

K-12
**MISSOURI
STATE
LITERACY
PLAN**



DESE VISION—Missouri public schools: the best choice, the best results!

DESE MISSION—The mission of the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education is to guarantee the superior preparation and performance of every child in school and in life.

DESE GOAL—All Missouri students will graduate ready for success.



THE K-12 MISSOURI STATE LITERACY PLAN LAYOUT AND DESIGN TEAM

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INTRODUCTION

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has long held high standards and expectations for students. The Outstanding Schools Act of 1993 called together master teachers, parents and policy makers from across the state to create Missouri's academic standards. The result of that work was the Show-Me Standards, which were adopted by the Missouri State Board of Education in 1996 (Authority for the Show-Me Standards: Section 160.514, RSMo, and the Code of State Regulations, 5 CSR 50-375.100). The standards detail the mastery competencies considered to be essential for students exiting high school in order to lead productive lives.

The Show-Me Standards state the following: In Communication Arts, students in Missouri public schools will acquire a solid foundation which includes knowledge of and proficiency in

- speaking and writing standard English, e.g., usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization;
- reading and evaluating fiction, poetry and drama;
- reading and evaluating nonfiction works and material, e.g., biographies, newspapers, technical manuals;
- writing formally, e.g., reports, narratives, essays, and informally, e.g., outlines, notes;
- comprehending and evaluating content and artistic aspects of oral and visual presentations, e.g., story-telling, debates, lectures, multimedia productions;
- participating in formal and informal presentations and discussions of issues and ideas; and
- identifying and evaluating relationships between language and culture.



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The Show-Me Standards establish a solid foundation of literacy skills that support the ever-increasing breadth and depth of what it means to be literate. A literacy plan reflecting the reality of twenty-first-century change is essential in guiding Missouri students' learning.

In April of 2016, the Missouri State Board of Education adopted the Missouri Learning Standards: Grade-Level Expectations. Based on the Show-Me Standards, which remain under Missouri law, these new MLS expectations continue Missouri's tradition of high expectations for students and guide districts in revising local curricula and in promoting literacy.

Definition of Literacy

“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute and communicate using visual, audible and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. The ability to read, write and communicate connects people to one another and empowers them to achieve things they never thought possible. Communication and connection are the basis of who we are and how we live together and interact with the world” (International Literacy Association, 2018). Literacy skills are a shared responsibility and important part of every academic discipline; however, each discipline relies on different types of texts, writing styles and language to convey ideas and learning. For students to be fully prepared for the challenges and expectations of college and career, it is crucial they develop literacy skills in all content areas.

The National Council of Teachers of English addresses the issue of Twenty-First-Century Literacies as follows:



Literacy has always been a collection of cultural and communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy. Because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies. These literacies are multiple, dynamic and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups (National Council of Teachers of English, 2013).

It is because of these changes in the complexity and wide range of literacies that DESE's literacy plan has been revised, providing stakeholders with updated research and pedagogy.

Purpose

In Missouri, local school boards make curriculum decisions tailored to the needs of their students and communities. The state literacy plan is not a mandated document for districts but rather a collection of resources, ideas and themes that might be considered in building a local, comprehensive literacy plan.

The K-12 Missouri State Literacy Plan is an evidence-based resource for administrators and teachers with useful information for parents and caregivers all along the K-12 continuum. It provides information on integrating literacy instruction with the state standards and current knowledge about literacy development. It offers ideas and links to resources to promote literacy, provides clear guidance on the components of a comprehensive literacy system, incorporates evidence-based practices necessary to achieve long-term success for our students and guides districts in developing a comprehensive literacy plan.

The state literacy plan encompasses all aspects of reading, writing, listening and speaking using effective

methods, strategies and materials needed to promote successful learning.

The most current research on literacy has been used to develop the state literacy plan comprised of the following five components:

LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM

INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION, INTERVENTION AND ENRICHMENT

ASSESSMENT

PARTNERSHIPS

Each component, necessary for the literacy development of all children educated in the Missouri school system, is interwoven to create a full picture of literacy education in Missouri. This plan explains the key components and encourages a systemic and synchronized approach to literacy implementation that includes state, district and community involvement.

The plan supports the development of the following broad range of skills and knowledge necessary to be truly literate:

- The integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking across all media types
- The knowledge to recognize and use language appropriate to a situation
- The ability to think, create, question, analyze, solve problems and reflect

Using *The K-12 Missouri State Literacy Plan* as a guide, it is the hope that individual school districts will design their own literacy plan to meet the needs of their students. At the end of each section, the "What's Your Status?" questions serve as starting points for developing a local literacy plan.



LEADERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

Leadership is a key component in any literacy initiative. Several stakeholders may be involved within this component, including state leaders (DESE), district and building administration, and instructional staff working collaboratively to ensure a common set of values and beliefs guides literacy instruction.

State Leaders

Because of their work interpreting state and federal policies, leaders at the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are in a position to serve as liaisons between legislative policy and classroom practice dealing with literacy. DESE leaders provide support and guidance for educators seeking to improve literacy in their districts and schools.

An array of resources from DESE leaders provides opportunities for educators to learn about and engage in best practices for literacy instruction. With resources ranging from online materials to professional development workshops, state leaders ensure that literacy education remains an attainable statewide priority.

District and Building Administration

Of primary importance is the role of the administrative leader and principal. Research (Sebring & Bryk, 2000; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009) shows sustained, long-term commitment to the professional growth of teachers is a critical function of effective school leadership.

Booth and Roswell (2007) state, “There are two types of expertise needed in order to seriously improve literacy in schools: one area is expertise in the content of literacy; the other is expertise in leading the change process” (p. 7).

In order to develop and implement a strong literacy program, administrators

- articulate and monitor high expectations of all staff and students;
- ensure ample time for enriched literacy development and learning for staff members;
- ensure ample time for collaboration among staff members;

- maximize time for literacy instruction within the classroom;
- participate with faculty in embedded literacy training;
- support opportunities for students, both within and outside of the school day, such as needed interventions and enrichment, homework help, early learning and parent involvement, credit recovery, and extra-curricular activities related to literacy, e.g., writing camps, book clubs, etc.;
- comply with federal and state mandates and policies pertaining to literacy;
- fund the resources necessary to sustain and grow K-12 literacy; and
- provide time and tools for teachers to analyze assessment data and reflect on instructional practices.

The administrator and/or principal is the primary change agent for the school. Biancarosa and Snow (2004) state, “. . . without a principal’s clear commitment and enthusiasm, a curricular and instructional reform has no more chance of succeeding than any other school-wide reform” (p. 21).

Instructional Staff

At the heart of all student learning is the instructional staff. Teachers not only carry the responsibility for implementing literacy instruction but also for sustaining the culture of literacy. Beyond the establishment of a culture of literacy, there is an ongoing commitment to improve student learning through thoughtful and purposeful collaboration with building and district administration, colleagues and parents. Involvement of teachers across all content areas is essential to ensure that the teaching of literacy is interwoven across all aspects of learning.

Literacy Teams

Leadership responsibilities are shared. The establishment of a literacy team encourages building staff representation in the decision-making process. Included in this team are literacy professionals, such as literacy coaches, media specialists and others who are knowledgeable



in literacy practices, methods and resources. Teachers from each grade level and content area as well as any special populations, e.g., special education teachers, English learner teachers, reading specialists, speech and language teachers, occupational therapists, and/or other critical school personnel, are also part of the team. The literacy team may

- analyze data to make sound instructional and professional development decisions,
- optimize available resources for literacy instruction,
- develop and implement a building literacy plan, and/or
- support new and existing staff.

Literacy Coaches/Teacher Leaders

Literacy coaches provide ongoing, job-embedded training and support for teachers to build capacity and effectiveness in literacy instruction. They spend most of their time working with teachers and working with students to demonstrate lessons for educators (Wren & Reed, 2005).

The literacy coach/teacher leader offers support to faculty in a non-evaluative role, knowing that building and maintaining trust is imperative when asking teachers to learn, step out of their comfort zones and engage in opportunities to grow as educators.

It is also expected that the literacy coach/teacher leader is provided with the time and resources necessary to engage in professional development. The literacy coach/teacher leader stays abreast of and receives professional development on current research in the areas of literacy, data analysis and adult learning.

Literacy coaching standards outlined in the International Reading Association (IRA) report, created in collaboration with other national content organizations (NCTE, NCTM, NSTA, and NCSS) outline what a literacy coach should know and be able to do (Novak, 2014).

IRA Standard 1: Literacy Coaches are Skilled Collaborators who

- assess the literacy needs of the school by reviewing student data, curricular goals, student characteristics, instructional practice strengths and areas of improvement, and learning about the needs of the staff;
- facilitate small- and large-group discussions about instructional practices and how they impact student learning;
- conduct ongoing evaluations of literacy improvement actions and communicate the results to teachers and administrators; and
- meet with school leadership frequently to discuss goals, progress and areas in need of improvement.

IRA Standard 2: Literacy Coaches are Skillful Job-Embedded Coaches who

- support teachers as they choose curriculum materials and instructional strategies to meet the needs of all students;
- link teachers to the most current research in the field of literacy;
- model lessons while the teacher actively observes and reflect with the teacher after the model lesson;
- observe and provide feedback to teachers about their instruction in a non-evaluative manner; and
- reflect with the teacher on the observed lesson, linking comments to the needs assessment of the school.



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

IRA Standard 3: Literacy Coaches are Skillful Evaluators of Literacy Needs who

- help to set schedules to administer and analyze student assessments;
- are present during the analysis of data in order to ensure that the assessments inform teacher instruction; and
- conduct regular meetings with teachers to examine student work and standardize the scoring of writing.

