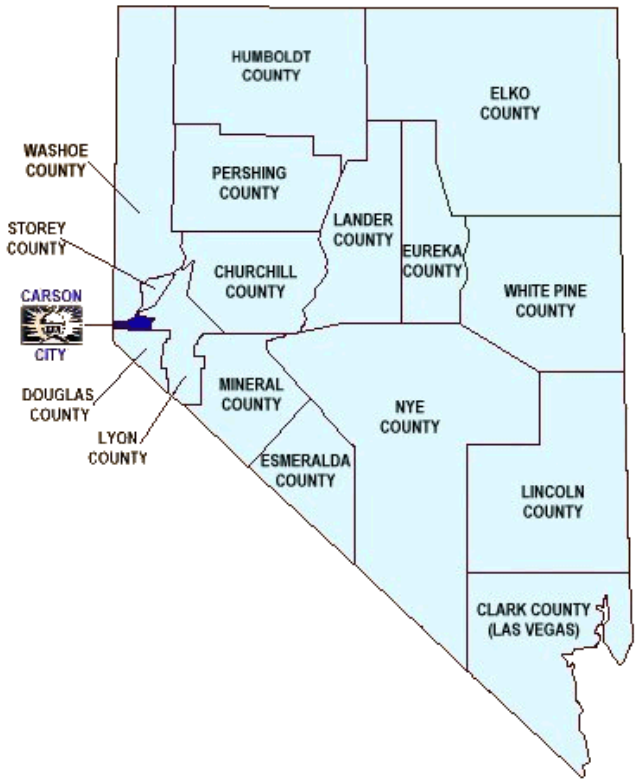
# *PreK-12 Nevada State Literacy Plan*




NEVADA Department of Education

**2025**

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# Superintendent's Letter

**Dear Nevadans,**

As the Superintendent of the Nevada Department of Education, I am honored to introduce the updated Nevada State Literacy Plan (NSLP). This plan reflects our collective commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all students across our great state. Literacy is not only foundational for academic success but also for equipping our students to thrive in the modern world, whether they pursue college, careers, or civic life.

Our "North Star" remains clear: to ensure that all Nevada students graduate with the necessary literacy skills to be future-ready and globally competitive. Achieving this vision requires a shared responsibility among educators and leaders at every level of our education system. Moreover, this plan serves as a call to action for all of us to focus on the literacy needs of Nevada's students.

With increased state funding for K-12 education and Governor Lombardo's Acing Accountability initiative, we have both increased resources and the mission to make a measurable difference in student outcomes. This updated plan introduces key enhancements to improve our approach to literacy, including:

- **Vertical Alignment**: A comprehensive approach to literacy that addresses all grade levels and their specific needs, ensuring students receive support wherever they are in their literacy journey.
- **Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)**: Clear guidance on using MTSS to address students' literacy needs in real-time, ensuring that no student falls behind.
- **Updated Scientific Research**: Incorporating relevant literacy research to ensure that our instructional practices are based on evidence and best practices.
- **Adolescent Literacy**: A deeper focus on preparing older students for the complex reading demands of various disciplines to ensure college and career readiness.

This new plan provides guidance to address the current challenges our students face while anticipating the needs of the future. Together, we can ensure that every Nevada student has the opportunity to succeed and thrive through literacy.

Thank you for your partnership in this important work.

Sincerely,
**Jhone M. Ebert**
Superintendent of Public Instruction
Nevada Department of Education

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# Preface

Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 385.010 establishes the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) which consists of the State Board of Education and the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (NDE) leads and collaborates with Nevada's 17 school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority. This includes regular collaboration to ensure state and federal requirements are met and students and educators are supported. NDE also collaborates with educational partners including childcare providers, the Nevada System of Higher Education, and Regional Professional Development Programs to improve student achievement and educator effectiveness.

NDE is organized to effectively administer the state and federal programs that support educational efforts in public and private schools to meet the needs of Nevada's students and their families. The outline below provides a quick overview of how NDE is organized.

**Office of the Superintendent**

- Executive Team
- Communications Team

**Student Investment Division**

- Office of Pupil-Centered Funding

**Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement Division**

- Office of Career Readiness, Adult Learning, and Education Options
- Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment
- Office of Educator Development, Licensure, and Family Engagement

**Student Achievement Division**

- Office of Assessment, Data, and Accountability Management
- Office of Inclusive Education
- Office of Early Learning and Development
- Office of Student and School Supports
- Office of Teaching and Learning

The 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP) is an operational plan that provides guidance for the improvement of Nevada's PreK-12 education system over the next five years. During the 82nd Nevada State Legislature, the Nevada Department of Education was allocated funding to revise and update the 2015 Nevada State Literacy Plan. During the same period, the State Governor, Joe Lombardo, committed $2.6B in increased funding to K-12 education through Acing Accountability with the goal of directly tying funding to student performance.

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Under Acing Accountability, all school districts, the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), and its charter holders will be assessed based on the following Essential Questions:

- To what degree are school districts and the SPCSA effectively implementing reading and mathematics resources?
- To what degree are kindergarten through grade 3 (K-3) students demonstrating progress toward mastery in literacy?
- To what degree are grades 4 through 8 (4-8) students demonstrating growth and proficiency in mathematics?
- To what degree are high school graduates prepared for success in college or a career?
- To what degree do school districts and the SPCSA have the workforce to meet the needs of every student?
- To what degree are school districts and the SPCSA using innovative solutions to meet the unique needs of their students?

The revised PreK-12 Nevada Literacy Plan is a foundation for improvement, providing Local Education Agencies with guidance to develop the policies and practices necessary to address the needs of ALL of Nevada's children, including those who are the most vulnerable.

Audiences for this plan include:

Policy makers –State and local legislatures, school boards, councils, and civic organizations responsible for allocating funds and directing policies to guide educational efforts.

Administrators – LEA and site level administrators responsible for developing and implementing policies and programs while guiding improvements.

Educators – Teachers and education support professionals who are interested in what the Nevada Department of Education has prioritized in evidence-based practices central to their work.

Community members – All who are interested in what the Nevada Department of Education is doing to provide the children of Nevada with literacy knowledge and skills to become functional, contributing members of our state and nation.

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# Overview

## Purpose

The purpose of the PreK-12 Nevada State Literacy Plan is to provide a blueprint for **improving literacy outcomes for *all* Nevada's students**. This plan will inform Nevada's educational leaders about literacy development, instruction, and assessment across the PreK through 12th grade continuum. Additionally, this plan will provide Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and charter organizations with **actionable guidance** to develop policies and practices necessary to improve literacy outcomes in Nevada. This plan also serves as a **call to action** to regional and state leaders, policy-makers, and legislators to support the literacy development of *all* Nevada's students.

Our *North Star* is:

> **For all Nevada students to graduate with the necessary literacy skills to be future-ready and globally prepared for postsecondary success and civic life.**

The literacy development of Nevada's students relies on all of us; it is a shared responsibility for legislators, state and local leaders, educators, and caregivers across our PreK-12 system. We are all charged with providing students with the skills and understandings required to make this future a reality. Towards this goal, the NSLP will:

- communicate Nevada's current literacy challenges
- strengthen connections between existing state initiatives
- encourage collaboration (horizontal and vertical) throughout the PreK-12 grade span
- define a comprehensive instructional approach for literacy achievement, providing a continuum for coherent literacy education and evidence-based practices for literacy improvement for all.

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# Nevada Department of Education's Vision, Mission and Values

As stated in the Statewide Plan for Improvement of Pupils, the 2025 Vision, Mission, Values and Goals[1] are as follows:

**Vision:** All Nevada students are equipped and feel empowered to attain their vision of success.

**Mission:** to improve student achievement and educator effectiveness by ensuring opportunities, facilitating learning, and promoting excellence.

**Values:**

- **Equity:** The learning needs of every student are supported in an environment where all students are valued, respected, and see themselves in their curriculum and instructional materials while experiencing academic success without regard to differences in age, gender, socio-economic status, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, native language, national origin, or citizenship status.
- **Access to Quality:** Students, educators, and families have opportunities to take full advantage of Nevada's education system, regardless of their zip code, district, or setting.
- **Success:** Lead the nation in the excellence and rigor of our standards, assessments, and outcomes for students and educators.
- **Inclusivity:** Learners are served in their least restrictive environment in culturally responsive and sustaining schools.
- **Community:** NDE collaborates with educators, districts, families, stakeholders, and partner agencies to lead a high-performing and responsive system of education for all Nevadans.
- **Transparency:** Districts, schools, and communities are served through efficient and effective use of public funds and fulfillment of statutory responsibilities.

The NSLP will be revisited annually to assess how it is enhancing literacy initiatives and continuing to meet the State of Nevada's Vision, Mission, Values and Goals. It will be revised as needed.

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[1] 2021 Nevada STIP Plan Addendum

# An Updated Plan for Nevada's Students

The last decade of literacy research, and our reality of living in a post-pandemic era, has provided new perspectives and evidenced-based recommendations to build on the foundation established in the 2015 plan.

During the 82nd Nevada State Legislature, the Nevada Department of Education was allocated funding to revise and update the 2015 Nevada State Literacy Plan (NSLP). During the same period, the State Governor, Joe Lombardo, committed to increased funding to K-12 education through Acing Accountability with the goal of directly tying funding to student performance.

Under Acing Accountability, all school districts, the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), and its charter holders will be assessed based on the following Essential Questions related to Literacy:

- To what degree are school districts and the SPCSA effectively implementing reading and mathematics resources?
- To what degree are kindergarten through grade 3 (K-3) students demonstrating progress toward mastery in literacy?
- To what degree are high school graduates prepared for success in college or a career?
- To what degree do school districts and the SPCSA have the workforce to meet the needs of every student?

This new plan updates and revises the 2015 plan in the following ways:

- **Vertical Alignment**–Rather than separating out recommendations by grade level, the new plan offers a comprehensive and vertically aligned approach to literacy in the service of the Nevada Academic Content Standards. This approach allows for all LEAs to support students with their specific literacy needs, regardless of what grade they are in. At the same time, the appendix includes helpful one-pagers that can help educators and leaders focus literacy instruction within specific grade bands.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports**–The shift from RTI to MTSS in the last decade affords Nevada a system for identifying and responding to the literacy needs of Nevada's students in real-time. The new plan offers clear guidance on what MTSS is and how to use it at the systems level to support all students.
- **Updated Scientific Research**–The last decade of literacy research has expanded our understanding of literacy learning and has provided specific additions to guidance on reading

instruction. The new plan amplifies the research that provides evidence-based recommendations for instruction and aligns with Nevada's Read by Grade 3 legislation[2].

- **A Deeper Focus on Adolescent Literacy**–The 2015 plan spanned PK through adult literacy, and the new plan has been updated to span PreK-12. With respect to adolescent readers, the new plan now includes expanded references to complex text and reading within different academic disciplines reflecting the Nevada Academic Content Standards and to ensure our students are prepared for college and career success.

# Organization of the 2025 Nevada State Literacy Plan

The Pk–12 Nevada State Literacy Plan is organized with a section for each of the six levers for change. Within each section there is:

- a description of each topic including research evidence for why it was selected.
- key components of each topic.
- A selection of actions for implementation for each key component.

At the end of the document, you will find several appendices.

- Appendix 1: Considerations by grade-span
- Appendix 2: Additional resources to support implementation
- Appendix 3: State demographic and needs assessment data
- Appendix 4: Current legislation, initiatives, and policies
- Appendix 5: References

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[2] Nevada Department of Education. Nevada's Read by Grade 3 Program.https://doe.nv.gov/rbg3/home/

# Nevada's Definition of Literacy

*Literacy is the ability to actively and critically read, write, speak, and listen across all academic content areas and/or career pathways in order to construct meaning and communicate effectively. A literate individual is able to independently and collaboratively function in a global society by using evidence, creativity, questioning, reflecting, and problem-solving skills.*

In this plan we focus on the key systems and evidence-based practices necessary to support all PreK-12 students in Nevada to have competence and confidence in reading, writing and the prerequisite oral language skills for both. While literacy is broader than reading and writing these are the most critical areas of growth for Nevada's students.

# Science of Reading in Nevada

Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 392.748 defines reading to include, without limitation, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The science of reading refers to a broad, evidence-based body of research across disciplines such as education, cognitive science, linguistics, and psychology that is focused on understanding how individuals learn to read, the processes involved in reading development, and the most effective instructional practices for teaching reading. This includes insights and information regarding all of the elements of reading as outlined in NRS 392.748.

The following key components are necessary to ensure that educators are prepared with the knowledge, understanding, and skills to effectively teach reading and improve reading outcomes for students:

1. **Evidence-Based Instruction**

   Evidence-based reading instruction is grounded in research that has been proven to help students, including those with diverse backgrounds, learn to read more efficiently and effectively, enhancing their overall literacy skills. These practices should occur across all grade levels, from Pre-K through 12th grade.

2. **Explicit and Systematic Instruction**

   Explicit instruction is clear, unambiguous instruction targeting specific reading skills, whereas systematic instruction involves teaching skills in a logical, sequential order. Each skill builds upon previously learned skills, ensuring that learning progresses in an organized and cohesive manner. This approach to reading instruction enhances student learning, supports diverse needs, and helps educators deliver effective and efficient instruction. Effective reading instruction should also focus on fostering a love for reading, enhancing student motivation, and actively engaging students in the learning process. Without motivation, even evidence-based practices may not be as impactful.

3. **Early Intervention and the Use of Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**

   MTSS provides a structured framework for delivering differentiated instruction and targeted interventions based on student needs. Early intervention and the use of MTSS is key to preventing long-term reading struggles and supporting students in developing strong reading skills. By systematically addressing varying levels of support, MTSS ensures that all students receive the appropriate instruction and resources needed to develop foundational skills and improve reading proficiency. The best outcomes for students, including those with diverse learning needs, occur with early intervention.

4. **Data-Driven Decision Making**

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Data-driven decision-making involves using evidence and assessments to inform instructional practices and interventions. By analyzing student performance data, educators can tailor instruction to address specific needs, track progress, and make informed adjustments to enhance reading outcomes. This approach ensures that teaching methods are effective and responsive to the actual needs of students.

5. **Literacy Specialists**

   Literacy specialists provide coaching, guidance, and support in implementing evidence-based reading practices and interventions. They help educators analyze student data to develop and refine instructional strategies, ensure fidelity to research-based methods, and address individual student needs, thereby enhancing overall reading outcomes.

6. **Professional Learning**

   Professional learning equips educators with the latest research-based strategies and methodologies for effective reading instruction and ensures that teachers stay updated on best practices to improve student literacy outcomes.

7. **Cultural Responsiveness**

   Cultural responsiveness ensures that teaching practices are inclusive and relevant to students from diverse backgrounds, enhancing engagement and learning outcomes. The science of reading emphasizes evidence-based methods for teaching literacy, focusing on phonics, phonemic awareness, and other foundational skills. When combined, cultural responsiveness and the science of reading create a more equitable learning environment by addressing individual needs and leveraging students' cultural contexts to support effective literacy development.

8. **Family and Community Engagement**

   Family engagement fosters a collaborative approach to support student literacy development, leveraging families' insights, and reinforcing reading practices at home. It is important for educators to ensure that culturally and linguistically relevant strategies are used to support reading development in a way that respects and incorporates the unique experiences of Nevada families and our communities.

Clearly defining the science of reading and outlining its key components ensures consistency of understanding across the state, delivery of high quality instructional opportunities, and alignment with evidence-based practices, ultimately leading to improved literacy outcomes for all students in Nevada.

