leaders streamline curricular goals and focus on effective literacy strategies and initiatives?

Next Steps for Teacher Leaders

- Ensure that curated collections of materials that enhance units (e.g., a rhyming lesson with mentor texts or books with elements of speech and dialogue, such as the "Elephant and Piggie" series) are available and well-implemented. Additionally, the classroom environment and small group instruction deliver access to decodable books where students practice what they are learning.
- The creation of take-home bags of literacy materials that can be used at home with family members can extend access to materials and increase exposure to learning.
- Additionally, the development of a Parent University-type of tool/program that is curated by a school literacy expert and designed to be used at home with an adult or presented to families can increase awareness about educational objectives and goals. Furthermore, a school library can be open before and after school, and if possible, all summer long for students to use as an access point to literacy and learning.
- Experts in the field share strategies that will enhance instruction and provide opportunities for teacher growth in mindset and practice. The professional development experience is immediately applicable, so teachers can learn and implement the training/resource/skill/strategy with their students and in their instruction soon after. Resources are demonstrated to teachers in ways that allow for easy implementation.
- Teacher leaders and school administrators should acknowledge that best practices evolve and be receptive to teacher feedback.
- The implementation of a train-the-trainer model is productive so the teacher leader can provide professional development to classroom teachers on curricular initiatives as needed.
- Teacher leaders can work to ensure a guaranteed and viable vertically aligned curriculum is supported in grade-level bands and implemented with fidelity.
- Teacher leaders can focus on consistent data collection that shows student growth and areas of need over grade-level bands.
- Teacher leaders can communicate with administrators about how the curricular initiatives are being implemented and gaps that could be filled while also identifying cross-curricular connections to infuse literacy in all subject areas.
- School administrators can hire certified teacher leaders who are specialists in their field and create systems of support for classroom teachers and students.

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Community and Family

Who is in this role: Individuals in this role play an active role in promoting and supporting literacy within the community. This audience typically consists of the following:

- Parents and Guardians: Parents and guardians are crucial members of the community and family audience. They have a direct influence on their child's literacy development and are responsible for creating a literacy-rich environment at home.
- Family Members: Siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other family members who are involved in a child's life can also be part of the community and family audience. Their support and engagement contribute to a child's overall literacy experiences.
- Community Members: This category includes individuals residing in the local community, such as neighbors, friends, and volunteers, who actively participate in literacy-related activities and events. They may contribute their time, resources, or expertise to support literacy initiatives.
- Leaders of Local Businesses and Organizations: Businesses and organizations within the community can play a significant role in supporting literacy efforts. They may contribute financial resources, donate books or educational materials, provide volunteer opportunities, or collaborate on literacy projects. Depending on the scope of work, these local businesses and organizations can also be part of the regional or state level.
- Leaders of Literacy Organizations and Advocacy Groups: These organizations and groups work specifically to promote literacy and provide resources, training, and support to families and community members. They can be valuable partners in implementing a State Literacy Plan. Again, these groups also may belong to the state or regional audience.

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. A State Literacy Plan should strive to engage and involve a diverse range of individuals and groups to ensure comprehensive support for literacy development.

Leaders at this level should examine the following implementation considerations in their effort to support each goal.

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GOAL 1: All students achieving grade level literacy skills.	GOAL 2: All educators are equipped to utilize evidence based literacy practices.	GOAL 3: Streamline and consolidate initiatives to enhance focus for educators and students.
• Children construct their knowledge from their surroundings. Informal learning environments can be a good lever to utilize when engaging youth. • The sociocultural approach to literacy and learning reminds us that all words bring a history of meanings that intersect with our lives in complex ways while revealing much about the social worlds we construct. Children construct their knowledge from their surroundings with language playing a pivotal role in mental development.	• Parents are our students' first educators, they need to be informed on initiatives happening within their child's school. Schools need to have an open door policy to share information regarding the students education.	• 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.

Leaders at this level should consider the following essential questions in their efforts to support each goal.

Reflection Questions

- How will the local literacy plan affect your student(s)?
- How can community partnerships and parents be leveraged to support schoolwide initiatives?
- How can older students or community members be used to encourage, support, or tutor students who are struggling?

Next Steps for Community and Family

- Schools need to 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).
- 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.
- Develop an asset-based approach of considering the organizational and professional resources within the communities that can be leveraged to support implementation. This could be a recommendation that empowered local districts/regions to consider family/community engagement.

- Join in on the discussion. Attend local school board meetings, grade-level curriculum events, or Open House events.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Offer to volunteer in school classrooms.
- Advocate for your student if they are not progressing.

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Section 5

Tools and Resources

Overview

This section is a work in progress and development will continue.

The following is a list curated with resources identified to assist districts, teachers, and parents and support the Illinois State Literacy Plan. The intent is to provide free or temporarily free learning resources for teachers and parents to support student learning. These resources do not represent an endorsement or recommendation of curriculum or eLearning systems.

Resources and Tools to Consider as Implementation Resources		
	Name/Link	Description
Curriculum Evaluation	ISBE's Curriculum Evaluation Tool	This 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.
	EdReports	EdReports is an independent nonprofit designed to improve K-12 education. EdReports draws upon expert educators to review instructional materials and support smart adoption processes that can help teachers nationwide to equip themselves with high-quality materials.
	The Reading League Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines	These guidelines are designed to be used for Tier 1 instruction to highlight "red flags" that do not align with current evidence-based practices. These are part of a "living document."
Assessment	DIBELS 8th Edition	This is a universal screener for K-8 to identify students at risk for difficulties in reading. A free version and professional learning are available. *Note that DIBELS is currently developing an encoding screener to be included.