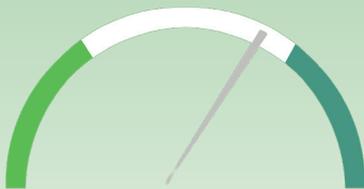
IRA Standard 4: Literacy Coaches are Skillful Instructional Strategists who

- are familiar with all state standards and current research on best practice and
- have strong subject matter knowledge in the three genres of writing, the writing process, the technical nature of vocabulary, reading comprehension strategies, text structure, language conventions and sentence structure, and critical thinking skills. (Novak, 2014)



LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find leadership and sustainability resources online here.



WHAT'S YOUR STATUS?

- What structures are in place in our schools/district for us to share responsibility for student literacy achievement?
- How do our building/district leaders support literacy instruction across the curriculum and for all students?
- What supports are in place to sustain evidence-based practices in literacy?
- How does our school/district provide support for teachers to ensure professional growth in literacy?



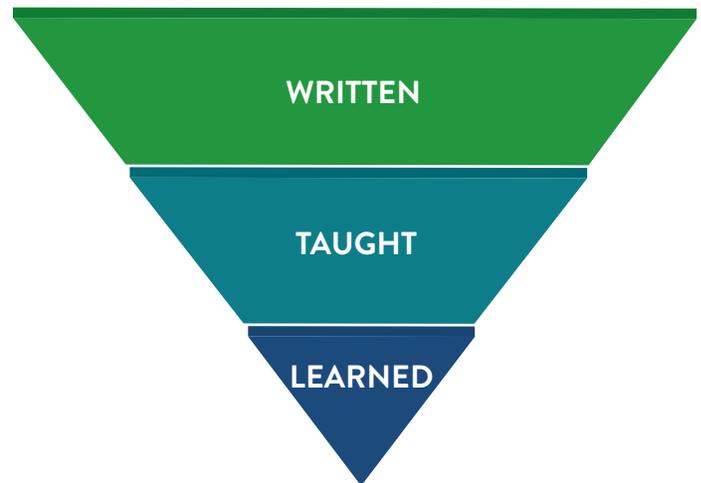
STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM

The foundation of any literacy plan, whether at the state, district, building or classroom level, is a standards-based curriculum. A standards-based curriculum provides the content and expectations for all students to be successful in college, other post-secondary training and careers. It also provides instructional practices to help students meet expectations, along with aligned assessments, which provide evidence and track student success in meeting the standards. A strong, standards-based curriculum ensures students, teachers, administrators and parents of a rigorous and intentional curriculum aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards to promote student learning and success in reading, writing, speaking and listening across all content areas. A standards-based curriculum should

- provide clear expectations in all areas of literacy: reading, writing, speaking, listening;
- include expectations for students to access, interpret, analyze, evaluate and create texts of various types in various media;
- embed explicit, grade-appropriate literacy instruction and instruction in research skills across the curriculum;
- ensure development of academic and content-specific vocabulary across and among grade levels;
- integrate student use of technology to gather, organize, manipulate and express ideas and information for a variety of authentic purposes and audiences;
- align and articulate horizontally and vertically to provide a seamless transition from class to class, grade to grade, and school to school;
- include a balanced system of assessment with both formal and informal evaluation techniques to drive instruction and determine success;
- challenge and develop students to think critically at high levels;
- provide opportunities for extension and enrichment through inquiry-based activities and projects; and
- allow differentiation to respond to individual student needs.

A written, standards-based literacy curriculum can help improve teaching, inform planning, and guide and shape accountability. It should periodically be reviewed, evaluated and revised by all stakeholders based on data, new research on student growth and learning, and effective pedagogy.

Even the best-written curriculum cannot ensure student learning and growth. The written, taught and learned curriculum must be systematically reviewed, monitored and evaluated using internal and external data.



The Curriculum Framework developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides information on designing curriculum that may include a rationale, district literacy vision, course/grade-level descriptions, measurable learner objectives, scope and sequence, Depth of Knowledge, assessments, resources, instructional strategies and activities.





Districts and schools may use the Literacy Curriculum Status tool below as one way to reflect upon and review their current literacy curriculum.

INDICATORS	MEETS	PARTIALLY MEETS	DOES NOT MEET
Literacy curriculum components include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy vision • rationale • grade-level/course-level descriptions • measurable learner objectives • scope and sequence 	Literacy curriculum includes a vision for literacy, unit rationales, grade-level/course-level unit descriptions, measurable learner objectives and a comprehensive literacy scope and sequence.	Literacy curriculum includes some, but not all, curriculum components.	Literacy curriculum components do not exist.
Literacy curriculum aligns to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLS* • DOK+ levels 	Literacy curriculum is fully aligned to MLS and DOK levels.	Literacy curriculum is partially aligned to MLS and/or DOK levels.	Literacy curriculum is not aligned to the MLS and DOK levels.
Literacy assessments include formative and summative assessments and align to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MLS • DOK levels 	Formative and summative literacy assessments are fully aligned to MLS and DOK levels.	Formative and summative literacy assessments are partially aligned to MLS and/or DOK levels.	Formative and summative literacy assessments are not aligned to the MLS and DOK levels.
Literacy curriculum aligns <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instructional practices/strategies with • student activities 	Literacy curriculum aligns instructional practices/strategies with student activities that allow for differentiation.	Literacy curriculum partially aligns instructional practices/strategies with student activities that allow for differentiation.	Literacy curriculum does not align instructional practices/strategies with student activities that allow for differentiation.
Literacy curriculum resources include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equipment • literacy programs • instructional materials • professional development 	Literacy curriculum uses a variety of resources to support equipment needs, literacy programs, instructional materials and professional development.	Literacy curriculum contains some but not all resources needed to support equipment needs, literacy programs, instructional materials and professional development.	Literacy curriculum does not denote use of resources needed to support equipment needs, literacy programs, instructional materials and professional development.

*Missouri Learning Standards
+Depth of Knowledge

**LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?**

Find standards-based curriculum resources online here.



WHAT'S YOUR STATUS?

- How do we ensure our written/taught/learned curriculum is aligned to the Missouri Learning Standards expectations?
- What collaborative structures do we have in place to ensure Missouri Learning Standards expectations are the foundation of our written curriculum?
- What are our processes to write, review, revise and adopt curriculum?
- How do we address both the depth and breadth of the Missouri Learning Standards expectations?



Photo by Abigail Gebhardt, Salisbury High School Yearbook Staff



INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION, INTERVENTION & ENRICHMENT

Once a written literacy curriculum has been established, districts can begin to focus on the implementation of evidence-based strategies employed in the classroom, the day-to-day practices that address how and when students learn.

“...the term ‘evidence-based,’ when used with respect to a State, local educational agency, or school activity, means an activity, strategy, or intervention that –

- (i) demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on –
 - (I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study;
 - (II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or
 - (III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or
- (ii) (I) demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and
 - (II) includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention.

(from section 8101(21)(A) of the ESEA)

(United States Department of Education, 2016)

Effective instruction focuses on all learner groups, including age- and grade-level groups, high school, and special populations such as special education, gifted, students with dyslexia and English learners. It is important to recognize that certain instructional strategies, structures and methodologies are more applicable and appropriate to specific learners.

LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find intentional instruction, intervention and enrichment resources online here.

The four key resources at the heart of high-quality instruction are

- strong instruction that lets students do most of the thinking in the lesson,
- consistent opportunities to work on grade-level appropriate assignments,
- a sense by students of deep engagement in what they’re learning and
- teachers who hold high expectations for students and truly believe they can meet grade-level standards (New Teacher Project, 2018).