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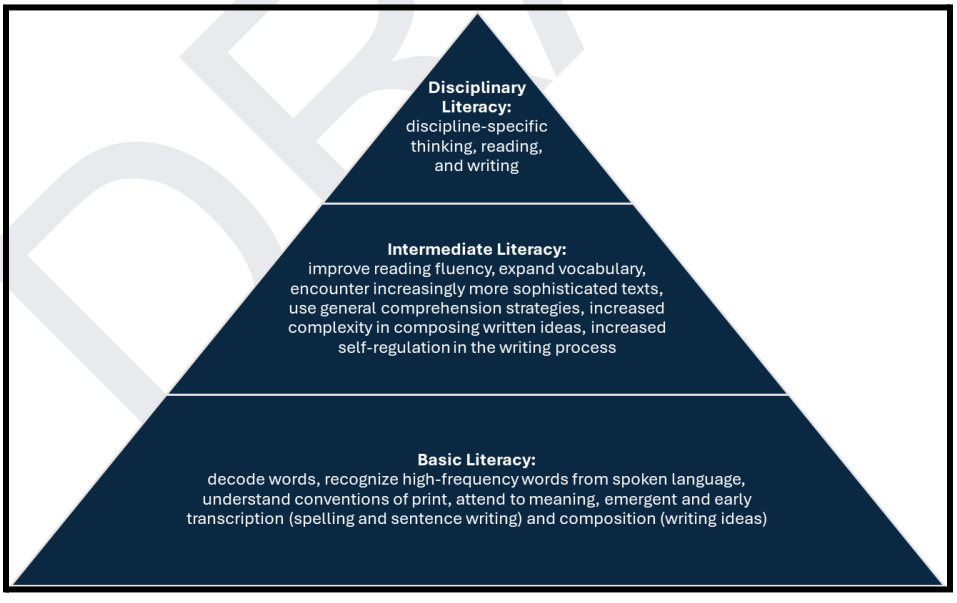
# A New Pathway Forward: A Comprehensive and Vertically Aligned Approach to Literacy

According to the International Literacy Association (ILA), comprehensive literacy instruction is a type of instruction that addresses all aspects of reading and writing, while also being equitable and responsive to the needs of individual students.

Comprehensive reading and writing instruction, which also includes attention to oral language, is the focus of this plan. Oral language (Byrnes, & Wasik, 2019) has a reciprocal relationship with reading development (Cervetti, G. et.al., 2020), and supporting and reinforcing reading instruction. Evidence-based writing instruction is also essential for students to achieve college and career readiness across the academic disciplines (Graham and Herbert, 2010).

Research on literacy development, and the Nevada Academic Content Standards, suggest a trajectory of skill development in reading and writing. Figure 1 shows a common pyramid of literacy development (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008), illustrating that each stage of literacy development is a foundation for the next stage. However, students will progress through that development at different speeds and with different strengths. A comprehensive and vertically aligned approach to literacy instruction assures that educators have access to information across grade-levels and can identify strategies to meet all students where they are.

**Figure 1.Pyramid of Literacy Development**




Adapted from Shanahan and Shanahan, 2008[3]

[3] Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. Harvard Educational Review, 78, 40–59.

To support students' literacy development, a Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) ensures that all students receive the instruction and intervention they need. MTSS is a set of structures built on a foundation of strong Tier 1 instruction and assessment. MTSS ensures assessment and intervention are systems in place for those students who need additional support.

Figure 2, on the following page, demonstrates examples of some core instructional targets of literacy instruction by grade span. Figure 2 also shows when specific instructional targets should receive emphasis in Tier 1 instruction and when they may surface as more intensive needs for intervention (Tiers 2 and 3) in later years.

**Figure 2: Example Core Instructional Targets of Literacy PK-12**

| Core Instructional Targets | Pre-K | Grades 1-2 | Grades 3-5 | Grades 6-12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Phonological Awareness and Print Awareness** | | | | |
| **Word Reading and Spelling** | | | | |
| **Fluency** | | | | |
| **Vocabulary and Morphology** | | | | |
| **Text Structure and Reading Comprehension Strategies** | | | | |
| **Writing** | | | | |
| **Disciplinary Literacy** | | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Tier 1 Universal Support for All Students (Highest Priority ) |
| | Tier 1 Universal Support for All Students (Lower Priority) |
| | Tier 2 Targeted Interventions for Students at Risk |
| | Tier 3 Individualized Supports for Few Students |

# Our Theory Of Improvement

The 2025 Nevada State Literacy Plan' Advisory Council identified six priority areas as the levers for literacy improvement. Tier 1 Instruction, Assessment, Multi-tiered Systems of Support, Leadership, Professional learning, and Family and Community Engagement.

We believe that if we improve in these areas, we will be able to build the instructional capacity, systems, structures, leadership, and community partnership necessary to by 2030:

- Improve Nevada's overall ELA growth in proficiency of grade K-2 students on the Spring Administration of the benchmark assessments. NDE is currently in the process of updating assessment tools for K-2. Specific goals will be determined once the assessment tools are finalized.
- Improve Nevada's overall ELA proficiency to at least 60% of grade 3-8 students at or above proficient on the Smarter Balanced Assessment.
- Improve the average ACT reading score for graduating students to 40% at benchmark.

**Figure 3: Nevada's Theory of Improvement for Literacy**

| Goals | Primary Levers for Change | Inputs | Strategies/ Activities | Outcomes |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| By 2030 Improve Nevada's overall ELA growth in proficiency of grade K-2 students on the Spring Administration of the benchmark assessments.<br><br>By 2030, Improve Nevada's overall ELA proficiency to at least 60% of grade 3-8 students at or above proficient on the Smarter | Strong Tier 1 Instruction | Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS) in ELA<br><br>Nevada Educator Performance Framework(NEPF)-Teacher Instructional Practice Standards<br><br>Guidelines for High Quality, Standards-based Instructional Materials<br><br>Dedicated Literacy Instructional Time Guidance<br><br>Teacher Collaboration and Planning Structures<br><br>Dyslexia guidance | All students are centered as expert language users<br><br>Rich oral language experiences are provided<br><br>Foundational skills for literacy are explicitly and systematically taught<br><br>Reading comprehension of complex texts across formats, genres, and disciplines is scaffolded<br><br>The expression of written ideas for a variety of audiences is modeled and guided | All students receiving high-quality, grade level appropriate core instruction.<br><br>Improved academic performance<br><br>Improvement on college and career readiness indicators |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Balanced Assessment.<br><br>By 2030 Improve the average ACT reading score for graduating students to 40% at benchmark. | | NV ELD Framework | | |
| | Assessment | PreK literacy screening assessments<br><br>Common K-8 screening Assessments<br><br>Recommendations for effective PK-12 diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments<br><br>Assessment Literacy Professional Development | Administer developmentally appropriate literacy screening assessments to all students<br><br>Administer appropriate diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments to students who need/are receiving additional support<br><br>Annual state Literacy assessments administered | Improved data collection and availability<br><br>Use data to understand effectiveness of interventions<br><br>Measure overall progress in literacy proficiency.<br><br>All LEAs identify and adopt literacy diagnostic tools for all grade levels PK-12 |
| | Multi Tiered System of Supports | MTSS Professional Learning and Coaching Support District Systems Fidelity Inventory (DSFI)<br><br>Improved student data collection tools, methods, and practices | Create, train, and support District Leadership Teams (DLTs)<br><br>Facilitate administration of DSFI to inform district literacy plans<br><br>Provide MTSS training and coaching for school teams to support literacy<br><br>Differentiated Instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students | Increased district capacity to train, monitor, improve, and evaluate MTSS implementation<br><br>Increased school capacity, resources, and protocols to engage in data-driven discussions<br><br>Increased fidelity of implementation of Tier 1 literacy practices |
| | Leadership | Nevada Educator Performance Framework(NEPF)-School Administrator | Implementation of the Nevada State Literacy Plan (NSLP) | NSLP introduced to All Nevada LEAs<br><br>District/LEA Literacy |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Instructional Leadership Standards<br><br>Literacy professional learning for leaders<br><br>Professional learning in observation and feedback for literacy instruction<br><br>Assessment Literacy Professional Development | Clear instructional vision, goals and expectations<br><br>Observation and Feedback Cycles<br><br>Create and maintaining systems to support literacy instruction<br><br>Monitor programs to ensure Students identified as performing below grade level are receiving appropriate Tier 1, Tier 2, or Tier 3 supports.<br><br>Address resource inequities that are barriers to all students receiving needed supports | Plans Developed aligned with the NSLP<br><br>Clear expectations for literacy instruction communicated<br><br>All students below grade level are receiving appropriate literacy support |
| | Professional Learning | Nevada Standards for Professional Development<br><br>Research-based Professional learning on literacy<br><br>Regional Professional Development Programs<br><br>Nevada Adolescent Literacy Network | Curriculum Embedded Professional Learning<br><br>Literacy coaching support for all K-5 teachers<br><br>Literacy communities of practice<br><br>Reading Certifications | Increased literacy professional learning participation<br><br>Deeper knowledge at state and local levels about literacy support strategies<br><br>Improved access to online resources to support literacy instruction |
| | Family and Community Engagement | Nevada Family Engagement Framework<br><br>Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement<br><br>Advisory Council for Family Engagement | Developing a Strength-based mindset and approach regarding literacy<br><br>Building parent/family relationships around literacy<br><br>Developing effective communication | Parents evident in active rolls in school and district literacy plan development<br><br>Improved parent participation in literacy-based activities |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Regional Professional Development Programs | systems<br><br>Shared decision making for literacy priorities | |

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# Tier 1 Instruction

"Core academic knowledge is the foundation from which students can apply durable skills, enabling them to build a life, a home, and a future for themselves, their families, and their communities."[4]

-Nevada Portrait of a Learner (2023)

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[4] Nevada Department of Education. (2023). *Portrait process: Portrait of a Nevada learner*. The Portrait Project. Nevada Department of Education, Carson City, NV., https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/process

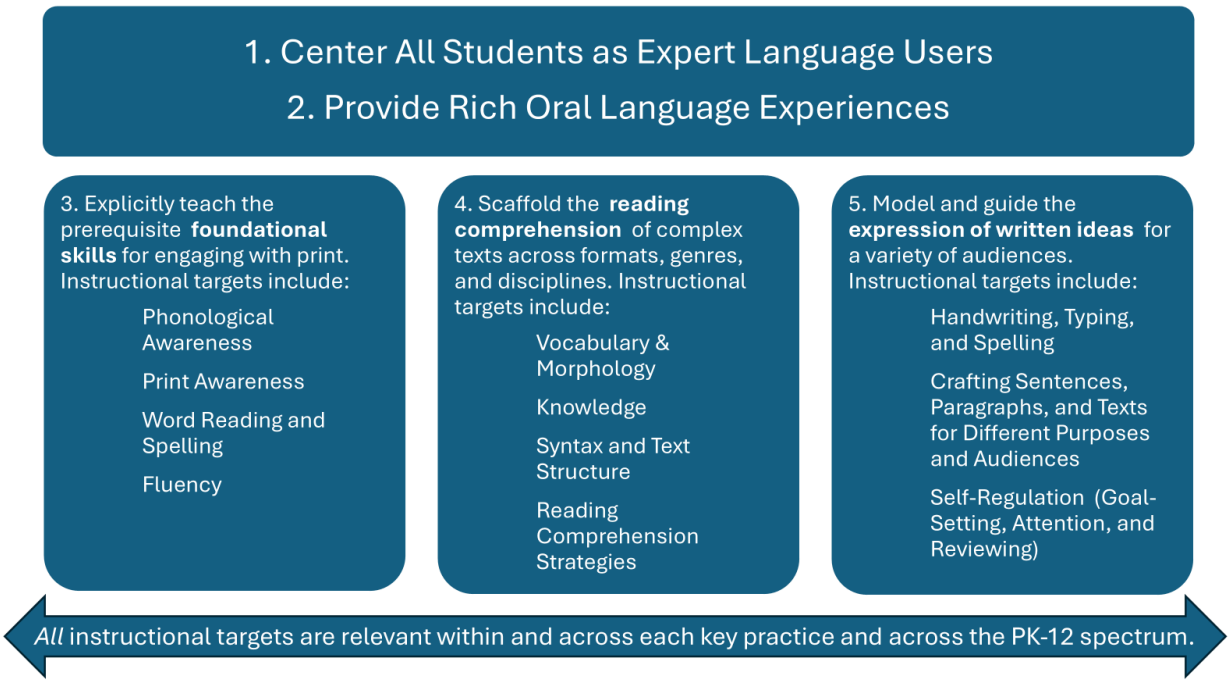
## Tier 1 Instruction

This section describes the core of the Nevada State Literacy Plan: **equity-oriented, comprehensive, and effective Tier 1 literacy instruction**. Figure 1 presents Nevada's approach to Tier 1 Literacy instruction. Specifically, it calls out five key practices, along with corresponding instructional targets, that make up Nevada's approach to Tier 1 literacy instruction.

1. Center All Students as Expert Language Users
2. Provide rich Oral Language Experiences
3. Explicitly Teach Prerequisite Foundational Skills
4. Scaffold the Reading Comprehension of Complex Texts
5. Model and Guide the Expression of Written Ideas

Figure 1 also highlights that all five key practices interact with each other; together they make up an *integrated* approach to Tier 1 instruction, rather than a set of five isolated steps. Finally, Figure 1 is fully aligned with Nevada's commitment to the rich body of research that comprises the science of reading and the science of writing.

**Figure 1. Five Key Practices for Tier 1 Literacy Instruction with Specific Instructional Targets**




Importantly, as illustrated by the arrow at the bottom of Figure 1, the instructional targets for each key practice are *generally* grouped. **The instructional targets are not mutually exclusive from each other, nor do they only belong to the key practice for which they are listed.** Here are three examples of the overlap:

- While writing might be perceived as an advanced literacy target, it has a reciprocal relationship with reading and language from the earliest grades.[5] Supporting emergent writers in PK is essential for writing development through 12th grade.
- Learning to read fluently (with accuracy, expression, and appropriate speed) is a critical foundational skill that young readers need to develop.[6] However, learning to read a second grade text fluently will do little to support a student reading a primary source document in a history class in middle or high school. Fluency predicts reading comprehension, and older readers continue to need support with fluency skills they can leverage in increasingly complex texts.[7]
- Reading and spelling words involves a set of skills that are enhanced by knowledge of vocabulary and morphology (knowledge of roots and affixes) at all ages – learning any of these in isolation is less effective than attending to sound, spelling, and meaning together.[8] Consider the words *variety* and *variable*, words which students are likely to encounter in secondary classrooms. The root VARI, which means change or difference, is in both words, but it is pronounced differently in each word. Attending to both spelling and meaning of the root VARI can help students read and understand words.

### *Key Practice 1: Center All Students as Expert Language Users*

The first key practice, centering all students as expert language users, emphasizes the equity orientation necessary for effective Tier 1 literacy instruction.[9] All of Nevada's students enter classrooms with a wealth of language knowledge for the communicative contexts they know best. While not all language expertise that students bring to classrooms overlaps with the language students are expected to use in school, ***all students have language expertise that can inform and support their success in school***.[10] Operating from this assumption is equity-oriented; it honors and leverages the cultural and linguistic strengths that *all* of Nevada's students bring to their classrooms (Alim & Paris, 2017). ***Nevada's richly diverse student population needs and deserves instruction that elevates their strengths and builds on them***.

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[5] Traga Philippakos, Z. A., & Graham, S. (2020). Research Advisory: Teaching Writing to Improve Reading Skills. International Literacy Association.

[6] Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *19*, 5–51

[7] Kim, J. S., Hemphill, L., Troyer, M., Thomson, J. M., Jones, S. M., LaRusso, M. D., & Donovan, S. (2016). Engaging struggling adolescent readers to improve reading skills. Reading Research Quarterly, 52(3), 357–382. https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.171

[8] Perfetti, C., & Stafura, J. (2014). Word knowledge in a theory of reading comprehension. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, *18*, 22–37

[9] Bailey, A. L., & Heritage, M. (2008). *Formative assessment for literacy: Building reading and academic language skills across the curriculum*. Corwin Press.