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	Acadience	This is a universal screener for K-6 to identify students at risk for difficulties in reading. A Preschool Early Literacy Indicators assessment is available for use with prekindergarten. A free version and professional learning are available.
	Illinois Report Card	IllinoisReportCard.com is the state's official source for information about public schools across Illinois. The information here will help you act as an informed partner in the education of our children. Families, researchers, policymakers, and community members can use the site to find school data that includes academic performance, school environment, educators, students, and highlights provided by principals
	My Data Dashboard	ISBE has launched a new tool called My Data Dashboard, accessible via MyIRC, that replaces Ed360. ISBE conducted a survey and focus groups to gather feedback about Ed360, which had been available since 2018. My Data Dashboard provides the same features with faster loading times and a better user experience. Stay tuned for more changes to make your academic, educator, and financial data more useful for continuous improvement. My Data Dashboard is an optional service provided by ISBE. The goal of My Data Dashboard is to provide 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.
Research/ Evidence-based Articles	International Dyslexia Association	IDA Fact Sheet
	The Reading League	Science of Reading: Defining Guide
	Reading Research Recap	Dr. Neena Saha selects current research articles to summarize and/or share. Dr. Saha gives links to research and specifies which are open access.
	Ten Maxims	Ten Maxims: What We've Learned So Far About

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		How Children Learn to Read by Reid Lyon (May 2023)
Teacher/District instructional support	Reading Universe	Currently being updated. The original resource is here. Taxonomy will give instructional tips that follow evidence-based approaches. These will be through clickable links that are specific to each skill.
	Reading League Illinois	Professional organization that provides professional learning and other resources, such as links to research.
	PaTTAN Literacy Resources	Professional learning resource hub that is dedicated to the science of reading.
	Understood.org	Resources to help with students who "think differently." This includes attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, anxiety, and more
	Anita L. Archer, Ph.D.	Dr. Archer is an educational consultant specializing in Explicit Instruction. This does not only apply to literacy, but all instruction at all levels.
	Reading Research Quarterly	Dr. Nell Duke discusses research beyond the simple view of reading into an "active" view. 2021
	Reading Research Quarterly	Dr. Maren Ackerman discusses "What Matters Most? Toward a Robust and Socially Just Science of Reading." 2021
	Unearthing Joy: A guide to Culturally and Historically Responsive Teaching and Learning	Author Gholdy Muhammad continues her focus from cultural and historical realities. Her wise implementation advice is paired with model lessons and assessment tools that span subjects and grade levels. 2023
	The Science of Reading Movement: The Never-Ending Debate and the Need for a Different Approach to Reading Instruction.	Research contained in this paper by Paul L. Thomas is from the National Education Policy Center and underwent a double-blind peer review. 2022

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	Florida Center for Reading Research	From 2004 to 2010, a team of researchers and teachers at FCRR collected ideas and created Student Center Activities for use in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms. The activities are designed for students to practice, demonstrate, and extend their learning of what has already been taught, sometimes with teacher assistance and sometimes independently. Students can complete the activities in small groups, pairs, or individually.

Resources & Tools to Consider for Assessment		
	Name/Link	Description
Free Benchmark Assessments	Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early LIteracy Skills EasyCBM	There are also many paid subscription services that also offer benchmark assessments. See the National Center on Intensive Intervention website for a list of research-based examples.
Free Writing Assessments	Primary Spelling Inventory (PSI) Assessment	The PSI allows teachers to analyze spelling and phonics patterns to find developmental spelling stages to guide instruction. (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, Johnston, 2016) Writing assessment at these levels can be performed through skill checklists, rubrics, and student self-assessment.

Sample Lesson Components for Consideration

Sample Explicit Phonics Lesson Sequence (Honig, Diamond, Gutlohn, 2018)		
1	Develop Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic awareness activities assist students in making sense of the alphabetic principle while developing phonics skills. Explicit teaching of letters is incorporated.
2	Introduce Sound/Spelling	Explicitly teach these elements in isolation.

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3	Blending	Explicit instruction and practice in sounding out and reading words. Routines include sound-by-sound, continuous, spelling-focused, and whole-word blending.
4	Build Automatic Word Recognition	Activities designed to develop automaticity; focus on quick and easy decoding and reading of words in isolation.
5	Apply to Decodable Text	Practice reading and rereading decodable texts to develop automaticity. Decodable texts used should contain previously taught sound/spelling correspondences.
6	Word Work (for Decoding and Encoding)	Activities that allow students to practice sound/spelling patterns by manipulating, building, and sorting words.

Sample Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Activities	
Word Sorting	Have students group words and pictures within and across categories. Word sorting reveals key similarities and differences among words.
Elkonin Boxes	Elkonin boxes are used to develop phonemic awareness in early literacy. They also can be used with letters to help students connect phonemes and graphemes. This may be helpful for multilingual learners acquiring English, as they can move actual letters representing specific sounds in the individual boxes.
Word Building	This is an activity that supports word recognition and decoding by asking students to change one letter. In this way, students understand the effect of inserting, substituting, or deleting letters.

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