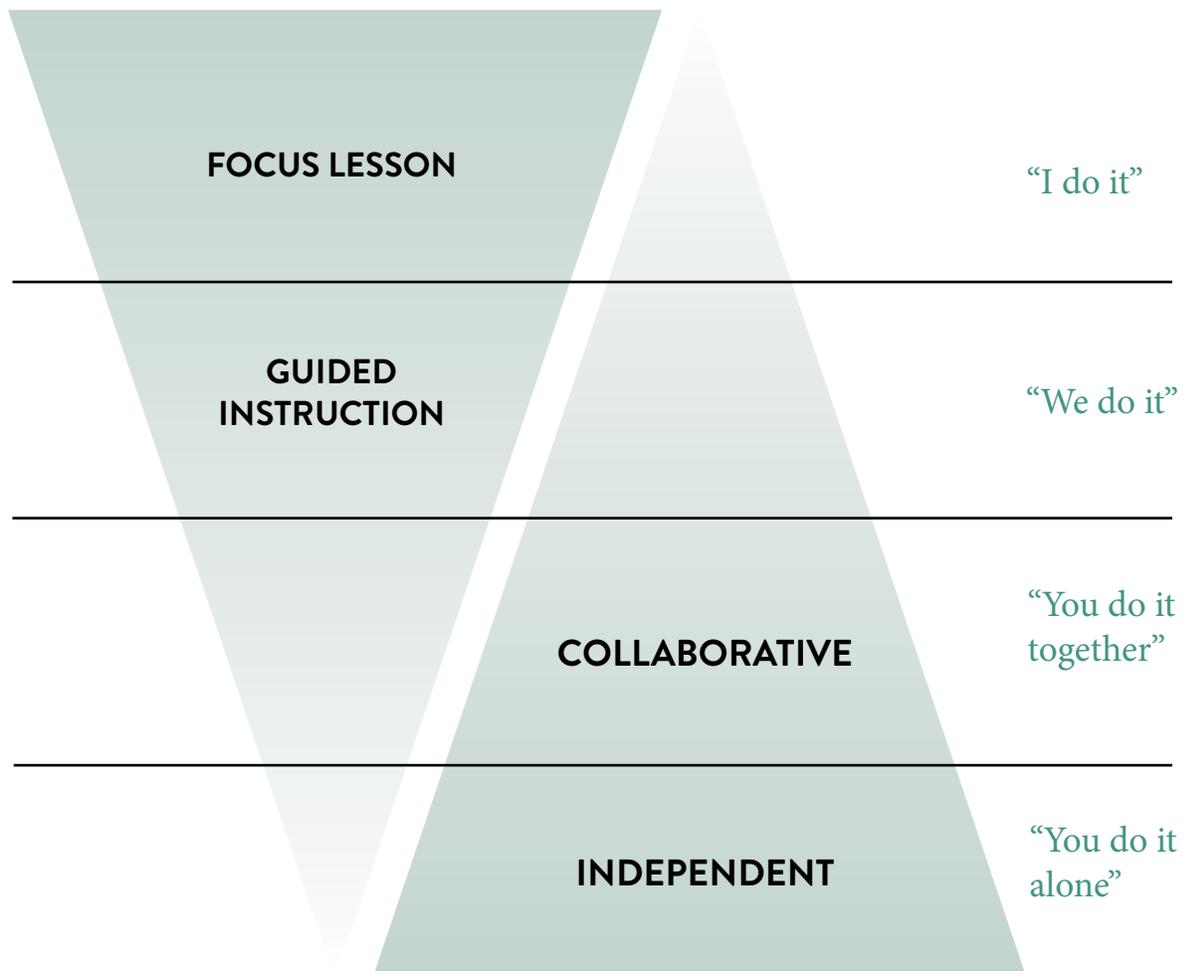


Educational theory from researchers such as Piaget, Vygotsky, Bandura, Bruner, et. al, have influenced a cognitive framework for literacy instruction called Gradual Release of Responsibility. This model moves intentionally from teachers modeling focused lessons (“I do it”), to joint responsibility between teachers and students (“We do it”), to student collaboration (“You do it together”) and finally to independent practice and application by the learner (“You do it alone”) (Frey & Fisher, 2007).

For students to develop well-rounded literacy skills, instruction should interweave components of reading, writing, listening and speaking. While Missouri state standards in literacy set targets for where students should be at each grade level, it is necessary to understand that a student, regardless of grade level, may land at any point on the literacy continuum. Good instruction meets students where they are on the continuum and guides them forward.

THE GRADUAL RELEASE OF RESPONSIBILITY MODEL

Teacher Responsibility

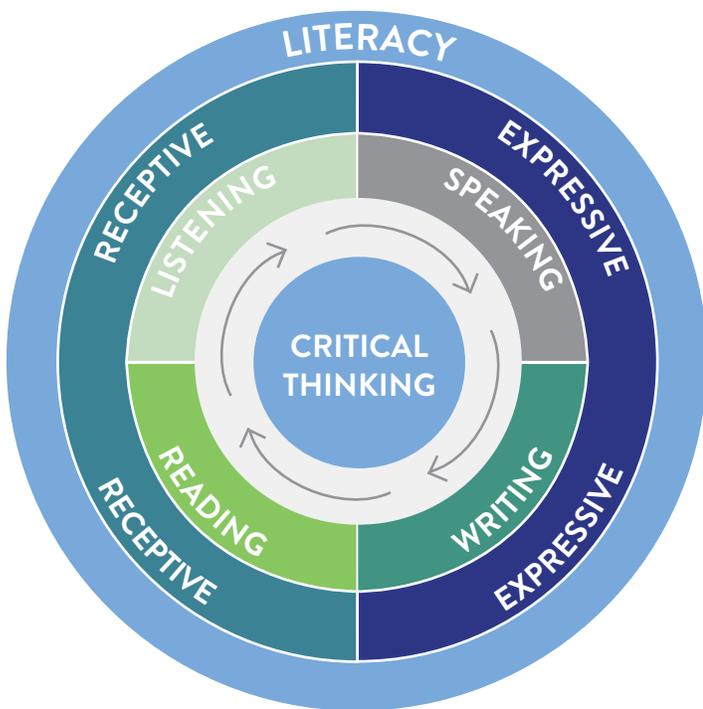


(Doug Fisher, used by permission)



THE INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION OF LITERACY

All literacy learners need to be engaged in speaking, listening, reading and writing for authentic purposes many times throughout the school day. Reading, writing, speaking and listening are reciprocal processes; the goal of the reader or listener is to use language to understand the message the writer or speaker is attempting to convey while the goal of the writer or speaker is to use language to communicate an intended message to the targeted audience.



INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION: READING FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

Reading Foundational Skills such as phonemic awareness instruction and phonics instruction usually occur in the early years of reading development. Such instruction can be systematic in nature while being integrated with purposeful, authentic reading instruction. Fluency instruction often takes the form of repeated reading, and it is necessary for the teacher, through reading aloud, to model expression and accuracy for learners. Vocabulary is developed through both incidental learning and direct instruction and should be incorporated into reading instruction at all

levels and in all content areas. Additionally, fluency has a direct impact on comprehending text. Comprehending, or uncovering meaning in text, is at the heart of reading—both in teaching and learning.

Reading Foundational skills are comprised of five parts: Print Awareness, Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency and Comprehension.

Print Awareness in Foundational Skills

Concepts of Print—In developing print awareness, a child begins to understand what print looks like, how it works and the fact that print carries meaning. Teachers who have an understanding of what aspects of print their students are attending to can introduce students early on to print conventions through experiences in both reading and writing—especially through focused instruction in the first six months of school (Clay, 2000, pp. 24-25).

At an early age, children who are exposed to print begin to develop theories about how print works. Through adult-mediated experiences with text, children learn that written words tend to follow certain rules on a page. They learn that books have a distinct front and back, on which page they are to begin reading and where to start reading on the page. Children learn the direction to follow when reading as they begin to recognize that words are clusters of letters and that they have boundaries; and they learn how to move from one line of text to the next and from one page of text to the next. Young children also develop the understanding that the print as well as the illustrations or pictures tell the story.

All of these concepts about print are developed when young children are regularly exposed to texts through shared reading and writing experiences. During shared reading of big books and poetry, the teacher explicitly engages children in discussions of how print works and carries a message for the reader. Shared and interactive writing are logical extensions of shared reading in that the teacher is able to provide for children a model of how to place letters and words on the page, explicitly showing students how to form letters and words.



Literacy print concepts should include

- book orientation knowledge;
- understanding of principles involving the directional arrangement of print on the page;
- knowledge that print and pictures contain the story and convey messages;
- understanding of important reading terminology such as word, letter, beginning of sentence and top of page;
- awareness there are different kinds of printed materials; and
- understanding of simple punctuation marks (Temple & Gillet, 1994, p. 70).

Phonemic Awareness in Foundational Skills

Phonological Awareness—One of the best predictors of early reading success is phonemic awareness (Adams, 1990). Many studies have established that phonemic awareness (the ability to identify the individual sounds in words) and phonics (the representation of those sounds with letters) are essential for skilled reading (Adams, 1994; Ehri, 2004; Torgesen et al., 2001).

The most complex level of phonological awareness happens within the smallest units of sounds and is referred to as “phonemic awareness.” Phonemic awareness is auditory and does not involve letters or words in print. Students who can manipulate sounds in words in a variety of word positions have well-developed phonemic awareness (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Development of phonemic awareness includes the following:

- Sound blending (starting with two-phoneme words and building)
- Sound matching (initial then final sound in a word)
- Sound isolation (initial, final then medial sound in a word)
- Sound segmentation (starting with two-phoneme word and building)
- Sound manipulation (substitution, deletion, addition and reordering of sounds in a word)
- Recognizing and producing rhyming words

According to Opitz (2000), there are research-based best practices that should inform instruction when focusing on phonemic awareness. These include

- embedding phonological awareness into everyday reading and writing experiences such as reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, interactive writing and writing workshop;
- providing time for children to write and allowing for invented spelling; and
- reading aloud children’s literature that focuses on rhyme, alliteration, phoneme substitution and phoneme segmentation.

Phonological awareness skills may continue to develop through third grade and beyond, particularly for students who struggle. It is important that explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness be monitored and mastered before cessation (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Phonics in Foundational Skills

The study of phonics is the study of how written language works and is most effective when connected to authentic, developmentally appropriate reading and writing needs. While engaging in shared and interactive reading and writing, learners analyze print and discuss the characteristics of words. Phonics instruction takes place within a literate environment and connects to the learners’ needs as they discover and interact with the world of print.



Photo by Brooke Stefankiewicz, Salisbury High School



Learning the system of phonics is a developmental process; as children experience text, they begin to develop an orthographic processing system to decode written language (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Strickland provides guidelines for phonics instruction and within those guidelines states, “Learners need to see the relevance of phonics for themselves in their own reading and writing” and “memorizing phonics rules does not ensure application of those rules” (1998, p.25).



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FROM THE NATIONAL READING PANEL

It is important to recognize that the goals of phonics instruction are to provide children with key knowledge and skills and to ensure that they know how to apply that knowledge in their reading and writing. In other words, phonics teaching is a means to an end. . . .

In implementing systematic phonics instruction, educators must keep the end in mind and ensure that children understand the purpose of learning letter sounds and that they are able to apply these skills accurately and fluently in their daily reading and writing activities.