[10] Mancilla-Martinez, J., Hwang, J. K., Oh, M. H., & Pokowitz, E. L. (2020). Patterns of Development in Spanish–English Conceptually Scored Vocabulary Among Elementary-Age Dual Language Learners. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, *63*(9), 3084–3099. https://doi.org/10.1044/2020_JSLHR-20-00056

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**Actions for Implementation for Centering All Students as Expert Language Users**

- Encourage students to draw on *all* language resources they bring to the classroom, including different languages and different varieties of English (e.g. African American Vernacular English).
- Help students make connections between the language they know and the language they are learning. This includes making connections between different dialects or ways of using English as well as between different languages.
- Teach students that all dialects and languages have value, and help students think about how to use different types of language for different audiences.
- Read texts that represent diverse cultures and languages to help students activate, share, and build on their cultural and experiential knowledge.

### *Key Practice 2: Provide Rich Oral Language Experiences*

Oral language is incredibly important for literacy development. Throughout the K-12 years, students need multiple and repeated opportunities to speak and listen in order to build the kinds of language resources that will support their reading and writing.[11] Oral language development begins from learners' youngest days with families and caregivers and extends through grade 12 and beyond. Oral language includes knowledge of sounds, word meanings, sentence structures, and how to communicate in different settings. It is the foundation on which all literacy development rests. In line with Key Practice 1, providing rich oral language experiences also means welcoming and encouraging all ways of using language and different languages. Students should be encouraged to draw on their existing language resources as they add new language resources for specific purposes and audiences.

**Actions for Implementation for Providing Rich Oral Language Experiences**

- Facilitate well-structured, interactive read-alouds to create many opportunities for students to listen to and practice using new vocabulary and syntax structures.
- Plan effective discussions with: clear discussion norms agreed upon by students, a reliance on complex and engaging texts, compelling questions, and a variety of formats.
- Academically Productive Talk is an excellent framework for effective discussions, with clear guiding principles and helpful "talk moves" for students.[12]

[11] Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K. (2018). Ending the reading wars: Reading acquisition from novice to expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *19*, 5–51. Donnelly, S., & Kidd, E. (2021). The Longitudinal Relationship Between Conversational Turn-Taking and Vocabulary Growth in Early Language Development. *Child Development*, *92*(2), 609–625. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13511. Laufer, B., & Rozovski-Roitblat, B. (2011). Incidental vocabulary acquisition: The effects of task type, word occurrence, and their combination. *Language Teaching Research*, *15*(4), 391–411.

[12] Michaels, S., & O'Connor, C. (2012). *Talk science primer*. TERC. http://searkscience.pbworks.com/w/file/fetch/67803311/18-TalkScience_PrimerArticle.pdf

### *Key Practice 3: Explicitly Teach Prerequisite Foundational Skills for Engaging with Print*

**Introduction to Foundational Skills.** In literacy, foundational skills refer to the skills needed to read words and connected text fluently. They are foundational in that other, more advanced literacy skills rely on them. Having a solid set of foundational skills in early elementary school is critical. At the same time, foundational skills continue to develop as students encounter increasingly complex text as they progress through grades. The instructional targets for developing foundational skills are:

- Phonological Awareness
- Print Awareness
- Word Reading and Spelling
- Fluency

**Phonological Awareness.** Phonological awareness describes the ability to recognize, manipulate, and differentiate between the segments of sound in spoken language. The smallest segments of sound are individual sounds found in words, called phonemes. Phonological awareness also includes awareness of larger segments of sound, such as syllables. For example, the spoken word "cat" has three individual sounds (/c/ /a/ /t/) and one syllable. Phonological awareness is essential for developing an understanding of the alphabetic principle, the system of mapping spoken sounds to written letters.[13] (Foorman et al., 2016). In order to map spoken sounds to written letters, children first need to be able to identify individual sounds in words. Phonological awareness is the precursor to decoding (reading) and encoding (writing) words.

A key consideration for phonological awareness with multilingual and multidialectal learners is to recognize that students will draw on their existing language resources for pronouncing words. When students draw on languages other than English, or on specific dialects of English (e.g. African American Vernacular English) to pronounce words in ways that do not align with the type of English commonly used in schools, they are not making "mistakes". Instead, students are fusing the language knowledge they have with the type of English they are asked to use in school. Helping students hear and use different pronunciations of words, based on audience and purpose, can boost their phonological awareness at the same time as it honors their existing language resources.

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Phonological Awareness**

- All practices to support phonological awareness are most effective when students are *seeing* the written form of the word as they practice manipulating sounds.

[13] Foorman, B., Beyler, N., Borradaile, K., Coyne, M., Denton, C. A., Dimino, J., Furgeson, J., Hayes, L., Henke, J., Justice, L., Keating, B., Lewis, W., Sattar, S., Streke, A., Wagner, R., & Wissel, S. (2016). *Foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade* (NCEE 2016-4008). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from the NCEE website: http://whatworks.ed.gov

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- Teach students that spoken language can be broken down into smaller segments of sound. Begin by teaching students to recognize larger segments, such as whole words within sentences, and then smaller segments such as syllables, morphemes, and phonemes within a word (Foorman et al., 2016).
- By kindergarten, many students will be ready to isolate, blend, delete, and replace phonemes in words. Begin with one-syllable words that have 2-3 phonemes. Invite students to substitute beginning, middle, and ending phonemes to create new words.

**Print Awareness.** Print awareness describes the knowledge that print represents language and carries meaning (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Wright et al., 2022). Print awareness also describes student understanding of conventions of print, which include the orientation and directionality of print (e.g., sentences are read left to right and pages are read top to bottom in English). Other characteristics of print awareness include awareness of the purposes of print (e.g., to inform, entertain, persuade) and the ability to differentiate between letters and whole words. Print awareness is an important building block in the foundation for word reading and writing (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008). When children have a foundational understanding of how print works, they are more prepared to develop an understanding of the alphabetic principle— the system of mapping spoken sounds to written letters (Wright et al., 2022). As students develop advanced print concepts— usually by pre-kindergarten— they may be able to identify specific letters and engage in writing letters (Wright et al., 2022).

With respect to Nevada's diverse student population, there is a great variety of writing systems Nevada's students have knowledge of, and some of those writing systems operate differently from English. While the writing systems of English and many other languages are alphabetic, with letters and groups of letters each representing one sound, some writing systems have individual symbols that represent whole syllables (e.g. Korean) or entire words (e.g. Mandarin). Additionally, some writing systems are read from right to left (e.g. Arabic). Multilingual students' knowledge of different writing systems should be honored in classrooms, and they should have opportunities to compare and contrast the writing systems they know with their developing knowledge of English.

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Print Awareness**

- Draw students' attention to print in text through "print referencing" (Justice et al., 2010; Piasta et al., 2012). Print referencing refers to the act of drawing children's attention to print concepts and explicitly discussing features of print concepts. Read-alouds, classroom routines, and play are excellent opportunities to engage students in print referencing (Wright et al., 2022).
- Support students in recognizing environmental print and symbols.
- Regularly identify book parts and features, such as the front, back, title, and/or author.

**Word Reading and Spelling.** Word reading is essential for proficient decoding and, ultimately, comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). The foundation of word reading is built on students' understanding of the alphabetic principle, which is the relationship between spoken sounds and written letters. Knowledge of spelling supports knowledge of word reading (Weiser & Mathes, 2011). Word

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reading and spelling involve strategically and flexibly applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships, spelling patterns, and morphology to read and spell words accurately and efficiently.

In the written English language, sounds—also called phonemes—are represented by letters or letter combinations, also called graphemes. Graphemes are also commonly referred to as spelling patterns. Some phonemes may have several graphemes. For example, the phoneme /ā/ (long a vowel sound) may be spelled with the following graphemes: a_e, ai, ay, ea, -y, eigh, ei, ey. Phonics instruction refers to teaching approaches in which students are taught to apply their knowledge of the alphabetic principle to decode words (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Systematic, explicit phonics instruction has more evidence than any other approach for teaching students in PK-2 to learn how to read words (Foorman et al., 2016; National Reading Panel, 2000). In explicit and systematic phonics instruction, students are explicitly taught letter-sound relationships in a systematic and sequential way across the early grades. For example, less complex letter-sound relationships are taught first. These include phonemes represented by single letters (e.g., /s/, /m/, /d/, /p/). Students then learn more complex letter-sound relationships, such as consonant digraphs (e.g., sh, ch, th) and blends (e.g., br, sm, pr) and short and long vowel spellings, including vowel teams (i.e., ay, ai, oi, ea) (Foorman et al., 2016; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Spelling words has a reciprocal relationship with reading words. When phonics intervention includes practice in spelling words, students make greater gains in both reading and spelling words (Weiser & Mathes, 2011). Importantly, spelling practice should be based on the letter-sound patterns being targeted in instruction, rather than a list of random challenging words, so that students have opportunities to both decode (read) and encode (spell) while they are learning new letter-sound patterns.

Importantly, multisyllabic words often have less predictable letter-sound relationships and vowel pronunciations which can present a challenge to developing readers (Kearns, 2020). Teaching knowledge of spelling patterns, especially vowel spelling patterns, and flexible word reading strategies can help readers break down multisyllabic words into smaller parts (Vaughn et al., 2022). In addition, morphology knowledge—knowledge and awareness of how words are constructed with morphemes (i.e. meaningful word parts like roots and affixes)—helps readers recognize meaningful word parts, break words into smaller parts, and infer the meaning of words (Vaughn et al., 2022).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Word Reading and Spelling**

- Teach each letter of the alphabet, uppercase and lowercase, and their corresponding sounds. Progress from simple to more complex letter-sound relationships, working with just a few at a time. Begin with consonant and short vowel sounds represented by a single letter before introducing consonant blends, digraphs, long vowel sounds, and vowel teams. Teach readers to blend, chunk, and sound out sound-spelling patterns (Foorman et al., 2016).
- While a common practice is to teach “a letter a week” in Kindergarten, research suggests that this is an artificial approach that is not effective. A better approach would be to teach 1-2 letters

a week for a few weeks and then build in a practice week of reviewing those letters/sounds together.

- Decodable texts, as part of a diverse "diet" of instructional texts and literature, can be used to help readers in early elementary school practice recently learned sound-spelling patterns and morphemes.
- Give students multiple opportunities to practice encoding (spelling) the letter-sound patterns they are learning.
- Teach readers to break multisyllabic words into smaller parts, and to read these smaller parts using flexible decoding strategies.
- Teach students affixes that they will commonly encounter, such as the prefixes "pre-, mis-, dis-" and the suffixes "-er, -est, -ed, -ing." Then, have them practice with these morphemes by manipulating them to create new words.
- Across all grade levels, students should be given opportunities to practice reading and spelling words with recently learned sound-spelling patterns and morphemes.

**Fluency.** Fluency describes the ability to read with accuracy, speed, and appropriate expression (National Reading Panel, 2000). Within the concept of fluency, accuracy refers to the ability to decode words accurately. Speed refers to the rate at which readers decode words. Appropriate expression refers to the ability to read words with intonation and phrasing that reflect the meaning of what is being read. These three components of fluency contribute to automaticity with reading, which is the ability to read words, sentences, and paragraphs accurately with speed and ease[14] (Kuhn, et al., 2010; National Reading Panel, 2000).

When readers are able to read fluently, they spend less time and energy on decoding individual words, which allows them to focus on the meaning of the text (National Reading Panel, 2000). To develop fluency, readers need well-developed word reading skills. However, fluency can be taught and practiced as soon as readers can identify a few words (Foorman et al., 2016). Students' fluency may vary from text-to-text, depending on the content, vocabulary, and sentence structure of each text. To support their fluency, students should be given opportunities to read a wide range of texts with varying difficulty, topics, and writing styles (Vaughn et al., 2022).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Fluency**

- Provide opportunities for students to read orally and repeatedly. Begin with more accessible texts with familiar words and simple sentence structures before moving to more challenging texts. Model how to read with phrasing and expression, and explicitly teach students the purpose of punctuation marks (Foorman et al., 2016).

[14] National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

- Use the Readers' Theater instructional routine to align fluency support with discipline-specific texts and content.
- Choral reading can help eliminate some of the anxiety students may feel over reading aloud in class while still providing opportunities for them to engage in oral reading (Paige, 2012).
- Use repeated reading and paired reading routines that help students read the same text multiple times for different purposes.

### *Key Practice 4: Scaffold the reading comprehension of complex texts across formats, genres, and disciplines*

**Introduction to Reading Comprehension.** Reading comprehension describes the process by which readers make meaning from the text they are reading (Snow, 2002). Comprehension is a complex process that relies on the reader's word reading skills, fluency, and vocabulary knowledge (National Reading Panel, 2000; Scarborough, 2001). However, comprehension also depends on other factors, such as knowledge about the topic or content of the text, the characteristics of the text (e.g., syntax, text structure), and the purpose for reading or associated task (e.g., reading for pleasure, reading to gather information) (Snow, 2002). Finally, digital and multimodal texts are ubiquitous in classrooms, colleges, and careers. They have unique features that are an important part of the reading comprehension equation. To navigate digital texts, students need to build skill sets that allow them to evaluate the quality of information and synthesize information across multiple modalities (e.g. print, images, video, diagrams, figures, etc.) The essential instructional targets for supporting reading comprehension are:

- Vocabulary and Morphology
- Syntax and Text Structure
- Knowledge
- Reading Comprehension Strategies

**Vocabulary.** Vocabulary describes knowledge of words and word meanings; in many ways, it is a proxy for knowledge itself. Vocabulary is first learned through oral language, and students come to school with well-developed vocabulary knowledge, often in multiple languages (Mancilla-Martinez et al., 2020). When students have developed word reading skills, vocabulary can also be learned from reading.

Vocabulary words are often conceptualized in three tiers (Beck et al., 2013). Tier 1 words are commonly used in oral language. Tier 2 words may be general academic in nature, meaning they are commonly found and used in school settings, especially in texts and writing. Tier 3 words are domain-specific—meaning they are found and used in specific settings and situations, including social, cultural, and academic domains[15].

Vocabulary can also be conceptualized as receptive versus productive: receptive vocabulary refers to the vocabulary that the student recognizes and understands through listening or reading, while productive

[15] Nagy, W., & Townsend, D. (2012). Words as tools: Learning academic vocabulary as language acquisition. Reading Research Quarterly, 47(1), 91-108. https://doi.org/10.1002/RRQ.011

vocabulary refers to the vocabulary that the student can use accurately in speaking or writing (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Vocabulary knowledge is essential for reading comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000) and proficient writing (Graham & Perin, 2007). In order to read proficiently, beginning readers must be able to recognize decoded words from their own vocabulary, learned through oral language (National Reading Panel, 2000).

All students, including and especially multilingual learners, need explicit instruction in word meanings (Graves et al., 2013) As part of this explicit instruction, students need student-friendly definitions, multiple encounters with words, examples and non-examples of words, and multiple opportunities to use words (Beck et al., 2013). All students also benefit from strategies for independent word learning through dictionary tools, the use of context clues, and recognizing meaningful roots and affixes within words. Multilingual learners should be encouraged to consider cognates, words that sound and are spelled similarly in two different languages. All students should be provided opportunities to read widely— read a variety of texts at a variety of instructional levels— to develop their vocabulary knowledge (National Reading Panel, 2000).

As students progress through the elementary and secondary grades, they will encounter increasingly unfamiliar academic and discipline-specific vocabulary in both texts and content learning (Nagy & Townsend, 2012). Discipline-specific vocabulary, words like *isosceles*, *electromagnetic,* and *institution*, are the building blocks of meaning in the academic disciplines. Students need explicit support with key terms that will support their reading and learning in the content areas (Townsend, 2022).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Vocabulary**

- Introduce new vocabulary through oral language activities, especially through read-alouds.
- For key terms that students will need deep knowledge of, provide ten or more meaningful exposures and opportunities to practice using those words.
- Help students personalize word meanings by helping them connect words to other languages they speak and their personal experiences.
- As students read increasingly complex and discipline-specific texts, they will encounter more unfamiliar vocabulary. To support students' comprehension, explicitly teach a few words from the text that students will need to know. Provide opportunities for students to deeply engage with the meaning of these words through exploring their meanings (including synonyms and antonyms), examples and non-examples, contexts in which they are used, and related words and ideas.
- Provide both oral and written opportunities for students to practice with new words.

**Morphology.** In addition to explicit instruction in word meanings, students need explicit instruction in morphemes, or meaningful word parts like roots and affixes (Vaughn et al., 2022 ). Words with more

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than one morpheme, or meaningful word part, are called morphologically-complex words. The word "construction" has three morphemes: the prefix *con-*, the root *struct*, and the suffix *-ion*. Morphemes are the smallest units of language that have meaning, and they are also referred to as base words, affixes (prefixes and suffixes) and roots. The word "rewrite" is made up of "re-", a prefix meaning "again," and "write," a base word.

Morphology knowledge is especially important because an estimated 60-75% of words in the English language are made up of Greek and Latin roots and affixes[16]. Many of these morphologically-complex words are discipline-specific, meaning they are uniquely used in specific disciplines, such as science and social studies. Morphology knowledge is essential for reading these morphologically-complex words and for overall reading comprehension (Bowers et al., 2010). Multilingual learners may have a unique edge when it comes to morphology, as many morphemes that appear in academic words in English can be found in the Romance languages, or languages that derived from Latin.

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Morphology**

- From readings and other instructional materials identify morphemes (roots and affixes) that students are likely to see in other words. Explicitly teach the meanings of morphemes and how they contribute to the meanings of words.
- Create a morpheme "bank" for students to refer to as they learn new meaningful word parts.
- Ask students to "hunt" for morphemes in their readings and to use their morphological knowledge to figure out what new words mean.
- Encourage multilingual learners to make cross-linguistic connections between morphemes in English and similarities in their home languages.

**Knowledge.** To support students in constructing meaning while they read, both *activating* and *building* background knowledge are essential. Students bring a great deal of cultural, linguistic, and experiential knowledge to texts that can help them make meaning while they read (Hattan et al., 2024). At the same time, many texts require that students have explicit opportunities to build topic-related knowledge to support comprehension of complex and unfamiliar topics (Lupo et al., 2018). Even very young students benefit, with lasting positive impacts, from learning opportunities that integrate literacy instruction with knowledge building in the content areas (Hwang et al., 2022). For example, when students are developing literacy skills with texts that also build knowledge in areas like science and social studies they make gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension that endure. For older students, one of the key recommendations for supporting comprehension is to "build students' world and word knowledge so they can make sense of the text" (p. 20) (Vaughn et al., 2022).

**Actions for Implementation for Activating and Building Background Knowledge**

- To ***activate*** existing knowledge to support comprehension:
    - Ask open-ended questions related to the topic of the reading.

[16] Townsend, D. (2022). Words worth using: Supporting adolescents' power with academic vocabulary. Teachers College Press.

  - Use graphic organizers like KWL (Know-Want to Know-Learned) charts.
  - Ask students to make visual representations about what they know about a topic.
  - Pose text-embedded questions that students answer as they read to make connections between what is in the text and what they already know.
- To ***build*** new knowledge about words and the world to support comprehension:
  - Select key or essential words from a reading that students will need to understand to comprehend the text, and provide opportunities for students to learn and use those words.
  - Share brief videos or lectures on information related to a text to help students begin to establish a knowledge base they can draw on while they read.
  - Use motivating and accessible texts to help students build the word and world knowledge they will need to comprehend a challenging text.
  - Support students in developing digital literacy skills, including finding and evaluating information online as well as synthesizing information from multiple sources and multiple modalities.

**Syntax and Text Structure.** Syntax and text structure both relate to the language structures students will see in their reading, and will also need to use in their writing. Syntax relates to sentence structure, and specifically the order of words in sentences. Text structure relates to the structure of paragraphs and whole texts; it lets the reader know if a text is going to be explaining something, or comparing and contrasting things, or showing a cause-and-effect relationship. The syntax of long sentences that have multiple clauses and phrases can pose significant challenges to developing readers. And, if readers are not able to identify the structure of an overall text, they can miss the purpose of the text as well as how key ideas relate to each other. Research shows the importance of both of these language structures. Syntactic knowledge correlates with reading comprehension (MacKay et al., 2021), and explicit teaching of text structure has been shown to improve reading comprehension (Duke et al., 2021; Strong, 2020). Teaching syntax and text structure with authentic texts and students' own writing is a better use of instructional time than isolated exercises that do not relate to what students are reading and writing in their classrooms.

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Syntax and Text Structure**

- Teach syntax and text structure with examples from authentic texts and students' own writing rather than with isolated exercises.
- To support students' syntactic knowledge, or knowledge of sentence structure:
  - Help students build sentences from groups of words that are out of order.
  - Teach students to expand sentences by adding important information about the subjects and actions of sentences.
  - Help students use connectives (i.e. transition words, signal words) to connect ideas within sentences.
- To support students' knowledge of text structure:
  - Using models and explicit instruction, help students understand the common text structures they will encounter, including description, sequence, cause-and-effect,

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compare and contrast, and problem and solution.

- Share the specific connective words that are clues to the type of text structure. For example, “because” and “as a result” are common connective words for cause-and-effect text structure, while “first,” “following,” and “finally” are common connectives for a sequence text structure.
- Help students verbalize the purpose of a text, as related to its text structure. For example, model statements like “In X text, the author’s purpose was to compare and contrast two different approaches to dealing with ocean pollution.”
- Provide cognitive modeling on identifying text structure. In other words, share a reading with students and model how a reader pays attention to the text features that give clues to the text structure, as well as how to identify the important information in the text based on the text structure.

**Reading Comprehension Strategies.** Proficient readers use their reading skills and knowledge strategically and flexibly to comprehend a wide variety of texts and navigate diverse reading demands. In particular, proficient readers use reading comprehension strategies to make sense of and understand what they are reading (National Reading Panel, 2000). Comprehension strategies are active, cognitive processes that readers employ to self-regulate their comprehension (Duke & Cartwright, 2021). Comprehension strategies include activating prior knowledge or predicting, questioning, making inferences, monitoring, summarizing, and finding the main idea of the text (Shanahan et al., 2010; Vaughn et al., 2022). In addition, reading demands change as students are asked to read more informational texts and discipline-specific texts, and students need explicit guidance with reading in the disciplines (Goldman et al., 2016).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies**

- Practice all comprehension strategies in the context of authentic, worthwhile texts, rather than in isolation.
- Model how readers monitor their comprehension, noting when they do not understand something and need to revisit words or sentences to clarify understanding.
- Teach students to pose questions while they read, such as “How does this idea connect to what I read earlier?” and “Why did the author share this detail or use this word?”
- Making inferences, also described as “reading between the lines” or attending to what an author might be suggesting without stating outright, is a central comprehension process. Modeling how to make inferences, and asking students pointed questions about what an author might be implying with specific phrases, sentences, and paragraphs, helps students learn to make inferences.
- Support students in finding and expressing a “gist statement” about a passage, which is a research-based strategy for identifying main ideas within texts (Vaughn et al., 2022).

***Key Practice 5: Model and Guide the Expression of Written Ideas for a Variety of Audiences***

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**Introduction to Writing.** Writing is essential for communicating for a variety of purposes and audiences, in all aspects of life. Writing refers to the integration of many literacy skills to communicate for a variety of purposes and audiences (Graham et al., 2018). The ability to write proficiently gives students the tools they need to communicate and express themselves effectively in both school and in a myriad of contexts outside of school (Graham et al., 2018). Writing has also been shown to enhance student learning across all grades (Graham et al., 2020). When students write about content— including social studies, science, and math content— their learning of that content improves (Graham et al., 2020). Writing and reading also have a reciprocal relationship, meaning that proficiency in one improves proficiency in the other (International Literacy Association, 2020).

The literacy skills necessary for proficient writing include transcription (i.e., spelling, handwriting), composition (syntax, crafting ideas), and self-regulation (attention, goal-setting, and reviewing) (Berninger et al., 2002; Y.-S. G. Kim & Schatschneider, 2017). As children gain print awareness, they begin to engage in the earliest stages of writing— drawing, scribbling, and approximating letters (Wright et al., 2022). As students develop early phonics skills, their writing may focus on encoding— determining the spelling of a word based on the sounds in the word (Foorman et al., 2016). As students develop proficiency in spelling, handwriting, typing, and sentence construction, they become more fluent writers and can engage more deeply in the other components of writing, such as the writing process (Graham et al., 2018). Explicit instruction in foundational writing skills (such as spelling, handwriting, typing, and sentence construction), the writing process (including writing strategies to support students' through the writing process), and writing to summarize content have all been shown to be effective in improving student writing (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham et al., 2018). The main instructional targets for writing include:

- Handwriting, Typing, and Spelling
- Crafting Sentences, Paragraphs, and Texts for Different Purposes and Audiences
- Self-Regulation: Goal-Setting, Attention, and Reviewing

**Handwriting, Typing, and Spelling.** Handwriting, typing, and spelling are the key mechanical components of writing (Graham et al., 2012). Students need explicit support in each of these areas in order to become fluent writers who can craft ideas for different purposes and audiences. Children can engage in composing, spelling, and handwriting even before they are proficient decoders or encoders (Wright et al., 2022).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Handwriting**

- For young children, celebrate their scribbles and beginning encoding as they begin to approximate letters, and explicitly teach children how to hold pencils and make the shape of letters to develop their handwriting (Wright et al., 2022).
- Encourage children to compose through dictation (where an adult writes) or through drawing (Wright et al., 2022).
- Around second grade, support students in proofreading their own work, and also in learning how to type.

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**Crafting Sentences, Paragraphs, and Texts for Different Purposes and Audiences.** To compose ideas, to put ideas into a coherent and cohesive message on the page, students need to draw on multiple skills and sets of knowledge. Much of what students learn as part of reading development directly supports their writing development, and vice versa. To write effectively with a specific purpose and for a specific audience, students need to use their knowledge of syntax to craft sentences, their knowledge of text structure to write paragraphs, and their knowledge of purpose and audience to write full texts (Graham et al., 2012). Writing for discipline-specific purposes and audiences is an important area of development for secondary students. Understanding the specific ways scientists, mathematicians, historians, and other professionals communicate with each other can help students meaningfully engage in those fields, and this supports students' college and career readiness.

**Actions for Implementation for Crafting Ideas for Different Purposes and Audiences**

- All students across grades should be explicitly taught to write for a variety of purposes and audiences, including for narrative, informative, and persuasive purposes.
- In secondary settings, students need explicit instruction in how to write across the content areas for discipline-specific purposes and audiences and in discipline-specific genres of writing (Graham et al., 2016; International Literacy Association, 2017).

**Self-Regulation: Goal-Setting, Attention, and Reviewing.** Writing is ultimately a process, once which involves a goal and a plan, as well as self-monitoring along the way. To set goals, to attend to those goals while writing, and to actively review one's own writing are essential skills for writers to develop. Self-regulation allows for writers to manage the steps of the writing process effectively. Students need explicit support with identifying purposes for writing, and with engaging in the writing process (Graham et al., 2018).

**Actions for Implementation for Teaching Self-Regulation**

- Teach students to use the writing process and related writing strategies and scaffolds. Scaffolds can support all students (including multilingual learners and students with disabilities) to use writing strategies flexibly and independently (Graham et al., 2018).
- Students should have ample opportunities to write and continuously build their ability to write more complex text.[17]
- Students should be engaged in inquiry and research and pre-writing strategies, outlining, peer revision, editing, and goal setting for their writing (Graham et al., 2018).
- Collaborative writing opportunities, model texts, and daily writing time are also components of effective writing instruction (Graham & Perin, 2007; Graham et al., 2018).
- Multilingual learners should be encouraged to draw on their full repertoire of linguistic

[17] Panero, N., (2016), *Progressive mastery through deliberate practice: A promising approach for improving writing,* Improving Schools 1–17, Sage publications, New York, NY

knowledge, within and across languages they know, to support their engagement in and success with writing.[18]

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[18] Payant, C. (2020). Exploring Multilingual Learners' Writing Practices during an L2 and an L3 Individual Writing Task. Canadian Modern Language Review, 76(4), 313–334. https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr-2020-0030

# Assessment

"Literacy assessment is much more complicated than many realize. In short, literacy assessment needs to reflect the multiple dimensions of reading and writing and the various purposes for assessment as well as the diversity of the students being assessed.[19]

-International Literacy Association, 2017

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[19] International Literacy Association. (2017). Literacy assessment: What everyone needs to know [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author

# Assessment

This section outlines  different types of literacy assessments and how they can be used to support student learning needs, identify students who need additional support, and monitor the effectiveness of literacy initiatives statewide. Assessment is how we produce the data to allow educators to make instructional decisions so that all students have equitable access to the high-quality literacy instruction and support that they need.

The International Literacy Association (ILA, 2017), defines literacy assessments in two categories: summative and ongoing:

> 1. Summative assessment, which includes state tests and end-of-course or subject exams designed to measure achievement at the end of an instructional sequence or time frame. The results of summative assessments are used by a host of stakeholders including parents, school and district administrators, and state and national policymakers to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning over a designated course of instruction.
>
> 2. Ongoing assessment, which includes formative and interim assessments used for screening, progress monitoring, and evaluating student needs. These types of ongoing assessments are used by teachers, students and, at times, school administrators throughout the school year to inform everyday teaching and learning.

Literacy assessment is more than a collection of technical assessment tools. In an effective assessment system, assessments are selected for specific purposes and are aligned to appropriate learning targets. Furthermore, as assessments are selected and used, the potential positive and negative consequences of assessment results should always be considered.[20]

Literacy assessment is an integral part of literacy teaching and learning; it contributes to the conditions for learning for students[21] and the overall assessment culture in a district or school.[22] Nevada's assessment approach aligns with the aims of competency-based learning, which is for assessment to be "a meaningful, positive, and empowering learning experience for students that yields timely, relevant, and actionable evidence."[23] To align with these goals, literacy assessment should be used to identify literacy strengths and areas of need at various grade levels in developmentally-appropriate ways.

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[20] International Literacy Association. (2017). Literacy assessment: What everyone needs to know [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author
[21] ibid.
[22] Keuning, T., Van Geel, M., Visscher, A., Fox, J.-P., & Moolenaar, N. M. (2016). The transformation of schools' social networks during a data-based decision making reform. Teachers College Record, 118(9), 1–33.
[23] Evans, C. M., Landl, E., & Thompson, J. (2020). Making sense of K-12 competency-based education: A systematic literature review of implementation and outcomes research from 2000 to 2019. The Journal of Competency-Based Education, 5(4). https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1228

These assessments then provide data-driven insights for educators to guide instructional decision-making and intervention planning. Well-designed and well-facilitated assessments also allow for districts to monitor progress toward state literacy goals and standards. Finally, effective assessments can ensure accountability and transparency in literacy education outcomes across the state.[24] These assessment objectives are aligned with Nevada's legislative guidelines for literacy assessment.[25]

## Literacy Assessment in Secondary School

Under the Every Child Succeeds Act ESSA, every secondary student is required to have literacy assessments completed at least once and at least once in High School. In Nevada, grade 6-12 students are screened for literacy needs three times a year. In secondary schools, the data from these assessments can be used to identify students who may need more literacy instruction.

As with elementary students, secondary students who are identified for additional support should then be assessed using diagnostic assessments. For this to happen the diagnostic assessment tools, staff trained to administer the assessments, and the time to administer the assessments and review the results need to be embedded into the school year. This may require the school to think differently around how they structure time and assign staff.