Knowing that not all phonics instructions are the same brings with it the implication that teachers must themselves be educated about how to evaluate different programs to determine which ones are based on strong evidence and how they can most effectively use these programs in their own classrooms. It is therefore important that teachers be provided with evidence-based, . . . ongoing . . . training to select (or develop) and implement the most appropriate instruction effectively.

A common question with instruction is whether “one size fits all.” At all grade levels, but particularly in kindergarten and the early grades, children are known to vary greatly in the skills they bring to school. Some children will already know letter-sound correspondences, and some will even be able to decode words, while others will have little or no letter knowledge.

Teachers should be able to assess the needs of the individual students and tailor instruction to meet specific needs. However, it is more common for phonics programs to present a fixed sequence of lessons scheduled from the beginning to the end of the school year. In light of this, teachers need to be flexible in their phonics instruction in order to adapt it to individual student needs.

“ . . . teachers need to be flexible in their phonics instruction in order to adapt it to individual student needs.”

(National Reading Panel, 2000)



Children who have already developed phonics skills and can apply them appropriately in the reading process do not require the same level and intensity of phonics instruction provided to children at the initial phases of reading acquisition. . . .

Teachers must understand that systematic phonics instruction is only one component—albeit a necessary component—of a total reading program; systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction in phonemic awareness, fluency and comprehension strategies to create a complete reading program.

While most teachers and educational decision-makers recognize this, there may be a tendency in some classrooms, particularly in first grade, to allow phonics to become the dominant component, not only in the time devoted to it, but also in the significance attached. It is important not to judge children's reading competence solely on the basis of their phonics skills and not to devalue their interest in books because they cannot decode with complete accuracy. It is also critical for teachers to understand that systematic phonics instruction can be provided in an entertaining, vibrant and creative manner.

Systematic phonics instruction is designed to increase accuracy in decoding and word recognition skills, which in turn facilitate comprehension. However, it is again important to note that fluent and automatic application of phonics skills to text is another critical skill that must be taught and learned to maximize oral reading and reading comprehension. This issue again underscores the need for teachers to understand that while phonics skills are necessary in order to learn to read, they are not sufficient in their own right. Phonics skills must be integrated with the development of phonemic awareness, fluency and text reading comprehension skills. (National Reading Panel, 2000)

“Phonics skills must be integrated with the development of phonemic awareness, fluency and text reading comprehension skills.”

(National Reading Panel, 2000)



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Fluency in Foundational Skills

Fluency is defined as “reading with reasonable accuracy at an appropriate rate with suitable prosody that leads to accurate and deep comprehension and motivation to read” (Hasbrouck & Glaser, 2012). In layman's terms, fluency is the ability to read a text aloud and sound natural. While we often associate fluency with emergent readers (which indeed it is), it is a skill that needs to be taught explicitly well into a student's academic career.

Fluency is much more than accuracy and speed; it is a complex process with development dependent upon many opportunities to engage in listening to and reading meaningful text. Several effective routes assist readers as they develop fluency. One of those routes, reading aloud using teacher modeling, is, according to Allington, “a critical contributor to the development of fluent reading” (2009, p. 22). Rereading of familiar texts and wide reading of texts that are at the reader's independent level are also known to be highly



effective, research-based methods of developing fluency. Allington warns, though, that “too-hard texts and lots of oral reading during reading lessons create a[n] . . . instructional factor that works against developing fluent, engaged readers” (2009, p. 41). He suggests that, especially when considering fluency development, students read texts in which at least 98 to 99 percent of the words are familiar.

The Role of Comprehension in Foundational Skills

Learning to read is a developmental process involving active engagement with text while using prior knowledge to construct meaning. According to Clay (1991), “reading [is] a message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more it is practiced” (p. 6).

Having students read text daily, both with and without constructive feedback, facilitates the development of reading accuracy, fluency and comprehension and should begin as soon as students can identify a few words. Students should interact with a variety of texts, including texts of varied levels, diverse genres and wide-ranging content. In particular, students should read both informational and narrative text, beginning in the early grades.

Students must learn to monitor their understanding as they read and to correct word-reading errors when they occur. Competent readers can recognize when the text does not make sense because they have misread a word and can correct their mistake. Often students do not recognize word-reading errors because they have not been paying attention to their own reading to know whether their reading made sense.

Teachers can monitor student progress and adjust the assigned text for students of above- or below-average reading ability. Text selection should reflect student abilities, the purpose of instruction and the degree of scaffolding and feedback available. For example, independent-level texts may be appropriate for independent fluency practice. In contrast, frustration-level texts may be appropriate for practice applying word-reading skills with individual teacher support.

This may mean that some students use different texts for a given activity than others, based on their reading ability, or that students practice different skills when working with the same text (Foorman, et al., 2016).

Good readers use many forms of thinking and analyzing text as they read. It is therefore important to teach beginning readers strategies for constructing meaning from text. Comprehension strategies help readers enhance their understanding, overcome difficulties in comprehending text and compensate for weak or imperfect knowledge related to the text. Strategies may be taught one by one or in combination. Both approaches can improve reading comprehension so teachers can choose the approach they are most comfortable with in the classroom.

Reading at the Elementary Level

After acquiring a solid foundation of early literacy skills, students need opportunities—preferably authentic—to build reading fluency and stamina. “Extensive reading is critical to the development of reading proficiency. Extensive practice provides the opportunity for students to consolidate the skills and strategies teachers often work so hard to develop” (Allington, 2002). With continually growing access to all kinds of texts, it is crucial students have exposure to a variety of forms to develop the different types of fluency and stamina these different text types require. “In and out of school, the texts students read vary significantly, from linear text-only books to multimodal textbooks to online hypertexts, each of which places different demands on readers and requires different strategies and approaches to reading” (National Council of Teachers of English, 2012). Furthermore, students need to be able to dissect, deconstruct and re-construct texts “to engage in meaning making and comprehension processes,” according to the National Council of Teachers of English (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

“Students appreciate lessons where they were given the chance to do the thinking. We must make sure all students have the chance to do that kind of hard thinking with content they will be expected to do in college



or in their careers. Give all students, especially those who are behind grade level, access to instruction and materials that asks them to think and engage deeply with challenging and complex texts” (The New Teacher Project, 2018).

Organization and Instruction

During whole-group instruction the teacher provides brief, focused and explicit instruction centering on one concept, a concept that is based on the learners’ needs, the components of reading instruction and the curriculum.

Interactive read-aloud occurs in a whole-group setting. The teacher reads appropriate, pre-selected texts aloud to students while modeling fluent, expressive reading. Students are invited to interact with the teacher and/or other students at predetermined points in the text for deepening understanding.

Shared reading is a procedure during which the teacher and students join to read from an enlarged text. Initially, the teacher reads to the students who join in, when they are able, during subsequent readings. Shared reading allows students to read more difficult text than they could read independently. Since both the teacher and the group offer support, this type of reading offers an opportunity for less proficient readers to join in successfully.

The small-group setting follows the focus lesson. The teacher guides learners as they practice the concept being taught and/or engage in discussion regarding a text the students have read. The groups are flexible and change frequently. Guided reading and literature-based discussion groups are two methods of instruction used in the small-group setting.

During guided reading, the teacher meets with a small group who demonstrate similar reading processes or similar needs. Using a carefully selected text that offers a moderate amount of challenge (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001, p. 191), the teacher introduces the text while providing just enough support for the students to read the entire text silently. The teacher selects salient

teaching points during and after the reading based on observations of the readers’ behaviors. While instruction may center on word-solving strategies, the focus is always comprehension of the text.

In literature-based discussion groups, small groups of students meet to have in-depth conversations regarding their responses to literature read prior to the groups’ meeting. Initially teachers help guide the discussion, but over time, they become just another participant in the discussion. Through structured discussion and extended written and artistic response, literature-based discussion groups guide students to deeper understandings of the text. School librarians play an important role in supporting literature discussion by collaborating with teachers on literature sets to be offered; by providing curriculum-driven collections; and by providing resources for research on particular authors, genres, etc.

Individual conferencing is a powerful method of instruction that occurs during reading instruction. At this time the teacher meets with individual students to engage them in discussion regarding the concept being taught, discuss what the reader is independently reading or conduct a brief assessment of reading behaviors. The teacher takes notes while conferencing with the reader in order to gather data for reflection and future instruction.

Reading also allows students to capture information and effectively communicate their ideas in writing. When students write and/or speak about material they are reading, they tend to understand the material better and retain it longer over time.

Vocabulary at the Elementary Level

There is a direct, positive relationship between the depth of a learner’s vocabulary and the learner’s academic success. The development of vocabulary is dependent upon the oral language environment as well as the life experiences provided to a learner. Some learners come to school with many rich experiences from which to draw, while others have very limited experiences. It is the responsibility of those in charge



of teaching children to provide learners with many opportunities to strengthen their knowledge of the language that enhances academic success.

Vocabulary is developed through both wide reading and direct instruction. Marzano (2003) developed action steps for both direct and indirect instruction in vocabulary. These steps include providing learners with life experiences that expand their knowledge of the world and the content they are exploring, providing opportunities for wide reading and providing direct instruction of vocabulary critical to understanding content-area concepts.

Direct instruction involves the learner in actively developing knowledge of a word both in linguistic and nonlinguistic terms. Marzano (2004) states that successful vocabulary instruction has the following research-based characteristics:

- Does not rely on dictionary definitions
- Has students represent their knowledge of words in linguistic and nonlinguistic ways
- Involves the gradual shaping of word meanings through multiple exposures to a word in varied contexts
- Teaches word parts to enhance students' understanding of terms
- Uses different types of instruction to teach various types of words
- Has students discuss the terms they are learning

- Encourages students to play with words
- Focuses on terms that have a high probability of enhancing academic success

Vocabulary development is not limited to the language arts but must be a part of all content-area instruction. The type of strategy used in vocabulary instruction will depend on the age and needs of the learner; however, in all cases vocabulary is best taught when learners experience a need to comprehend words and concepts encountered in fiction and nonfiction texts as well as in the world around them.

Comprehension at the Elementary Level

Constructing meaning is the whole purpose of reading. Comprehension is a complex process whereby the brain is trained to make letters into sounds to make words to make sentences that process text to connect and facilitate efficient understanding of text (Zwiers, 2010). This complex process may over time and through practice become automatic, but it never ceases, requiring the teacher's time and attention. Learners must be metacognitive; that is, they must be aware of what and how they are thinking as they uncover the meaning of texts.

The focus of comprehension instruction is to model for students how to be active in the reading process through monitoring their own use of metacognitive strategies for understanding while reading, writing, listening and speaking. Teachers should help students learn how to use comprehension strategies independently through the gradual release of responsibility. When releasing responsibility to students, however, be mindful that students differ in the extent of modeling or support they need from teachers in order to use strategies effectively (Shanahan, et al., 2010).

Intentional Instruction of Reading at the Secondary Level

Intentional instruction in reading does not stop at the secondary level. In fact, adolescent literacy is complex. Adolescents have difficulty making sense of texts for



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many reasons, and these difficulties manifest in various ways. Addressing students' needs often requires coordinated efforts from teachers and specialists.

The secondary classroom has its own literacy demands. “. . . secondary reading instruction should go beyond basic skills and strategies . . . typically emphasized in the elementary school. Recognizing that every content area has its own characteristic literacy practices, [researchers and experts] call for the development of subject-specific reading skills among adolescents, urging secondary teachers to incorporate literacy strategies into subject matter teaching” (Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

The Institute of Education Sciences (2008) provides five recommendations for increasing the reading ability of adolescents in their literacy and content area classes:

Recommendation 1: Provide explicit vocabulary instruction

- Dedicate a portion of regular classroom lessons to explicit vocabulary instruction.
- Provide repeated exposure to new words in multiple contexts, and allow sufficient practice sessions in vocabulary instruction.
- Give sufficient opportunities to use new vocabulary in a variety of contexts through activities such as discussion, writing and extended reading.
- Provide students with strategies to make them independent vocabulary learners.

See additional strategies from Marzano on page 20.

Recommendation 2: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction

- Select carefully the text to use when beginning to teach a given strategy.
- Show students how to apply the strategies they are learning to different texts.
- Make sure that the text is appropriate for the reading level of students.
- Use a direct and explicit instruction lesson plan for teaching students how to use comprehension strategies.



Photo by Megan Edwards, Salisbury High School Yearbook Staff

GENERALIZATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH

- Students must encounter words in context more than once to learn them.
- Instruction in new words enhances learning those words in context.
- One of the best ways to learn a new word is to associate an image with it.
- Direct instruction on words that are critical to new content produces the most powerful learning.

EFFECTIVE VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION

- does NOT rely on definitions
- represents words in linguistic and nonlinguistic ways
- involves the gradual shaping of word meanings through multiple exposures
- provides time for students to talk about the words they are learning



- Provide the appropriate amount of guided practice depending on the difficulty level of the strategies that students are learning.
- Talk about comprehension strategies while teaching them.

“[Some secondary] teachers lack the skills to provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction. Teachers may find it challenging to demonstrate their own thinking by providing [a] think-aloud [modeling] of how they use strategies as they read” (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2008). Teachers should become conscious of the reading processes that are automatic for them in order to model these with students. “Professional development in direct and explicit instruction of comprehension strategies will assist all teachers, including language arts and content-area teachers, in learning how to teach strategies” (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2008).

Recommendation 3: Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation

- Carefully prepare for the discussion by selecting engaging materials and developing stimulating questions.
- Ask follow-up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion.
- Provide a task or discussion format that students can follow when they discuss text in small groups.
- Develop and practice the use of a specific “discussion protocol.”

Recommendation 4: Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning

- Establish meaningful and engaging content learning goals around the essential ideas of a discipline as well as around the specific learning processes used to access those ideas.
- Provide a positive learning environment that promotes student autonomy in learning.
- Make literacy experiences more relevant to student interests, everyday life or important current events.
- Build classroom conditions to promote higher reading engagement and conceptual learning

through such strategies as goal setting, self-directed learning and collaborative learning.

Recommendation 5: Make available intensive individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by qualified specialists

- Use reliable screening assessments to identify students with reading difficulties and follow up with formal and informal assessments to pinpoint each student’s instructional needs.
- Select an intervention that provides an explicit instructional focus to meet each student’s identified learning needs.
- Provide interventions in which intensiveness matches student needs: the greater the instructional need, the more intensive the intervention. Assuming a high level of instructional quality, the intensity of interventions is related most directly to the size of instructional groups and the amount of instructional time.

For a deeper understanding of these recommendations, refer to the Institute of Educational Sciences complete practice guide.

Additional Thoughts on Intentional Instruction of Reading at Both the Elementary and Secondary Levels

Opportunities to develop strong reading skills in elementary and secondary classrooms include thinking critically about diverse and complex texts, developing disciplinary literacy and developing digital media literacy.

Diverse and Complex Texts

Why the emphasis on challenging and complex text? According to the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (2011), “A significant body of research links the close reading of complex text—whether the student is a struggling reader or advanced—to significant gains in reading proficiency and finds close reading to be a key component of college and career readiness.”



When selecting challenging and complex texts, think about quantitative features—ones that are counted—and qualitative features—aspects such as the language used, complexity of the shared ideas and other attributes of the text. Think about how challenging the text would be for a specific reader or group of readers and consider a third dimension of text complexity referred to as reader/task factors.

Students from all grade levels benefit from instruction that help build their understanding of the process of close reading and further develop the skills and stamina to read complex texts. All teachers need to create lessons that scaffold student understanding in ways that allow them to read appropriately complex texts.

Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary literacy moves students beyond the use of general reading strategies toward the use of specialized reading practices to comprehend and analyze the unique texts found within each discipline. It includes understanding the differences among the variety of texts used in different disciplines such as specialized vocabulary, text structures and text features.

Each discipline represents knowledge and the ways of producing and communicating that knowledge differently, resulting in a different approach to reading. For example, when reading a literary text, there is a range of interpretations a reader can make based on background knowledge and experiences. When reading a history text or primary source document, interpretations are made based on historical context and the writer's perspective. Science and math texts present information with one "truth" or interpretation based on accepted methods for using evidence.

Disciplinary literacy develops reader identities by teaching students to read like a historian, a scientist or a mathematician.

Digital Media Literacy

As technology grows and changes the way we interface with one another and with society, teaching students how to frame their thinking through and with technology

has increasingly fallen into the lap of literacy educators. Not only must classroom teachers focus on the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills necessary to navigate digital materials, they must also grapple with the cognitive, social, emotional and ethical implications of digital literacy.

According to Yamamoto and Ananou (2015), education in our time requires the creation and the delivery of instructional content as well as teaching and learning activities that are no longer confined to the four walls of a classroom. Instead, teaching and learning occur in an environment that increasingly includes the internet and the World Wide Web. Educators teach children how to live and work in a new digital society. While teachers may be prepared to teach students to read with printed text, write with a pencil, or speak and listen with a shoulder partner, the reality of a digital world means teachers must also prepare students to read and interact with digital text—knowing when to click a hyperlink; how to distinguish an advertisement from text; how to write effectively through email or a text; how to speak and listen through a podcast, facetime or another face-to-face app.

The concept of literacy has gone far beyond the covers of a book or magazine; our students have already been exploring this new arena of digital literacy when they walk into the classroom, and teachers must now be ready to guide them effectively and safely.



LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find intentional instruction, intervention and enrichment (reading) resources online here.





INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION: WRITING

Reading and writing are reciprocal processes. In discussing the connection between reading and writing, The National Writing Project along with Carl Nagin propose, “Readers and writers use the same intellectual strategies. Better writers tend to be better readers [and] tend to read more than poorer writers” (2003, p. 31). Like learning to read, learning to write requires daily opportunities for learners to engage in discussions of how writers compose the texts that are read aloud as well as those they read themselves and daily opportunities to engage in the actual process of writing.

Writing is an expressive language skill which has three primary elements: structure, style and content. Structure refers to the way the content is arranged or laid out on the page, style to the choices the author makes to express him/herself and content to the conventions of English and the development of the text. Ultimately, writing is a complex “cognitive activity that involves solving problems and deploying strategies to achieve communicative goals” (Deane, et al., 2008).

Learning to write requires daily opportunities to engage in the process of writing, as well as opportunities to study and discuss what authors do and how they do it.

Elementary Writing

The Institute of Education Sciences (2012) recommends the following best practices in elementary writing instruction:

1. Provide daily time for students to write.
2. Teach students to use the writing process for a variety of purposes.
 - Teach students strategies for the various components of the writing process.
 - Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.
 - Guide students to select and use appropriate writing strategies.
 - Encourage students to be flexible in their use of the components of the writing process.

3. Teach students to write for a variety of purposes.
 - Help students understand the different purposes of writing.
 - Expand students’ concepts of audience.
 - Teach students to emulate the features of good writing.
 - Teach students techniques for writing effectively for different purposes.
4. Teach students to become fluent with handwriting, spelling, sentence construction, typing and word processing.
 - Teach very young writers how to hold a pencil correctly and form letters fluently and efficiently.
 - Teach students to spell words correctly.
 - Teach students to construct sentences for fluency, meaning and style.
 - Teach students to type fluently and to use a word processor to compose.
5. Create an engaged community of writers. Give students writing choices.
 - Encourage students to collaborate as writers.
 - Participate as a member of the community by writing and sharing writing.
 - Provide students with opportunities to give and receive feedback throughout the writing process.
 - Publish students’ writing and extend the community beyond the classroom.