### Key Components of Literacy Assessment

1. Align literacy assessments with specific goals
2. Ensure inclusive assessment practices
3. Build capacity in assessment literacy

### *Key Component #1: Align Literacy Assessments with Specific Goals*

Different types of assessments have different purposes. Aligning the use of specific assessments with specific goals, such as screening, progress monitoring, and outcome evaluation, is critical for instructional practice and for using time and resources effectively.[26]

#### *Screening and Diagnostic Needs*

**Universal Screeners.** Screening assessments are used to quickly identify if someone needs intervention or support. **Universal screeners** are administered to all students in a classroom or grade level. They are essential tools designed to assess students' reading abilities and identify those at risk for reading

[24] Fisher, M. R., Jr., & Bandy, J. (2019). Assessing Student Learning. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved [5/24/2024] from https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/assessing-student-learning

[25] The plan will be reviewed regularly for changes to the assessment system and updates will be reflected appropriately.

[26] International Literacy Association. (2017). Literacy assessment: What everyone needs to know [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author

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difficulties. These standardized evaluations focus on literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, letter knowledge, word recognition, and reading comprehension (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006). For educators, universal screeners are invaluable because they enable early detection of reading challenges, allowing for prompt intervention to meet the specific needs of each student (Jenkins, Hudson, & Johnson, 2007). By identifying readers with areas of difficulty early, these screeners help prevent long-term academic difficulties, support differentiated instruction, and ensure that all students build the strong foundational reading skills necessary for their overall academic success (Johnson, Jenkins, Petscher, & Catts, 2009).

**Diagnostic Assessment**

Diagnostic assessments are typically conducted subsequent to screening assessments, particularly for students who do not meet benchmarks. Diagnostic assessment is an indispensable aspect of the assessment process, crucial for pinpointing students' strengths and weaknesses in specific reading skills (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Identifying skill gaps accurately guides the determination of appropriate instructional strategies and interventions.

***Monitoring Student Growth***

**Formative Assessment**

Progress monitoring is a necessary part of any assessment system. Formative assessments are used throughout the learning process to assess student knowledge of class learning outcomes and to make next step instructional decisions. Formative assessments tend to be informal and tightly aligned to Tier 1 classroom learning outcomes. Examples include: exit tickets, teacher observation, class quizzes, project-based learning, and student portfolios and presentations. Formative assessments are also used to provide students with relevant and immediate feedback. The use of formative assessment can significantly enhance student learning outcomes (Black & William, 1998 & Hattie & Timperley 2007).

**Progress Monitoring Assessments**

Progress monitoring assessments are a series of frequent, short-form assessments that evaluate student learning to provide feedback to both the student and the teacher. These assessments are typically focused on a specific skill being taught in Tier 2 or 3 intervention, and are part of an intervention plan that determines a specific, ambitious goal (which is based on the rate of improvement) and states the frequency of data collection and analysis. After approximately six weeks of collecting data through these assessments, the teacher can analyze the data to determine if they should continue the intervention, or if there needs to be a change to the type of instruction and intervention. They may go deeper into the error analysis data to see specifically what supports or clarifications the student requires. Collaborating with a team of colleagues is beneficial in helping the teacher make these decisions.

***Outcome Evaluation***

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**Summative Assessments**

Assessments that evaluate the learning after instruction has taken place can also be referred to as summative assessments and serve as crucial benchmarks for evaluating students' literacy proficiency and informing instructional practices across Nevada. These assessments provide a comprehensive measure of student learning, gauging the effectiveness of literacy instruction and intervention programs.

Summative assessments aim to:

- Evaluate student proficiency in literacy at the end of an instructional period.
- Identify trends and gaps in literacy achievement across diverse student populations.
- Inform state-wide educational policies and resource allocation.
- Guide professional development and instructional improvement efforts.

Research by Black and Wiliam (1998) highlights that well-designed summative assessments provide valid and reliable measures of student learning, critical for ensuring accurate evaluations of literacy proficiency. Feedback from well-designed summative assessments administered with fidelity can lead to significant improvements in teaching and learning when effectively utilized by teachers. The data can provide clear and actionable reports to educators, administrators, and policymakers that are disaggregated by student demographics, including socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and English language proficiency. Such disaggregation can highlight achievement gaps and ensure that *all* groups of students are receiving targeted support to meet their needs. In Nevada, summative assessments are a pivotal component of the state literacy plan, providing essential insights into student achievement and guiding continuous improvement in literacy instruction. By leveraging research-based practices and ensuring equitable access, these assessments contribute to our overarching goal of fostering high literacy standards for all students across Nevada. Table 1 provides a summary of the different types of assessments and their purposes.

**Table 1. Different Types of Assessments and their Purposes**

| | **Universal Screeners** | **Diagnostic Assessments** | **Progress Monitoring** | **Summative Assessments** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Why** | Which students are at risk?<br>Which systems are at risk? | What skills does this student have?<br>What skills need to be taught? | Is our instruction working?<br>Do we need to change course? | Have students learned what we need them to know?<br>Did our instruction work? |

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **What** | Brief, standardized assessments of key literacy skills | In-depth, often Unstandardized assessments | Very brief (1-3 minutes) | Outcome Evaluations of standards mastery |
| **Who** | All students | Students at risk | Students at risk 40th percentile and under on MAP | All students grades 3 –8 and up |
| **When** | Beginning, middle, and end of year | When problem-solving for differentiated instruction or intervention | Weekly or biweekly to allow for quick adjustments based on response to instruction | After units of study or at the end of a school year |
| **Analogy to Medicine** | **Periodic vitals check like blood pressure or cholesterol –** Is there a problem? | **Blood test or diagnostic imaging –** What is the problem? What do we need to do about it? | **Follow up checks –** Is our course of action working? Will we get there on time? Is it working? Keep going. If it's not working, change course of action. | **Annual Wellness Exam –** Are we fit and healthy? How can we stay healthy? |
| **Examples** | MAP<br>iReady<br>Acadience<br>AimsWeb Plus<br>Kindergarten Screener | CORE Phonics Survey<br>District adopted curriculum with diagnostic assessments.<br>Acadience<br>Comprehension<br>Fluency and Oral Language | Teacher-created measures and observations<br>Acadience<br>AimsWeb Plus<br>FastBridge<br>easyCBM<br>iReady | Criterion Referenced Tests (Benchmark Assessments)<br>SBAC<br>Summative assessments, e.g. unit tests, projects and assignments |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | iReady<br><br>Phonics Screener for Intervention (PSI) | | |

**Actions for Implementation**

- Ensure that screening and diagnostic assessments are available that are appropriate for both elementary and secondary students.
- Review assessments and ensure they are being used for the appropriate purposes (screening, progress monitoring, or outcome evaluation).
- Identify and use diagnostic assessments to determine academic interventions.
- Provide frequent actionable feedback to students using their assessment results.

### *Key Component #2: Ensure Inclusive and Equitable Assessment Practices*

To be inclusive and equitable, assessments should be designed to demonstrate student learning[27], aligned to rigorous common expectations for learning, and be accessible for *all* students regardless of their particular learning needs.[28] The social, cultural and linguistic background of students as well as any disabilities, should be considered when assessments are selected.[29]Assessments should have an explicit purpose, with results that allow teachers to make decisions about their instruction and students to make decisions about their own learning. Assessments should be selected and designed to support a continuous improvement process. Students should have a variety of ways to demonstrate their understanding beyond a single assessment. Using multiple types of assessment, including teacher observation and opportunities for students to creatively demonstrate their competency and providing a sense of efficacy. Assessment can have a strong impact on both teacher morale and student motivation, therefore they should not be used as punitive measures, only as instructional tools.[30]

Literacy assessment materials should be free of bias and stereotypes, and where possible should be reflective of the cultural diversity of the students. Questions should be clear, unambiguous and free of cultural references unless explicitly in the text.

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[27] Fuchs, D., and Fuchs, L., (2007) Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading, U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and Student Progress Monitoring, U.S. Department of Education.

[28] Evans, C. M., Landl, E., & Thompson, J. (2020). Making sense of K-12 competency-based education: A systematic literature review of implementation and outcomes research from 2000 to 2019. The Journal of Competency-Based Education, 5(4). https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1228

[29] Scott, S., Webber, C. F., Lupart, J. L., Aitken, N., & Scott, D. E. (2013). Fair and equitable assessment practices for all students. Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 21(1), 52–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2013.776943

[30] Evans, C. M., Landl, E., & Thompson, J. (2020). Making sense of K-12 competency-based education: A systematic literature review of implementation and outcomes research from 2000 to 2019. The Journal of Competency-Based Education, 5(4). https://doi.org/10.1002/cbe2.1228

Transparency is also essential with equitable assessment practices. What is being assessed and the results should be shared with students and families and students providing feedback that allows students to improve their understanding or misconceptions about the content assessed, and parents to fully understand their student's progress.[31]

**Accommodations**

Accommodations align with legal requirements for legally protected groups of students. They primarily apply to summative assessment tools that are normally rigid in their standard implementation. Accommodations reflect best practices in inclusive education, providing equitable testing conditions for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and other students with diverse needs. The primary objectives of accommodations and accessibility in summative assessments are to remove barriers that might prevent students from demonstrating their true literacy abilities.(Quenemoen et al., 2002

It is important to identify students requiring accommodations, in collaboration with special education professionals, ELL coordinators, and classroom teachers and utilize Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans to determine specific accommodations for students with disabilities. Compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates the provision of accommodations, ensuring that students with disabilities receive fair testing conditions (U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Accommodations provided should never modify or alter the assessment in any manner and instead, should allow the student equitable access given their needs. Some examples of Summative Assessment accommodations can include:

- **Presentation Accommodations:** Provide assessments in various formats (e.g., large print, Braille, audio) to meet diverse sensory needs.
- **Response Accommodations:** Allow students to respond in different ways (e.g., verbal responses, use of assistive technology, scribe support) to facilitate accurate demonstration of knowledge.
- **Timing and Scheduling Accommodations**: Extend time limits, offer frequent breaks, or schedule assessments at optimal times of the day for individual students.
- **Setting Accommodations**: Administer assessments in alternative settings (e.g., small group, one-on-one, quiet room) to minimize distractions and reduce anxiety.
- **Accessibility**: Provide tools such as text-to-speech, magnification, and adjustable screen colors in digital assessments.

Providing accommodations in summative assessments is integral to ensuring the data provided is valid and reliable. By implementing well-researched and carefully designed strategies, we can ensure that all students, regardless of their individual needs, have the opportunity to succeed and demonstrate their

[31] National Task Force on Assessment Education for Teachers, (2016)., *Assessment Literacy Defined*, Institute of Education Sciences, Washington D.C.

literacy proficiency. This commitment to equity and inclusivity will help us achieve our goal of high literacy standards for every student across Nevada.

**Actions for Implementation**

- Ensure that assessments are accessible for all students including instructions available in their home language, and/or extra time for completion.
- Ensure appropriate accommodations are provided for students such as assistive technology, or providing different ways to respond.

### *Key Component #3: Build Capacity in Assessment Literacy*

Achievement, the main goal of education, is measured through assessment. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers have strong assessment literacy. This is the knowledge that educators possess to design, implement, interpret, and use assessments effectively (Gasvoda, 2023). According to Wang (2022), there is a positive relationship between teachers' assessment literacy and their teaching efficacy.

Professional development should focus on the fact that assessment is not just something we do for compliance. It is an important tool in instructional decision-making. (*Brown, T. D., Barnes, M., & Finefter-Rosenbluh, I. (2023).* Ongoing professional development could encompass the following topics to build teachers' assessment literacy.

- The types and purposes of different assessments and when to administer them.
- How to design and use formative assessments, interpret scores, and identify next steps.
- How to access and use online reports from assessment platforms.
- Understanding assessment terminology (e.g.,percentage vs. percentile, scaled score, standard deviation, RIT, Rate of Improvement, etc).(*Kim, A. A., Chapman, M., Kondo, A., & Wilmes, C. (2019.)*
- Ways to embed assessment into daily routines (*Brown, T. D., Barnes, M., & Finefter-Rosenbluh, I. (2023).*
- Planning next steps for instruction using assessment data[32] *(Fisher, et al. 2019)*

Although all teachers would benefit from professional development to improve their assessment literacy, pursuant to AB289, all licensed teachers who teach reading to students in grades 1-4 **must** complete professional development in the area of reading. This required professional development provides an opportunity to include learning around assessments and assessment literacy.

**Actions for Implementation**

- Provide ongoing opportunities to build assessment knowledge.
- Leverage literacy existing professional learning opportunities to include assessment literacy.
- Provide training and support around formative assessment strategies.

[32] Fisher, M. R., Jr., & Bandy, J. (2019). Assessing Student Learning. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved [5/24/2024] from https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/assessing-student-learning/.

- Identify a core set of assessment tools and ensure professional development is available to ensure that they are administered correctly.

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# Multi-Tiered System of Supports

"A school that has a truly systematic process for meeting the needs of every child can confidently tell any parent whose child attends the school, "It does not matter what teacher your child has; we guarantee that your child will receive the time and support needed to learn at high levels."[33]

— Austin Buffum, Simplifying Response to Intervention: Four Essential Guiding Principles

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[33] Buffum, A. G. (2011). Simplifying response to intervention: Four essential guiding principles., Solution Tree Press., Bloomington, IN.

# Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is based on two evidence-based approaches: Response to Intervention (RTI) an academic support process and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)[34]. In accordance with the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Nevada Legislature passed AB275 (2017), establishing the Nevada Integrated Student Supports (NISS). NISS is an integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) that promotes equity, ensuring effective implementation of evidence-based practices to provide impactful services, practices, and resources to Nevada's students.

MTSS takes a  proactive approach for delivering high-quality academic instruction for all students by ensuring flexible learning environments and providing a range of learning experiences and opportunities. The Nevada framework is responsive to effective instruction and intervention, aiming to facilitate student success through high-quality instruction, data-driven decision-making, and collaboration.

State support and professional learning for MTSS is provided on a voluntary basis to LEAs. Following the COVID 19 pandemic, many districts have focussed on social emotional and behavioral supports which were broadly needed as students transitioned back to the classroom.[35] Today, although MTSS is intended to include academic interventions, MTSS implementation varies across the state and does not have a universal academic focus.

In Nevada, MTSS is an operating system for quality instruction that is supported at multiple levels of the education system through multiple teaming structures:

- A State Leadership Team – The State Leadership team ensures that Nevada has the staffing and resources to support districts with professional learning and support to implement MTSS for their LEA.
- District Leadership Team – District Leadership Teams provide guidance and support for school MTSS teams, and ensure that the work of teams is aligned with state goals.
- School MTSS Teams – School MTSS teams review student data, identify students who need support beyond Tier 1 instruction, identify evidence-based interventions for students, and monitor student progress.

An MTSS system focused on literacy divides instructional support into three tiers, sharing the same structure as one developed for social and behavioral supports. The three tiers provide more opportunities to personalize learning opportunities to meet the specific pedagogical and cultural needs of students, while maintaining rigorous, common expectations for all students.

[34] Goodman, S., & McIntosh, K. (2016). *Integrated multi-tiered systems of support: Blending RTI and PBIS*. Guilford Press.
[35] Fallon, L. M., Veiga, M., & Sugai, G. (2021). Strengthening MTSS for behavior (MTSS-B) to promote racial equity. *School Psychology Review*, *52*(5), 518–533. https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966x.2021.1972333

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The Tiers include:

**Tier 1 - Universal Support for All Students**
**Tier 2 - Targeted Interventions for Students at Risk**
**Tier 3 - Individualized Support for Students with the Highest Need**

The MTSS section focuses on Tier 2 and Tier 3 instructional support for literacy as Tier 1 Instruction was covered at length in previous sections. At the school level MTSS has three key components:

- Collaboration
- Progress monitoring
- Data-based decision making

**Key Component #1: Collaboration**

For MTSS, Collaborative teams are the key structure that enables comprehensive student support.