For a deeper understanding of these recommendations, refer to the Institute of Educational Sciences complete practice guide.

Secondary Writing

Once students establish foundational writing skills, the Institute of Education Sciences (2016) recommends the following instructional writing practices at the secondary level:

1. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies using a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle.
2. Explicitly teach appropriate writing strategies.
 - Teach strategies for planning and goal setting, drafting, evaluating, revising and editing.



- Instruct students on how to choose and apply strategies appropriate for the audience and purpose.
3. Use a Model-Practice-Reflect instructional cycle to teach writing strategies.
- Model strategies for students.
 - Provide students with opportunities to apply and practice modeled strategies.
 - Engage students in evaluating and reflecting upon their own and peers' writing and use of modeled strategies.
4. Integrate writing and reading to emphasize key writing features.
- Teach students to understand that both writers and readers use similar strategies, knowledge and skills to create meaning.
 - Use a variety of written exemplars to highlight the key features of texts.
5. Use assessments of student writing to inform instruction and feedback.
- Assess students' strengths and areas for improvement before teaching a new strategy or skill.
 - Analyze student writing to tailor instruction and target feedback.
 - Regularly monitor students' progress while teaching writing strategies and skills.

For a deeper understanding of these recommendations, refer to the Institute of Educational Sciences complete practice guide.

Roadblocks and Solutions to Teaching K-12 Writing

In addition to the recommendations for writing instruction, the Institute of Education Sciences (2012) also indicates some possible roadblocks and suggested solutions:

1. *The school's writing or English language arts curriculum includes only isolated grammar instruction using worksheets or copying tasks to teach sentence-writing skills.*
- **Suggested Approach:** Grammar instruction that relies on worksheets or copying tasks to teach sentence-writing skills is disconnected from students' actual writing. Students may be able to correctly circle parts of speech or identify

and correct errors in punctuation, but they often do not develop the ability to use these skills in their own work. Instead, teachers should have students practice these skills while drafting, revising and editing their own writing.

2. *There is not enough time in the school day to devote an hour each day to writing instruction.*

- **Suggested Approach:** Teachers should integrate writing and content-area instruction wherever possible in order to maximize instructional time and give students more writing practice.

3. *Teachers may be uncomfortable with their own writing and therefore hesitant to share their writing and discuss the writing process with their students.*

- **Suggested Approach:** Part of creating a community of writers involves establishing a supportive environment in which every member of the community has room to grow and it is acceptable to take risks and make mistakes. Writing is a lifelong skill, and it is important for students to understand that writing requires effort even when you are older and have been writing for many years. Making mistakes, demonstrating how to recognize those mistakes, and then correcting mistakes or revising word choice or sentence structure to make the writing more effective can be a powerful model and learning experience for all members of the class.

4. *Providing feedback on all student writing is overwhelming and time consuming.*

- **Suggested Approach:** It is not necessary for the teacher to provide feedback on all student writing; teachers should share the responsibility of providing feedback with students through student self-evaluation and peer evaluations. In fact, students should be able to write without expecting that every piece of writing will be assessed by the teacher. When students do complete writing pieces for teacher review and feedback, teachers should focus on specific elements, and they should discuss these expectations with students in advance. In



this way, teachers can focus their comments on specific elements, such as a compelling opening, descriptive language or effective use of transition words. Providing targeted feedback will help students better understand how to improve their writing.

LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find intentional instruction, intervention and enrichment (writing) resources online here.

INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION: SPEAKING

Language is the means by which the literate person communicates, so language is the basis of literacy. Oral language acquisition is one of the foundational skills that leads to the ability to communicate through reading and writing. It leads to greater comprehension, a stronger vocabulary and more explicit writing (Shanahan, as cited in MacArthur, Graham, & Fitzgerald, 2006).

“Speaking is a highly complex and dynamic skill that involves the use of several simultaneous processes—cognitive, physical and socio-cultural—and a speaker’s knowledge and skills have to be activated rapidly in real-time. It is important, therefore, that speaking should be taught explicitly in language classrooms—simply ‘doing’ speaking activities is not the same as learning the knowledge, skills and strategies of speaking” (Burns, 2012).

Speaking is made up of three primary types or purposes: casual conversation to connect as humans, speaking as a transaction to gather or impart information and speaking as a performance as in public speaking or giving speeches (Richards, 2016).

When asked how they teach speaking, many teachers answer with a list of assignments: students give a speech in front of the class, they present their learning on a text or they create a podcast. Although the process of speaking is often intuitive, we may falsely assume that because students may come to us talking that they also intuitively know how to speak in more formal contexts. However, just as hearing does not necessarily equate to

listening, talking does not necessarily equate to speaking. Students should learn the qualities a vocal performance may lend to their writing.

Speaking instruction should be purposeful and direct. It includes components like body gesturing, facial gestures, pacing or speed, pausing and dramatic effect, eye contact, inflection, voice, using visual aids from a variety of media and poise. Instruction in speaking includes teaching students to make word and usage choices based upon their audience to write and deliver speeches and presentations.

Teachers may believe discussions take classroom time. If literacy standards require students to think deeply (that is, to make connections, criticize conclusions and draw inferences), many students require the opportunity to acquire these skills by observing models of thinking during discussions. Teachers should carefully identify a few of the most important ideas in their content area for deeper consideration through classroom discussions that focus on building meaning from text (Institute of Education Sciences, 2008).

Elementary children need opportunities to talk in order to strengthen their communication skills. Encouraging sharing time in the early grades and small-group activities with an emphasis on clear communication throughout the grades will strengthen oral language. Activities such as dialogic reading, interactive read-alouds, share time, book discussions and vocabulary development in authentic situations, i.e., situated in purposeful reading and writing events with whole text, will strengthen students’ oral language ability, increase academic achievement and facilitate students’ development into literate adults.

Oral language development continues into middle and secondary schools where students need ample opportunities to work on more sophisticated skills such as using specific vocabulary, developing precision, expanding ideas and modifying a message for an intended audience. Activities such as book discussions, small-group collaborations and Socratic Seminars facilitate the growth of oral language abilities.



LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find intentional instruction, intervention and enrichment (speaking) resources online here.

INTENTIONAL INSTRUCTION: LISTENING

We know “[l]istening is an important component in how people judge communicative competence in the workplace”; further, “individual performance in an organization is found to be directly related to listening ability or perceived listening effectiveness” (Haas & Arnold, 1995, as quoted in International Listening Association). Given these real-world applications, the importance of teaching listening is clear.

“Even though most of us spend the majority of our day listening, it is the communication activity that receives the least instruction in school (Coakley & Wolvin, 1997, as quoted in International Listening Association). Students are asked to listen throughout the majority of their academic careers and beyond.

When structuring a comprehensive listening program, teachers must consider a student’s background knowledge, interest in a topic, and connotative and denotative meanings of words and phrases. The primary components of listening instruction include a strong knowledge of vocabulary and sentence structure (Richards, 2016). Not only must we hold students accountable for their reading and writing skills, we must also assess both

speaking and listening. That may mean assessing listening comprehension after a turn-and-talk conversation or asking students to paraphrase, summarize, analyze and synthesize listening passages.

The temptation when teaching listening is to include the written text when students are listening to a passage. Of course, once we provide students with written text, we have moved from assessing listening to assessing reading skills. Fortunately for educators, in a world of ever-increasing technology, podcasts, video segments and newscasts are easily accessible.

LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find intentional instruction, intervention and enrichment (listening) resources online here.



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action



WHAT'S YOUR STATUS?

- How do we ensure instruction within the comprehensive literacy curriculum meets the needs of each student?
- How do we develop authentic readers, writers and critical thinkers in every classroom?
- How do we encourage listening and speaking in every classroom?
- How do we select quality resources and provide teachers with the training to implement them effectively?



ASSESSMENT

A coordinated and comprehensive assessment system in which different tools are used for different purposes is a vital and necessary component of Missouri's literacy plan. Quality literacy assessments include implementation and analysis of a variety of assessment types. National, state, local, summative, interim and formative data sources all provide meaningful information about the effectiveness of literacy instruction. All literacy assessments are best used in combination with research-based effective practices, as well as teacher observation to monitor individual student progress.

An effective assessment system requires the knowledge and skills of all stakeholders to interpret and use assessment data. To determine the effectiveness of data, students, teachers and administrators should be knowledgeable of and proficient in analyzing data to make decisions. Understanding the role and function of a quality assessment system, how assessments are designed and measured, and how to interpret data for instructional modification helps ensure a valid and reliable assessment system. Students, teachers and administrators must understand the role assessment plays in curriculum and instruction, as well as the types and purposes of assessment.



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

Purpose of Quality, Authentic Literacy Assessment

Quality, authentic literacy classroom assessment is the gathering of information on progress toward curriculum standards for the purpose of guiding instruction and classroom practice. Assessments

- demonstrate mastery of ELA standards;
- identify student strengths and weaknesses;
- assist in planning and guiding instruction, including intervention and enrichment;
- enable collaboration and communication among administrators, teachers, students and parents;
- assist in goal setting for districts, buildings, teachers and students; and
- assist in evaluating ELA/literacy curriculum.