Collaboration provides opportunities for staff to help mutually support each other to identify and solve problems and make instructional decisions.[36] It also helps shape a school's culture of expectations for both instructional practices and student performance.[37]MTSS teams allow for the development of standardized activities within schools for educational intervention, which promotes successful implementation. This includes instructional planning, protocols for analyzing student work, developing data monitoring systems, and identifying common instructional approaches.[38] Vertical communication across grade bands is needed to maintain continuity of support for students as they move towards grade level proficiency.

Collaboration between elementary school, middle school, and high school leaders helps new schools know which in-coming students may be in need of Tier 2 and Tier 3 literacy intervention so that they can anticipate needs and have supports in place to help all students thrive in secondary school.

Actions for Implementation

- Leadership should provide structures and protected time for the MTSS team to meet at least monthly.
- Routines, structures, and protocols for data review, discussion, and instructional decision making should be established.
- Develop communication structures to ensure vertical alignment of literacy supports, as students matriculate from one school level to the next.

[36] Geijsel, F. P., Sleegers, P. J. C., Stoel, R. D., & Krüger, M. L. (2009). The effect of teacher psychological and school organizational and leadership factors on teachers' professional learning in Dutch schools. The Elementary School Journal, 109, 406–427. doi:10.1086/593940
[37] Keuning, T., Van Geel, M., Visscher, A., Fox, J.-P., & Moolenaar, N. M. (2016). The transformation of schools' social networks during a data-based decision making reform. Teachers College Record, 118(9), 1–33.
[38] ibid.

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- Teams should be provided support to identify common goals, expectations, and community agreements.
- Tools and structures for management of information and progress monitoring of student data should be provided.[39]

**Key Component #2: Progress Monitoring**

Progress monitoring is different from summative assessment because it focuses on instructional decision making for individual students in general and special education while tracking student growth towards identified goals. Yearly goals are determined using baseline screening data, progress monitoring tools, as well as curriculum-based assessments to monitor the rate of student growth towards their goals. Curriculum-based measures are measurement materials that meet the following criteria: Alignment to the school's curriculum, administered frequently, and use of the results to drive instructional decisions.[40]

Tier 2 intervention should be considered when students' performance on screening assessments and rate of progress both fall below the rate of their peers. Teacher observations regarding student progress during Tier 1 classroom instruction and interventions should also be taken into account, to ensure students are receiving all possible Tier 1 literacy support. Tier 3 intervention should only be considered when students fail to make progress with Tier 2 interventions.[41]

Benchmark assessments and screening tools may be used for progress monitoring. However, additional progress measures should be used for more frequent and targeted assessment. These Tier 2 and Tier 3 assessments should include short (1-5 minute), probing assessments utilizing Curriculum-based measures and/or specific standards-based assessments.[42] For literacy instruction, this progress monitoring can include curriculum-based measures such as listening to a student's reading, observing and noting patterns of mistakes, and using a rubric to review writing samples.

Actions for Implementation

- Use data to select evidence-based instructional strategies, design intervention programs and individualized instructional supports for at-risk learners.
- Identify a comprehensive set of progress monitoring assessments.
- Identify students who are not demonstrating adequate progress and therefore require additional or alternative forms of instruction.

**Key Component #3: Data-based Decision Making**

**Data-Based Decision Making for Elementary Students.** Using data-based decision-making processes allows MTSS team members to best match instruction and support with student needs. This use of data

[39] ibid.
[40] Fuchs, D., and Fuchs, L., (2007) Using CBM for Progress Monitoring in Reading, U.S. Office of Special Education Programs and Student Progress Monitoring, U.S. Department of Education.
[41] Stecker, P., Fuchs, D., and Fuchs, L., (2008). Progress Monitoring as Essential Practice Within Response to Intervention, Rural Special Education Quarterly; Fall 2008; Issue 27, Volume 4
[42] ibid.

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is perhaps one of the most critical features within a system of multi-tiered supports.[43] Oftentimes, data are collected for reporting purposes and may be aggregated and discussed at the end of each school year, but in an MTSS model, data are collected for immediate decision making.

Intervention data should be looked at daily, weekly, monthly, or as frequently as needed by the team. In addition to showing the impact of the implementation on student outcomes, data is also used to help measure the fidelity of implementation of MTSS.[44]

Assessment data helps School-based MTSS teams to identify and clarify specific problems and modify practices or programs used for targeted interventions and supports as needed. District and NDE MTSS Teams can use aggregated assessment data, along with implementation data to monitor program effectiveness, inform the allocation of resources, develop policies, and to help identify training and coaching needs. Data-based decision making ensures that students are getting the support they need and resources are allocated effectively.[45]

Actions for Implementation

- Provide professional learning in assessment literacy for leaders and staff.
- Provide coaching to help build the capacity of teachers and leaders to utilize data for informed decisions.[46]
- Monitor school-wide implementation of data-driven decision making in grade-level and content teams.

**MTSS for Secondary Students**

Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports remain the same across grade levels, but elementary structures and strategies cannot simply be transplanted to secondary schools; they must be adapted to allow for the different contexts of secondary schools.[47]

**Data-Based Decision Making for Secondary Students.** Data-based decision making is critical for all students who are in need of targeted Tier 2 or Tier 3 support, but it is particularly important for Nevada's adolescent learners. Adolescents who are in need of literacy intervention in middle and high school have likely experienced literacy difficulties since they started school, and they have likely already spent

[43] Wang, H., Sun, W., Zhou, Y., Li, T., & Zhou, P. (2022). Teachers' assessment literacy improves teaching efficacy: A view from conservation of resources theory. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1007830

[44] Alemany, J., Wallace, H., Greenwald, A., and Fleetwood, K., (2023) Nevada's School Climate Transformation Project: Building Multi-Tiered System of Supports 2022–23 Evaluation Report, Developed for the Nevada PBIS Technical Assistance Center, Metis Associates, New York, NY.

[45] ibid.

[46] van Geel, M., Visscher, A., & Teunis, B., (2017) School characteristics influencing the implementation of a data-based decision making intervention, School Effectiveness and School Improvement, Issue 28, Volume 3, 443-462, DOI:10.1080/09243453.2017.1314972, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09243453.2017.1314972

[47] Daye, J. (2019). MTSS Implementation in High Schools: Expert and Stakeholder Perspectives. Graduate Theses and Dissertations. https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/etd/7775

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numerous hours receiving literacy support. Furthermore, for these older readers, time is of the essence; the number of years left to support them is diminishing. These factors for older readers mandate urgent attention: adolescents who need literacy support need it to be: (1) targeted to their specific needs and strengths, (2) motivating, and (3) research-based. Data for decision making should be nuanced enough to identify those adolescents in need of support for word-reading, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and/or writing, and evidenced-based practices and research-informed programs for each of these areas should be used accordingly. For adolescents who would benefit from support in all or most of these areas, comprehensive interventions that take a multi-component approach to supporting adolescent literacy should be used.

Once data-based decisions have been made, secondary schools need to navigate both logistical and instructional challenges for implementing literacy intervention. Logistical challenges may include: making time for interventions in the daily schedule while providing all students access to both their core curriculum and electives; staffing intervention instructors for groups; and finding space for intervention groups to meet. Instructional challenges may include: departmentalization and lack of ownership of the responsibility; lack of curriculum and materials at the instructional level of students; and a lack of teacher knowledge in literacy instruction to support students.[48] The following actions for implementation can help leaders and educators put the systems in place that ensure that all secondary students who need literacy support receive it.

**Actions for Implementation**

Every secondary school is different and will need to determine the exact structures and supports that will work for them. Some common strategies for secondary interventions were identified in a research brief by Samatha Durance.[49] They include:

- **Strengthen core instruction to reduce the need for intervention.** Drawing on the Tier 1 section of this plan, as well as the grade-band recommendations in the appendix, strengthen core literacy practices that can support all students.
- **Adjust the master schedule to create a dedicated period for intervention and enrichment**. Time and space are needed both for intervention and for MTSS team meetings to review data and problem solve.
- **Create an MTSS team and carefully select intervention teachers**. The best intervention teachers are those who "are willing to get to know their students and differentiate their teaching based on student need."[50] Intervention teachers do not need to be limited to resource teachers, but may include teachers from other disciplines if they have the interest.
- **Select evidence-based intervention strategies or programs.** Ensure that intervention programs and materials meet both evidence-based criteria for ESSA and meet the particular learning needs of your students. The most common instructional targets adolescents with histories of

[48] Durrance, S. (2023), *Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools: Challenges and Strategies*, Region 6 Comprehensive Center, National Comprehensive Centers, Washington D.C.
[49] ibid.
[50] Clark, A.G. & Dockweiler, K.A. (2019). Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in Secondary Schools: The Definitive Guide to Effective Implementation and Quality Control (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doiorg.libproxy.uncg.edu/10.4324/9780429023712

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reading difficulty are decoding multisyllabic words, fluency with grade level texts, comprehension, and engaging with complex texts, and there are established evidence-based instructional routines to support growth in these areas.[51]

- **Identify and group students who need intervention.** Use multiple types of data to identify students for small group support.
- **Provide ongoing professional development and supports for MTSS.** All staff, particularly teachers and classified staff responsible for providing intervention support, need ongoing professional learning in both literacy instructional strategies as well as social-emotional learning strategies.
- **Develop or identify structures and resources to support MTSS.** Structures, resources and tools should be developed to support consistency of interventions across the school. To select specific instructional approaches and intervention programs for literacy, use research aligned tools, such as the Adolescent Literacy Intervention Selection Tool.[52]

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[51] Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9 (WWC 2022007). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. ttps://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC/Docs/PracticeGuide/WWC-practice-guide-reading-intervention-full-text.pdf

[52] American Institute for Research. (2024). Adolescent literacy intervention selection tool. https://region1cc.org/A-LIST-development-and-training

# Leadership

"Improving literacy outcomes for all students starts with consistently implementing evidence-based practices, and implementation requires strong leadership."

-Dr. Mikkaka Overstreet, Education Northwest[53]

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[53] Overstreet, M., (2023) Literacy Lens: The Impact of Literacy Leadership (Blog post), Education Northwest, Accessed June 18, 2024, https://educationnorthwest.org/insights/literacy-lens-impact-literacy-leadership

# Leadership

Literacy leaders hold a range of responsibilities to ensure the success of literacy programs. They maintain and uphold the Nevada Academic Content Standards in literacy instruction and have a comprehensive understanding of how the district and schools operate together as a system. They organize and lead teams cohesively, aligning efforts to improve literacy outcomes and manage the resources necessary for effective program implementation.[54] Recognizing the field's constant evolution with new research and practices, literacy leaders foster a culture of continuous professional development and growth. This approach is grounded in improvement science, which enhances educational practices through iterative testing and refinement across different contexts. It acknowledges the variability in practice implementation and emphasizes continuous monitoring and adaptation to optimize educational outcomes.

### Literacy Leadership for Secondary Schools

Many students enter middle and high school with literacy skills well below their grade level who, as a result, are unable to fully access the grade level content in their classes. Literacy is essential to secondary school success and college and career readiness. Reading comprehension, text analysis, and writing are necessary skills to be successful in Math, Science, History, and all other academic subjects[55], yet the vast majority of secondary content area teachers have not been prepared to support literacy instruction along with the content knowledge they teach. The structure of secondary schools also does not lend itself easily to supporting students with gaps in their literacy skills.

As a secondary leader, it is important to message the importance of literacy for all students, and to build an academic culture of literacy learning. While content area teachers are not expected to be reading teachers, good instruction in any content area should include application of literacy strategies.[56] Leaders can work with staff to ensure that literacy strategies are integrated into content area instruction to support student access to content knowledge and that students have access to reading material that they can read, across content areas,  including high-interest/low level books designed for secondary students.

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[54] Mansueto, D., Kilag, O., Andrin, G., Guineta, R., Ford, L., & Tiu, J. (2024). Leadership Impact on Literacy: Principals, Synergistic Partnerships, and Progressive Pathways for School Improvement. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of  Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence*, *1*(2), 50–56.
[55] National Literacy Trust. (n.d.). *Literacy leadership in secondary schools*. National Literacy Trust. https://literacytrust.org.uk/resources/literacy-leadership-secondary-schools/#:~:text=Ofsted%20states%20that%2C%20%E2%80%9CLiteracy%20includes,sheet%20to%20record%20your%20observations.
[56] Op. Cit. Manesueto.

The leadership practices below contribute to successful literacy outcomes for elementary and secondary learners. School leadership strongly influences student learning and is linked to collective leadership[57] [58]. The Four Domains of Rapid School Improvement categorizes leadership into four key practices for school improvement.[59]

- Transformative Leadership
- Develop Talent
- Transform Instruction
- Shift Culture

### *Key Practice #1: Transformative Leadership*

The impact of leadership practices on the implementation of literacy initiatives is evident among proactive leaders who foster a culture that prioritizes literacy proficiency.[60] To be a transformative leader of literacy, it is important for leaders to build their own knowledge of literacy instruction, so they may inspire and motivate educators to cultivate a passion for literacy that fosters dynamic instruction. The literacy vision of a district or school provides the foundation for effective literacy instruction. It sets the strategic direction for instruction, professional learning, collaboration, and support.[61] By articulating a shared vision for literacy excellence grounded in Nevada's definition of the Science of Reading, leaders align educators' efforts toward common goals, enhance collaboration and chart a path for improved literacy proficiency.[62]

Literacy goals should be informed by literacy assessment data. These goals may be included in the annual School Performance Plan and should reflect both overall growth and the needs of groups of students who have not yet received the support they need to thrive. When developing goals, all students should be held to high expectations, with the understanding that some students may need additional support. Goals should be revisited throughout the year, not only to measure performance, but to ensure that the actions to support them are being fully implemented.

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[57] Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. Educational administration quarterly, 44(5), 635-674

[58] Bryk, A. S., Gomez, L. M., Grunow, A., & LeMahieu, P. G. (2021). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Harvard Education Press.

[59] The Center on School Turnaround. (2017). Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework [The Center for School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

[60] Andrin, G., Kilag, O. K., Abella, J., Tañiza, F. N., Groenewald, E., & Cordova Jr, N. (2024). Leadership in literacy: The role of instructional leadership in fostering student reading achievement. *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1), 100-109.

[61] Mansueto, D., Kilag, O., Andrin, G., Guineta, R., Ford, L., & Tiu, J. (2024). Leadership Impact on Literacy: Principals, Synergistic Partnerships, and Progressive Pathways for School Improvement. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence*, *1*(2), 50–56.

[62] Andrin, G., Kilag, O. K., Abella, J., Tañiza, F. N., Groenewald, E., & Cordova Jr, N. (2024). Leadership in literacy: The role of instructional leadership in fostering student reading achievement. *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1), 100-109.

Family and community engagement in literacy is crucial. Meaningful family engagement is based on the shared responsibility of parents, educators, and community members for students' academic, physical, social, emotional, and behavioral development. This engagement is nurtured through a deliberate process embraced throughout the school, empowering adults to support student growth, address learning barriers, and ensure college and career readiness. Effective family engagement systems, policies, and practices reflect diverse school communities. In other words, these systems, policies, and practices honor the richness in language, culture, and experiences of any school community and meet the specific needs of its students and families.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Develop the content knowledge of leaders in literacy to guide decision-making.
- Build leadership capacity to understand, observe, and provide actionable feedback on literacy instruction.
- Ensure Nevada Academic Content Standards for instruction are maintained and upheld.
- Develop a shared vision for literacy excellence grounded in Nevada's commitment to evidence based Tier 1 instruction for reading and writing to align literacy efforts toward a common goal.
- Inspire and motivate educators to develop an instructional environment where a passion for literacy is cultivated.
- Prioritize improvement in literacy and communicate its urgency.
- Monitor short and long range literacy goals.
- Lead district level teams in selection of curriculum from the Nevada Department of Education's approved list.
- Coordinate support and resources for effective implementation of high quality curriculum.
- Stay abreast of advances in literacy instruction, research, and technology, including the use of generative AI to support literacy teaching and learning.

### *Key Practice 2: Talent Development*

At the heart of literacy success is a steadfast commitment to equity[63] (Kelley & Dkonjo-Moore, 2022). Leaders at all levels must prioritize equity in their decisions, acknowledging the unique needs of diverse students and working to eliminate systemic barriers to literacy achievement. This commitment embraces the varied identities and experiences of students, creating a learning environment that meets the needs of all. Leaders actively recruit and support educators from diverse backgrounds to enhance inclusivity and representation in order to address all students' needs. Systematically analyzing literacy achievement data across demographic groups enables targeted interventions and resource allocation. Including student input and perspectives in assessing literacy needs ensures that initiatives are responsive to their actual requirements and experiences.

[63] Kelly, L. B., & Djonko-Moore, C. (2022). *What does culturally informed literacy instruction look like?*. The Reading Teacher, 75(5), 567-574.

Leaders prioritize talent development by encouraging educators to build their capacity through coaching and sustained professional learning opportunities.[64] Leadership practices that emphasize ongoing professional development are crucial in boosting the effectiveness of literacy instruction.[65] The literacy field is constantly evolving with new research and practices. Literacy leaders recognize the importance of ongoing learning and improvement. This systematic approach aims to enhance educational practices through iterative testing and refinement in different contexts. It acknowledges the variability in practice implementation and emphasizes continuous monitoring and adaptation to optimize educational outcomes in specific settings.

**Actions for Implementation**

- Embrace a steadfast commitment to fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth centered on literacy improvement.
- Demonstrate a commitment to professional learning by keeping up to date with the latest research, instructional methods, and technological advances necessary for implementing effective literacy instruction.
- Establish clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff around literacy instruction.
- Establish clear performance expectations and systems for supportive feedback and growth.
- Monitor student progress and intervention fidelity.

**Key Practice #2: Transform Instruction**

Enhancing student learning outcomes relies on system-wide support for Nevada's equity-oriented, comprehensive approach to strengthen Tier 1 literacy instruction based on five key practices: 1) center all students as expert language users, 2) provide rich oral language experiences, 3) provide rich oral language experiences, 4) explicitly teach prerequisite foundational skills, 4) scaffold the reading comprehension of complex texts, and 5) model and guide the expression of written ideas for a variety of audiences. These five key practices depend on strong standards-based teaching, data-driven planning, differentiation and individualization, research-based pedagogical methods, and classroom management.[66]

Effective literacy leadership begins with a solid foundation of knowledge and expertise in the five key practices. At its core, it involves creating an environment where every student can become a proficient reader, writer, and skilled communicator. This foundational knowledge is crucial for leaders to build such

[64] Mansueto, D., Kilag, O., Andrin, G., Guineta, R., Ford, L., & Tiu, J. (2024). Leadership Impact on Literacy: Principals, Synergistic Partnerships, and Progressive Pathways for School Improvement. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence*, *1*(2), 50–56.
[65] Andrin, G., Kilag, O. K., Abella, J., Tañiza, F. N., Groenewald, E., & Cordova Jr, N. (2024). Leadership in literacy: The role of instructional leadership in fostering student reading achievement. *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1), 100-109.
[66] The Center on School Turnaround. (2017). Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework [The Center for School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

an environment and serves multiple critical purposes. Effective leaders recognize the importance of a dynamic approach that leverages the diverse values and expertise of staff members, especially those with essential literacy knowledge. Schools that adopt a distributive leadership model, where decision-making is shared among a team of leaders, can tap into the wealth of talent among educators.

A significant aspect of leadership is strategic resource allocation.[67] This encompasses distribution of staff, time, and providing a supportive environment for the implementation of curriculum and literacy resources. Leaders gather teams to review and select approved instructional materials for adoption in their districts. Once a high quality curriculum is in place, leaders are instrumental in allocating resources and supervising staff to help them refine their skills in implementing the curriculum. Monitoring the implementation of curriculum through frequent classroom visits is essential.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Ensure access to standards based curricula.
- Provide support to ensure evidence is used in instructional planning.
- Monitor Tier 1 instruction and ensure identified evidence-based practices are being used.

### *Key Practice 4: Shift Culture*

Attaining the necessary level of commitment to elevate literacy in Nevada depends on many people working together to provide a comprehensive and vertically aligned approach. This requires both high academic expectations and concerted effort.[68]

This effort includes family and community involvement which plays a vital role in enhancing literacy opportunities for students.[69] Their participation in a child's educational journey supports a dynamic system extending beyond the classroom. A cohesive literacy approach emerges when open communication and collaboration between educators, families, and communities is fostered. Active family participation in literacy activities and community initiatives demonstrates the significance of reading and writing in real-world contexts. This interconnected approach not only reinforces the importance of literacy but also promotes a collaborative and nurturing environment.

School and community libraries should be integral in fostering a shared enthusiasm for literacy within educational settings, at home, and throughout the broader community. Libraries play a crucial role in promoting literacy by collaborating with schools to provide access to resources, assist with schoolwide literacy initiatives, and foster a reading culture (ILA 2017). Beyond the academic setting, they extend

[67] Andrin, G., Kilag, O. K., Abella, J., Tañiza, F. N., Groenewald, E., & Cordova Jr, N. (2024). Leadership in literacy: The role of instructional leadership in fostering student reading achievement. *Excellencia: International Multi-disciplinary Journal of Education*, 2(1), 100-109.
[68] The Center on School Turnaround. (2017). Four domains for rapid school improvement: A systems framework [The Center for School Turnaround at WestEd]. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.
[69] Fikrat-Wevers, S., van Steensel, R., & Arends, L. (2021). Effects of family literacy programs on the emergent literacy skills of children from low-SES families: A meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 91(4), 577-613. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654321998075

their impact by providing family literacy programs and partnering with local organizations, creating a community-wide enthusiasm for reading.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Model reading throughout the school and build in opportunities for adults and students to read together.
- Create opportunities for the school community to come together to discuss and reflect on student learning.
- Build a strong community intensely focused on Nevada's comprehensive approach to Tier 1 literacy instruction.

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# Professional Learning

"One of the most important actions, things a leader can do, is to lead by example. If you want everyone else to be passionate, committed, dedicated, and motivated, you go first."

-Marshall Goldsmith[70]

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[70] This quote is attributed to Marshall Goldsmith, an executive leadership coach and author.

# *Professional Learning*

This section defines professional learning, outlines the essential elements of high quality professional learning, and offers action steps for leaders.

Professional learning is an integral part of a school and local education agency strategies for providing educators (teachers, principals, other school leaders, specialized instructional support personnel, paraprofessionals, and, early childhood educators) with the knowledge and skills necessary to meet Nevada Academic Content Standards.[71] [72] Research demonstrates a positive link between teacher professional development, teaching practices, and student outcomes.[73]

To ensure high quality, professional development should be aligned to Nevada's Standards for Professional Development and designed to meet the conditions outlined by Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning. Effective professional development is interactive, ongoing, and tailored to teachers' needs. It promotes teachers' ownership of their learning and encourages them to apply new knowledge in their teaching environments.[74] Educators should have ongoing opportunities to continually update professional knowledge.

Professional learning initiatives centered on evidence-based literacy instruction should be prioritized and differentiated for educators with different roles in the system. For example, professional learning opportunities for administrators should include methods to observe high quality literacy instruction, while professional learning for literacy coaches and specialists should include advanced training in coaching techniques and intervention strategies. Equipping educators with knowledge of the most research-based instruction and providing opportunities for integrating that knowledge into their practice can contribute to improved literacy outcomes for all students.

Three Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) provide high quality professional development across the state concerning the statewide academic standards (NRS 391.512). In addition, The RPDPs implement the Nevada Early Literacy Intervention Program (NELIP), providing professional learning on evidence-based reading methods.

The overall aim of literacy professional learning is to improve literacy instruction in order to boost student learning outcomes. Nevada's approach to professional learning is guided by an extensive review

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[71] U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*. https://www.ed.gov/laws-and-policy/laws-preschool-grade-12-education/every-student-succeeds-act-essa

[72] Learning Forward. (2022). *Standards for professional learning*. Learning Forward.

[73] Darling-Hammong, L., Hyler, M.E., Gardner, M., (2017). *Effective teacher professional development* [Report]. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/476/download?inline&file=Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf

[74] Keuning, T., Van Geel, M., Visscher, A., Fox, J.-P., & Moolenaar, N. M. (2016). The transformation of schools' social networks during a data-based decision making reform. Teachers College Record, 118(9), 1–33.

of the literature over the last three decades which found that effective professional learning centers on 7 key practices[75]:

Key Practices:

1. Provide Literacy Focused Content
2. Foster Active Learning
3. Foster Collaboration
4. Use Models
5. Provide Coaching
6. Provide Reflection and Feedback Cycles
7. Ensure Sustained Duration

### *Key Practice 1: Provide Literacy Focused Content*

Content for professional learning should center on Nevada's comprehensive approach to Tier 1 literacy instruction, assessment, and family engagement. Specific content should be selected based on analysis of literacy data collected at school sites and the needs of the students and staff. Ideally, the content is aligned with school and district priorities to provide coherence for educators and should include evidence-based practices for delivering literacy instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners, English Language Learners, and students with special needs.

Avenues for literacy focused learning may include face-to face opportunities as well as technology facilitated professional learning. Online professional learning modules developed by literacy experts have been successfully used to teach about early literacy instruction especially when the modules include opportunities for interactive activities and dialogue with peers[76]
Providing professional learning in conjunction with curriculum and classroom materials should be prioritized.[77] Teachers who have access to high quality curriculum and expert support combined with collaborative active learning opportunities are more likely to impact student achievement.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Develop needs assessments centered on the five key practices, along with corresponding instructional targets that make up Nevada's equity-oriented, comprehensive, and effective approach to Tier 1 literacy instruction. This is one way to ensure a data centered approach to

[75] Darling-Hammong, L., Hyler, M.E., Gardner, M., (2017). *Effective teacher professional development* [Report]. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/476/download?inline&file=Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf.

[76] DeIaco, R., Samuelson, C., Grifenhagen, J., Davis, D. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2021). Using Insights from Teachers to Inform Online Professional Development in Early Literacy Instruction. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, *61*(1), 84–111. https://doi.org/10.1080/19388071.2021.1921889

[77] Short, J., & Hirsh, S. (2020). Transforming teaching through curriculum-based professional learning. New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.

determine professional learning goals and focus on actual rather than perceived needs[78] (Shearer et al., 2018.)

- Analyze student literacy assessment data from needs assessments to pinpoint the most essential and desired areas and formats for professional learning. This data can help ensure that professional learning remains relevant to practice and supports the knowledge and skills educators seek to develop.
- Ensure all professional learning aligns to Nevada's Standards for Professional Development.
- Focus cohort opportunities on comprehensive professional learning developed by literacy experts.
- Provide professional learning for new teachers to understand and implement the Nevada Academic Content Standards.

### *Key Component #2: Foster Active Learning*

Professional learning experiences should be designed to address not only what teachers learn but also how they learn. Principles of adult learning should be kept in mind as leaders shape professional learning opportunities.[79] [80] Reflection and inquiry should be central to the learning process. Active learning moves away from traditional, lecture-based models to engage teachers directly in the practices they are learning, ideally connected to their classrooms and students. Unlike passive sit-and-listen lectures, active learning involves using authentic artifacts, interactive activities, and other strategies for deeply embedded, highly contextualized professional learning. Engaging teachers in activities where they actively participate, such as modeling, role-playing, or peer teaching, enhances learning and retention. Providing time for teachers to observe peer mentors teaching with opportunities to collaborate and debrief afterward, gives teachers the opportunity to learn from experts in the building.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Organize continuous improvement around professional learning that is grounded in the principles of adult learning.
- Link professional learning to curriculum.
- Provide choice in learning opportunities based on a needs assessment.
- Provide professional learning that is inquiry based and literacy focused.

### *Key Component #3: Foster Collaboration*

Teacher collaboration is an important element of professional learning and can include within school interactions to school wide collaboration with professionals beyond the school doors.

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[78] Shearer, B. A., Carr, D. A., & Vogt, M. (2018). Reading specialists and literacy coaches in the real world. Waveland Press.

[79] Knowles, M. S., Holton III, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2014). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. Routledge.

[80] Ittner, A., Frederick, A., Kiernan, D., & Bear, D. (2023). *Word study for literacy leaders*. Guilford Press., New York, NY

By working collaboratively at the site level educators can positively affect a school culture to embrace continuous improvement.[81] Collaborative professional learning opportunities, such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), encourage teachers to share knowledge, strategies, and experiences. A PLC is a group of educators who collaborate to expand their knowledge and enhance their instruction to improve student achievement. [82] PLCs meet on a regular basis, review data, read about evidence-based literacy practices, share ideas, set collaborative goals, problem solve, and work together to plan. Professional Learning Communities provide a structured approach to enhance team effectiveness. They establish a system and protocol to ensure teachers engage in ongoing action research and collective inquiry.

School leadership plays a crucial role in embedding PLCs within the school culture and ensuring their foundational structure is consistently implemented. Leaders prioritize PLCs by scheduling common preparatory times for grade levels or subject area teachers where they can meet weekly to actively participate in planning, sharing knowledge, and learning together. Throughout the year, PLCs closely monitor progress data to evaluate the effectiveness of each tier of support. If progress is insufficient, teams adjust instruction in the relevant tier. When students struggle with reading progress, the team focuses on variables within the school's control that can significantly impact progress.

**Actions for Implementation**:

- Evaluate and redesign the use of time and school schedules to protect time for professional learning and collaboration, including participation in professional learning communities, peer coaching and observations across classrooms, and collaborative planning.
- Offer resources and guidelines to assist PLCs in applying evidence-based strategies.

### *Key Component* #4: Use Models

Professional learning that incorporates models of effective practice has been shown to enhance teacher learning and support achievement. Curricular and instructional models, along with instructional modeling, provide educators with a vision of practice that supports their own learning and growth.

**Actions for Implementation**:

- Provide curricular models including
    - Videos of demonstration lessons
    - Videos to increase understanding of literacy assessments
    - Demonstration lessons
    - Unit or lesson plans
    - Peer observation
    - Sample literacy assessments

[81] Keuning, T., Van Geel, M., Visscher, A., Fox, J.-P., & Moolenaar, N. M. (2016). The transformation of schools' social networks during a data-based decision making reform. Teachers College Record, 118(9), 1–33.

[82] Vescio, V., Ross, D., & Adams, A. (2008). A review of research on the impact of professional learning communities on teaching practice and student learning. Teaching and teacher education, 24(1), 80-91

- Student work samples

### *Key Component* #5: Provide Coaching and Expert Support

Federal initiatives paired with state and district level initiatives have been implemented to support literacy instruction. These initiatives require teachers to have an in-depth understanding of how to teach literacy. To reach the goals of such initiatives, it is vital for instructional leaders to provide literacy coaches. The primary responsibility of a literacy coach is to collaborate with teachers and to foster schoolwide improvement in literacy instruction and learning.[83] Coaches may serve at the system or site level and offer vital support for continuous collaborative learning and sustaining the vision of a professional learning system.[84]

An expert literacy coach brings many strengths to facilitate the coaching cycle for early career educators and more experienced educators. A literacy coach may work one on one or with a group of educators in a variety of ways to implement high-quality curriculum and instructional materials and aligned assessments.[85] By participating in the coaching feedback cycle, expert literacy coaches are able to meet with teachers, collaborate and assess instructional needs, model and observe instruction, and provide non-evaluative feedback. In collaboration with administrators, instructional coaches play a crucial role in ensuring the professional learning strategies teachers acquire are effectively implemented. They serve as facilitators, mentors, and support systems for teachers, helping to translate professional learning into actionable classroom practices.