Multiple formative and summative assessments are needed to form a comprehensive and coordinated assessment system. All are an integral part of gathering information on student understanding of the skills and knowledge identified in the standards. An accurate assessment has an established purpose and intended audience. It uses clear and appropriate learning standards and has purposeful design. If an assessment is to be used effectively, educational personnel must consider how the results are used, communicated and reported.

The terms formative assessment and summative assessment may conjure up images of paper-and-pencil exams, but each of these assessments has specialized purposes.

Formative Assessments (FOR Learning)

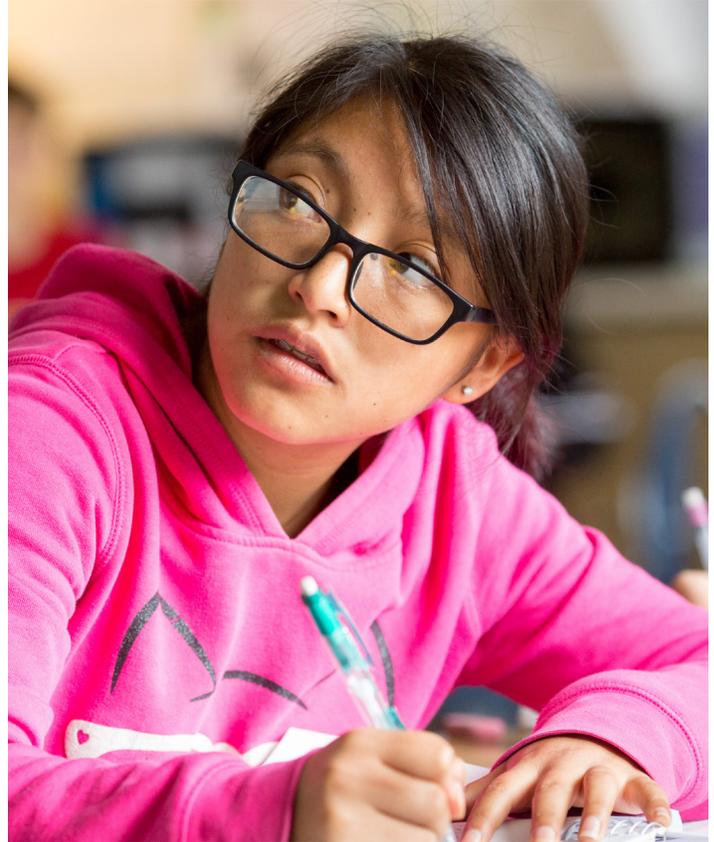
Formative assessments are informal processes that gather information about student learning during a lesson or unit of study. They are directly linked to instructional practices and focus on discovering what students know and are able to do in light of targeted Missouri Learning Standards. Teachers administer



formative assessments, change or adapt instruction based on results, and if necessary reassess to determine the impact of instruction on student learning. One of the most valuable assets of formative assessment for students is the critical descriptive feedback it provides for individual student goal setting and subsequent tracking of the student's learning. The intended audiences for these assessments are students and teachers. Formative assessments are not intended to be included in the grading process or used to judge teacher performance.

Summative Assessments (OF Learning)

Summative assessments are used to measure student performance on a specified number of Missouri Learning Standards at a specific point in time after instruction has ended. Generally, summative assessments are given as end-of-unit or final project-based assessments, final exams and placement tests. Additional examples of summative assessments include district benchmark or interim assessments, state-mandated assessments and national assessments.



Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action

FORMATIVE VS. SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT	SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT
a process	a single measurement
during instruction	at the end of instruction
results used to adjust teaching and learning strategies	results used to evaluate student performance
assessment <i>for learning</i>	assessment <i>of learning</i>



Information about student learning is important to many stakeholders. Each stakeholder counts on the availability of accurate information about student learning to measure growth. The following table presents questions that help distinguish between formative and summative assessment uses (adapted with permission from Jan Chappuis).

ASSESSMENT USER	FORMATIVE (FOR LEARNING)	SUMMATIVE (OF LEARNING)
Students	Where am I now? Where am I going? How will I know when I get there? How can I close the gap?	Did I meet my learning goal(s)? Did I meet the learning standard(s)? Is my score a true reflection of what I know and am able to do?
Teachers	What do my students need? What are my students' successes and challenges? How will I adjust my instruction to meet student needs? How do I collaborate with other teachers, administrators, students and parents during the learning process?	What grade do I put on the report card? What support services might students need? How do I communicate student learning results with other teachers, administrators, students and parents?
Parents	What can we do to support my child's learning? Is my child making progress toward the standards?	Did my child meet the standards? How does my school's performance compare to district, state and national performance?
Principals	Are teachers adjusting instruction based on formative data to meet the needs of all students?	Is instruction producing desired results? Are our students meeting the standards? What additional resources/supports are needed to ensure success? Is the curriculum producing desired results?
Superintendents	Are all buildings implementing effective formative assessments across the district?	Does our written curriculum match the learned curriculum? Do the assessment results match the expectations of the written curriculum? How does achievement data affect curricular decisions? What additional resources/supports are needed to ensure success?
Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education		Are Missouri students achieving the literacy standards? What support/structures for Missouri teachers are needed to enhance student literacy achievement?
Citizens		How does our literacy achievement data compare to others locally, across the state, nationally and internationally?



Evaluating Quality, Authentic Assessments

Assessing literacy is a complex task. Assessments should reflect the multiple dimensions of reading and writing and the various purposes for assessment, as well as the diversity of the students being assessed. Because of the variety of assessment options available to districts and teachers—formal/informal, formative/summative, teacher created/commercial—it is essential to evaluate whether the particular assessments being used are aligned to the intended purpose and provide results that inform teaching and learning (Yale Center for Teaching and Learning, 2018).

The best way to evaluate the assessment system is to complete assessment audits at the district, building and

classroom levels. An assessment audit provides teachers and districts with an opportunity to look at assessments with a critical lens in order to ensure they are useful and timely and provide the intended information. The audit provides a snapshot of large-scale assessments and screenings administered at each grade level in a given year.

District-Level Chart

The assessment audit begins at the district level and identifies all the district-wide assessments given in a year. Completing a chart like the one on the following page provides districts with a snapshot of large-scale assessments and screenings administered at each grade level in a given year.



Photo by Bryn Wooldridge, Salisbury High School



Below is a sample of what one district assessment plan might look like.

ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	GRADE/ STUDENTS TESTED	SCHEDULE (WHEN)	LENGTH (TIME)	HOW RESULTS ARE USED
Observation Survey	Program Placement	1-2	Fall and Spring	30 minutes	Placement
Running Records	Formative	K-5	Weekly	5-10 minutes	Instruction
Fountas and Pinnell	Benchmark	K-5	Quarterly	30-60 minutes	Instructional grouping
STAR	Benchmark	K-8	September and March	Untimed CAT (approx. 45-60 minutes)	Predictor of state assessment benchmark
MAP	Accountability	3-8 ELA 3-8 Math 5 & 8 Science	Spring	1 week (March 3-7)	AYP MSIP Public accountability Placement
EOC	Accountability	English II Algebra I Government Personal Finance	Winter Spring Summer	1-2 days per subject	AYP MSIP Public accountability Placement
ACT	College Placement	10, 11, 12	Fall Winter Spring	4 hours	College placement Scholarships
Other					

(Note: This is not an endorsement of any one assessment.)



Building-Level Chart

Completing a chart like the one below can help reduce the number of assessments in a given grade and eliminate redundancy and unnecessary testing.

Grade: 3

ASSESSMENT	PURPOSE	GRADE/ STUDENTS TESTED	SCHEDULE (WHEN)	LENGTH (TIME)	HOW RESULTS ARE USED
Unit 1 Post Assessment	Summative	3/all students	Every Friday	30-60 minutes	Mastery of standards
Unit 1 Pretest	Diagnostic	3/all students	Every Monday	15-20 minutes	Instructional
Running Records	Formative	3/all students	Weekly	5-10 minutes	Benchmark
Fountas and Pinnell	Benchmark	3/all students	Quarterly	30-60 minutes	Benchmark
Writing Assessment	Benchmark	3/all students	Fall Winter Spring	60 minutes	Mastery
Spelling Test	Summative		Every Friday	10-15 minutes	
STAR	Benchmark	3/all students	September and March	Untimed CAT (approx. 45-60 minutes)	
MAP	Accountability	3/all students	Spring	1 week (March 3-7)	
Other					

(Note: This is not an endorsement of any one assessment.)



Classroom-Level Chart

Classroom assessments can provide teachers and students with instructionally informative data. According to Jan Chappuis, et al. (2012, p. 11), “Classroom assessment instruments and practices are built on a foundation of the following five keys to quality:

- They are designed to serve the specific information needs of intended user(s).
- They are based on clearly articulated and appropriate achievement targets.
- They accurately measure student achievement.
- They yield results that are effectively communicated to their intended users.
- They involve students in self-assessment, goal setting, tracking, reflecting on and sharing their learning.

An audit at the classroom level delves into analyzing the assessment format to ensure it is valid, reliable and aligned to the learning standards. The chart below demonstrates one way to analyze a classroom assessment.

UNIT:						
UNIT STANDARD TAUGHT:			UNIT STANDARD ASSESSED:			
	Standard		DOK:	Item Format:	Percent Correct:	Impact on Instruction:
		Fully Assessed:				
#1		Y/N	1 2 3 4	MC CR PE		
#2		Y/N	1 2 3 4	MC CR PE		
#3		Y/N	1 2 3 4	MC CR PE		
#4		Y/N	1 2 3 4	MC CR PE		
Totals	Standard assessed:		DOK: 1 2 3 4	Item Format: MC CR PE	Overall Percent:	Notes for overall concerns/successes/insight/impact:



Below is a sample of what a classroom assessment audit might look like.

UNIT: NARRATIVE SHORT STORIES					
UNIT STANDARD TAUGHT: RL.1.A, RL.1.B, RL.2.D			UNIT STANDARD ASSESSED: RL.1.A, RL.1.B		
	Standard	DOK:	Item Format:	Percent Correct:	Impact on Instruction:
	Fully Assessed:				
#1	RL.1.A Y(N) Only "draw conclusion"	1 ② 3 4	MC Ⓞ CR PE	75%	• Thought this was an easy item; need to take a look at student responses
#2	RL.1.A Y(N) Only "text evidence"	① 2 3 4	Ⓞ MC CR PE	97%	• Students did well 😊
#3	RL.1.B Y(N) Only "figurative" meaning	1 ② 3 4	Ⓞ MC CR PE	12%	• Reteach figurative language • Although given context, students still selected literal interpretation
#4	RL.1.A Y(N) Only "inference"	1 2 ③ 4	MC CR Ⓞ PE	84%	• Could probably expand this to include analysis
Totals	Standard assessed: RL.1.A-III RL.1.B-I	DOK: 1-I 2-II 3-I 4	Item Format: MC-II CR-I PE-I	Overall Percent:	Notes for overall concerns/successes/insight/impact: • Take a look at how I assess the rest of RL.1.A • Need more assessments on RL.1.B

(Note: This is not an endorsement of any one assessment.)

It is important to note that controversies may arise when the richness of literacy is overly simplified by assessments that are not multidimensional or authentic, such as the overuse of multiple-choice questions or assessments not embedded in authentic text. Educators may find the lack of authenticity of these assessments frustrating when results do not appear to represent what their students know and can do (Munger, 2016).



Resources for Developing Quality Classroom Assessments

The National Council of Teachers of English recognizes the crucial role teachers have in making assessment decisions in their classrooms:

Most educational assessment takes place in the classroom, as teachers and students interact with one another. Teachers design, assign, observe, collaborate in and interpret the work of students in their classrooms. They assign meaning to interactions and evaluate the information that they receive and create in these settings. In short, teachers are the primary agents, not passive consumers, of assessment information. It is their ongoing, formative assessments that primarily influence students' learning. This standard acknowledges the critical role of the teacher and the consequences and responsibilities that accompany this role.

Whether they use tests, work samples, discussion or ongoing observation, teachers make sense of students' reading and writing development. They read these many different texts, oral and written, that students produce in order to construct an understanding of students as literate individuals. The sense they make of a student's reading or writing is communicated to the student through spoken or written comments and translated into instructional decisions in the classroom (e.g., subsequent assignments, grouping for instruction). Because of such important consequences, teachers must be aware of and deliberate about their roles as assessors (National Council of Teachers of English, 2009).

When students are not performing well on classroom assessments, a common initial response of teachers might be to place blame on the student's capabilities or efforts, instead of considering or examining the assessment design. Whether teachers are administering classroom assessments that are pre-designed, choosing items from an existing item bank to create an

assessment, or preparing assessments themselves, assessment-literate teachers should be skilled in designing, administering, scoring and interpreting the results of assessments.

Realizing the magnitude of this work, educators need to keep the following components in mind:

- Purpose of the assessment
- Alignment to Missouri Learning Standards
- Appropriateness of rigor
- Complexity/Variety of texts used in the assessment
- Authenticity of assessment task(s)
- Usefulness of assessment results for targeted instruction

Whether educators opt to purchase or use pre-made assessments or create their own, a number of resources are available to help educators ensure the assessments they use in their classrooms address the above considerations.



LOOKING FOR SUPPORT?

Find assessment resources online here.

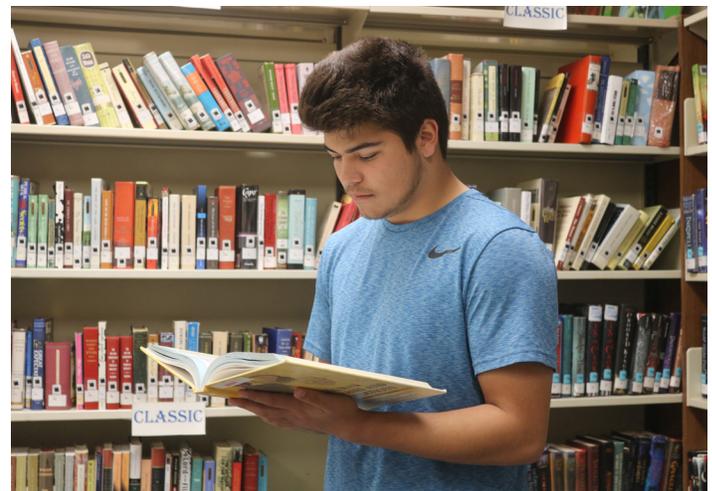


Photo by Bryn Wooldridge, Salisbury High School



WHAT'S YOUR STATUS?

- How have we developed an effective and coherent assessment system in our classrooms/buildings/district?
- How do we use ongoing classroom formative and summative assessments, district benchmarks and state-required assessments?
- How do we determine which assessments to use in our classrooms/buildings/district?
- How do we help educators become assessment literate?

PARTNERSHIPS

According to Dennis Van Roekel, former National Education Association president, “No single education stakeholder group can do the job ahead . . . it will take all of us—teachers, education support professionals, principals, superintendents, school board members, parents, families, government leaders, business leaders, faith-based leaders” (National Education Association, 2011).

Partnerships among schools and businesses, community organizations, and other educational entities are essential components in fostering a culture of literacy. Each community offers unique opportunities for relationships and collaboration. The strength of any literacy program is reflected in the school district’s ability to seek and build the affiliations available.

Community Involvement and Family Engagement

Community involvement includes partnerships with various community members including parents, other family members/guardians, child care providers, volunteers, homework centers and other entities contributing to the child’s development—particularly in literacy. Strong and effective PTA/PTO organizations, local libraries and community outreach organizations often work together to educate the whole child. These groups may help raise money for special projects,

volunteer time for school activities and host literacy special events.

When included in meaningful ways, parents and families are education’s strongest advocates. Consider, for example, local after-school care centers and education help centers: a partnership may be able to share current learning and homework strategies. Many communities have the Parents as Teachers program in which school personnel provide in-home educational information and modeling for parents of young children. Together parents, community members and professional educators form a corps to help students achieve literacy success.

Business and Government

Businesses large and small can work in conjunction with schools to promote literacy. Examples of these partnerships include larger corporations that may offer significant block grants and continued scholarships to teachers and/or students (e.g., through professional development funding or book donations). Small businesses are often more familiar partners in education. They may join schools and classrooms in sponsoring literacy events and sharing information about their businesses with students.



Schools have the opportunity to involve local government stakeholders in literacy councils and may choose to send staff representatives to statewide literacy councils. Key to a successful business and government partnership is seeking the institutions in one’s own community or seeking literacy opportunities at government entities such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education that are dedicated to school and student success.

Foundations

Multiple charitable organizations across the nation, state and community have literacy foundations that provide books and other literacy materials to students in need. Additionally, like businesses, foundations may provide grants for teachers’ continued education or districtwide literacy needs.

Professional and Service Organizations

Professional organizations promote literacy and teacher education through scholarships, materials donations and information. Educators have opportunities to become active members in teacher organizations, many of which offer content-specific educational resources. While this option may require a more active role by the educator, the reward in collaborating with like-minded, like-content

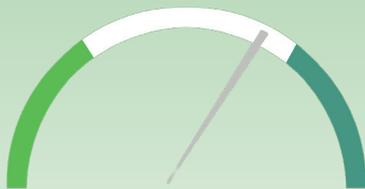
professionals can be invaluable. Community service organizations and clubs may focus on literacy and have scholarships and grants available. State and local libraries and library councils partner with schools to ensure that books are available for students and teachers.

Literacy Organizations

Many literacy organizations (both professional and private sector) provide not only literacy information but also literacy materials and supplies. Schools and individual staff members can benefit from partnering with these organizations through their research journals, instructional ideas, book donations and scholarships.

Educational Entities

Schools benefit from partnering with nearby universities and colleges through student teaching programs, professional development programs, and research efforts in literacy. Professional development through both coursework and targeted workshops is available through higher education institutions. Some universities and colleges offer Regional Professional Development Centers that partner with local schools to conduct research and/or provide services that can benefit both entities.



**WHAT’S
YOUR
STATUS?**

- How do our programs and practices engage families/partners in literacy development?
- How do we communicate with stakeholders to encourage and promote literacy in our school community?
- How do we encourage a shared responsibility to foster a culture of literacy?



A CALL TO ACTION

A district literacy plan is an essential blueprint for improving student literacy. An effective plan requires the consideration of the literacy needs and expectations of the district and community, resources needed to support literacy development, implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment and the use of on-going data.

Writing an effective literacy plan is not easy; however, once operationalized, a literacy plan allows all members of the school and community to understand the district's goals for the future, its current status, the actions necessary to reach the goals, shared roles and responsibilities and measurement of success.

In a technology-based, globalized world, a highly literate citizenry is needed for Missouri's economic growth and prosperity. To this end, preparing Missouri students for lifelong learning and college and career readiness is a shared responsibility of state policymakers, districts, buildings, families and the community.

The K-12 Missouri State Literacy Plan provides clear guidance on the components of a comprehensive literacy plan as well as resources to build, implement and strengthen student literacy.



Photo by Brooke Stefankiewicz, Salisbury High School



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