A literacy coach should regularly collaborate and support classroom teaching through co-teaching, co-planning, and data analysis with teachers. Professional learning through coaching, leading data teams, and leading workshops should be provided by literacy coaches.

These practices are especially relevant in secondary schools; coaches should work with teachers within and across the content areas. *Within* content areas, coaches can help teachers from the same content area identify the literacy demands of their content areas and plan for scaffolded learning opportunities for students to develop as readers, writers, speakers, and listeners thinkers in math, social studies, ELA, and science, and any number of electives. *Across* content areas, coaches can help interdisciplinary teams of teachers understand and commit to regular opportunities to build vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing skills. Importantly, coaches in secondary schools can help teachers develop the professional knowledge that helps them simultaneously develop literacy skills and meet learning objectives in the academic disciplines. Indeed, these two areas of development are mutually reinforcing.

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[83] International Literacy Association. (2017). Literacy assessment: What everyone needs to know [Literacy leadership brief]. Newark, DE: Author

[84] Learning Forward. (2022). *Standards for professional learning*. Learning Forward.

[85] ibid.

It is important for literacy coaches to understand the coaching process, adult learning theory, organizational leadership, and the process of assessment as it relates to literacy instruction.[86] Literacy coaching at the middle and high school levels shifts to a focus on the content area and disciplinary literacy instruction; however it is still important for a literacy coach at both the primary and secondary levels to understand the process of coaching. Literacy coaches at both levels must establish credibility, a trusting relationship, and an ability to work with teachers. A literacy coach continually needs to be able to participate in a collaborative process of inquiry that will promote teacher reflection, decision making for instruction, and problem solving through challenges.

**Actions for Implementation**:

- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of literacy specialists and coaches.
- Ensure coaching is individualized, intensives, sustained, context specific, and focused on literacy.[87]
- Plan for the professional development needs of literacy coaches and literacy interventionists/specialists**.** Professional learning for literacy coaches and specialists should include advanced training in literacy assessment, intervention strategies, and coaching techniques.

### *Key Practice* #6: Provide Reflection and Feedback Cycles

Regular opportunities for teachers to receive feedback and reflect on their practice are crucial for continuous improvement.[88] (Desimone, 2009). Mentor teachers and coaches observe and provide feedback in a non-evaluative capacity. Professional development models linked to improved student learning provide dedicated time for teachers to reflect, receive feedback, and adjust their practices. Although feedback and reflection are distinct practices, they complement each other to guide teachers toward the expert practices they have observed or learned about during professional learning. Effective professional learning programs involve sharing both positive and constructive feedback to authentic teacher practices like lesson plans, demonstration lessons, or instructional videos.[89] These activities typically take place during coaching sessions or group workshops facilitated by a skilled professional learning facilitator. Coaches and mentors must build relationships with teachers in order for them to participate in such feedback cycles.

**Actions for Implementation**:

[86] op.cit. International Literacy Association.
[87] Kraft, M. A., Blazar, D., & Hogan, D. (2018). The effect of teacher coaching on instruction and achievement: A meta-analysis of the causal evidence. Review of educational research, 88(4), 547-588.
[88] Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. Educational Researcher, 38(3), 181-199.
[89] Learning Policy Institute. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development* [Report]. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/476/download?inline&file=Effective_Teacher_Professional_Development_REPORT.pdf.

- Establish regular opportunities for educators to reflect and receive feedback on their literacy instruction.
- Develop an evaluation plan to measure the efficacy of professional development.

### *Key Component* #7: Ensure Sustained Duration

Professional learning should occur over an extended period, allowing teachers to thoroughly engage with new strategies and integrate them into their practice. Just as students need spiral review of content, teachers need the opportunity to learn, practice, receive feedback, evaluate, and make adjustments as needed. Meaningful professional learning that leads to cumulative changes in practice cannot be achieved through brief, one-off workshops. Traditional episodic and fragmented professional learning lacks the time required for rigorous and cumulative learning. Sustained professional learning, which provides multiple opportunities for teachers to engage with a single set of concepts or practices, is more likely to transform teaching practices and enhance student learning.

**Actions for Implementation**:

- Cultivate a culture of ongoing professional learning. Partner with your local Regional Professional Development Program to provide sustained professional learning and responsiveness to the specific needs of leaders and educators and to the school and district contexts in which teaching and learning will take place.
- Provide flexible funding and avenues for credit attainment for learning opportunities that include sustained engagement in mentoring and coaching.
- Share information about pathways for teachers to obtain the Endorsement to Teach Reading and the Reading Specialist Endorsement.
- Share information about learning opportunities offered by the state's higher education institutions.
- Develop long-range professional learning plans that include all staff (rather than those who opt in to learning outside of school hours) and which remain focused on improving literacy instruction in an iterative manner that responds to the learning needs of educators as they implement their learning.

**Summary**:

Well-designed and implemented professional learning should be regarded as a vital element of a comprehensive teaching and learning system that equips students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary for success in the 21st century (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). To maintain a coherent system supporting teachers throughout their careers, professional learning should connect to their experiences, align with teaching standards and evaluations, and extend to leadership opportunities. This ensures a comprehensive system dedicated to the continuous growth and development of Nevada's educators.

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# Family and Community Engagement

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."[90]

-Margaret Wheatley

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[90] Wheatley, M. J. (2014). Turning to one another: Simple conversations to restore hope to the future. Berrett-Koehler., Oakland, CA

# *Family and Community Engagement*

In this plan, we are extending the concept of family and community engagement to the idea of fully teaming with our families and communities to improve literacy teaming with families and communities in education refers to the collaborative efforts among schools, families, and community members to enhance the educational experience and outcomes for students especially when it comes to literacy. Literacy and educational success is a shared responsibility and aims to create a supportive network that fosters student success. Stakeholders have the capacity to affect positive student growth and learning outcomes. As stated by Mapp and Bergman in a 2021 synthesis of research on family engagement, "When schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."[91]

In 2021, the Nevada State Department of Education gathered an advisory committee to develop Nevada's Family Engagement Framework[92] and a definition to offer further guidance to educational stakeholders including districts, schools, educators, community partners, and families. For literacy to thrive, all stakeholders must contribute to the support of involvement and engagement.

The Nevada Department of Education defines family engagement as :

> Family engagement is a shared responsibility between schools, families, and communities where all receive equitable access to tools and supports needed to successfully work together toward the development of children and youth for college, career, and lifelong learning.[93]

This definition implies that all stakeholders have the intent and capacity to effect positive student growth and learning outcomes. This aligns with the research finding that children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more when schools work together with families to support learning.[94] The framework also contains a toolkit intended to help navigate through the many possible stumbling blocks along the pathway of effective family engagement for student success.

In an earlier report, Henderson and Mapp also share that, by engaging families in ways that are linked to learning, students demonstrate more improvement. Building partnerships with families that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, helps to sustain connections that are aimed at improving

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[91] K., Mapp and E.,Bergman, (2021), *Embracing a New Normal:Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement*, Carnegie Corporation, New York. https://www.delawarepbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Liberatory-Approach-to-Family-Engagement.pdf

[92] NDE,(2021), Nevada's Family Engagement Framework Birth through Grade 12, Nevada department of Education, Carson City, NV., https://doe.nv.gov/family-engagement/nv-birth-through-grade-12-framework/

[93] Ibid, pg.8

[94] K., Mapp and E.,Bergman, (2021), *Embracing a New Normal:Toward a More Liberatory Approach to Family Engagement*, Carnegie Corporation, New York. https://www.delawarepbs.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Liberatory-Approach-to-Family-Engagement.pdf

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student achievement,"[95] Therefore a focus on building partnerships around literacy improvement will support the effectiveness of literacy improvement initiatives.

Looking into the future of learning in education, Nevada's Portrait of a Learner describes what a learner looks like in today's world. Building this image in partnership with families and discovering what this means for future generations is essential. It acknowledges that "core academic knowledge is the foundation from which students can apply durable skills," and offers five essential questions for students to explore:

- How will I grow in my learning?
- How do I build & sustain relationships & community?
- How will I contribute to make an impact?
- How will I thrive?
- How might we create learning relationships, experiences, and environments that put these shared values into practice?

For students to gain the literacy skills to fully engage these questions, and learn the skills needed for the real world, family and community partnership is essential. Evidence-based practice has identified some key components of family engagement to support this partnership.

Key Components of Family and Community engagement include:

- Welcoming All Families
- Communicating Effectively
- Supporting Academic Success
- Sharing Power (Involvement vs. Engagement)

**Figure**

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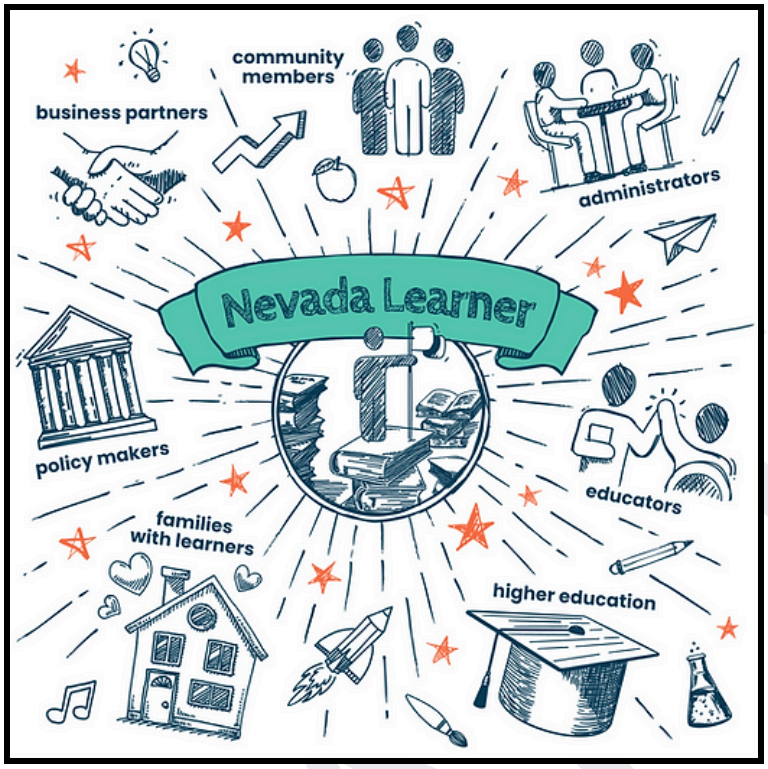
[95] Henderson, A., Mapp K., (2002), A New Wave of Evidence, The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement,pg.14, National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)., Austin Texas.https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED536946.pdf




***Key Component #1: Welcoming All Families***

Welcoming families means actively encouraging and facilitating a variety of opportunities for families to be involved in the educational process and community. It involves creating an inviting and inclusive environment that not only gets families in the door but also values and motivates them to become active participants in their children's education. This inclusive and inviting environment is not limited to educators on a school campus but begins with office personnel as the front line of family-facing educational staff.

Educational leadership, policymakers, and teachers have access to a plethora of information, research, and resources for implementing effective parent and family engagement policies and practices to improve student academic success, mental health, and self-esteem. At the core of welcoming families is treating all families with respect and acceptance in order to make the educational setting an emotionally safe setting for both students and their families.

Welcoming all families requires sometimes shifting the role of schooling from that of repairing families to welcoming families in as experts to contribute their own unique assets, understandings, and talents to their children's learning. This shift requires honoring some core assumptions about families that may require some reflection and effort to develop and maintain:

- Trust that all families want the best educational experience for their children[96].
- All backgrounds, cultures, and languages have value.[97]
- Families have the capacity to help make decisions about their children's learning.[98]
- Families want to and can contribute to helping their children.[99]

Engaging families around literacy is foundational to student success, because literacy is foundational to all other academic subjects and elective courses. Welcoming all families is the first step in building partnerships that help enable students to grow to be independent, capable community members who are critical consumers of information.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Listen to and draw on families' knowledge about their child's strengths and how they learn.
- Listen to family members about their experiences, treatment, and hopes for future experiences through focus groups, listening sessions, and/or dialogue circles. Train and support family-facing staff in the art of relationship-building conversations with all students and families.
- Model asset-based thinking about students and families through asset-based language and attitudes that center on the intrinsic value of all families as partners. Interrupt deficit-focused and biased language and actions regarding students and families.
- Ensure time is allocated for teachers and other educational staff to build positive relationships with families during the contracted day.
- Create opportunities for families to share their funds of knowledge showcasing how literacy plays a role in their own culture, jobs, and activities in the school community.

### *Key Component #2: Communicating Effectively*

Decades of research have shown us that there is a strong connection between the literacy skills students learn at home and their academic success.[100] Strong relationships between schools and families are critical for effective partnership between schools and families. School staff that demonstrate authentic respect for families build connections that foster success in and out of school.

Two-way communication in the family's home language and school- and community-based activities can help develop school/home partnerships. Effective communication allows LEAs and schools to better

[96] Weiss, H. B., Caspe, M., & Lopez, M. E. (2018, October 18). Joining together to create a bold vision for next generation family engagement: Engaging families to transform education. Carnegie Corporation of New York. https://www.carnegie.org/publications/joining-together-create-bold-vision-next-generation-family-engagement-engaging-families-transform-education/

[97] Coppola, S.,(2024) Literacy For All; A Framework for Anti-Oppressive Teaching, Equity and Social Justice in Education Series, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, New York, New York.

[98] Ibid.

[99] Weiss, op.cit.

[100] Curry, D. L., Reeves, E, Mcintyre, C. J., (2016).Connecting Schools and Families: Understanding the Influence of Home Literacy Practices.Texas Journal of Literacy Education, v4 n2 p69-77.*Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX.,* *https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1121638*

understand community literacy needs and develop programs and targeted supports that will better support students and their families. Research from the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools emphasizes that, "Programs that successfully connect with families and community invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parent and community needs."[101] Families are more willing to support school literacy initiatives when they feel heard and understood about their specific needs.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Communicate directly with families, using consistent methods and tools that are accessible to all. Some examples include social media, virtual parent teacher conferences, and home visits or engaging with families in their community.[102]
- Ensure that communication about student performance is ongoing and two-way, and equips families with concrete, specific methods to engage with their child's learning in the home.
- Ensure families know the district and school's plan to improve literacy and have access to resources.
- Create resources and tutorials that demonstrate how students can practice literacy skills at home.
- Use language in communications that is clear, precise, and free of jargon.
- Translate important documents and announcements into the home languages of your students.
- Provide opportunities for students to communicate their progress, ideas, and plans for improvement with their families and community, including them as key partners in their own learning.
    - Student-led conferences and portfolio presentations are two evidence-based practices that support this type of communication.
    - Student advisory committees and focus groups allow students to have a voice in decision making that will affect them.

### *Key Component #3: Supporting Academic Success*

Families are a child's first teacher(s) and play a critical role in all facets of literacy development. Language development begins with early childhood including talking, listening, conversing, singing, and playing; all before a child enters the formal educational environment. Regardless of home language, students come to school with an abundance of transferable language skills.[103]

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[101] Henderson, A., Mapp K., (2002), *A New Wave of Evidence, The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL)., Austin Texas.https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED536946.pdf

[102] National survey data reports that 75 percent of families use social media. Online platforms allow schools to reach many families quickly and regularly (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

[103] US Department of Health and Human Services. (2024, September 30). *Language and literacy*. Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/language-literacy

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Once formal education starts, the partnership between families and schools to support academic success begins. An asset-focused orientation is vital when entering into this partnership. This is an opportunity to develop shared high expectations and goals, while honoring the role that families can continue to play in providing a rich language environment in informal settings, while reinforcing what is learned at school.

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Regularly provide student data to families and create data-driven conference structures to support parents to understand the data and to use it to plan next steps.
- Provide parent education opportunities  focused on literacy skills to strengthen home literacy support.
- Work with families to plan family-centered literacy activities with age-appropriate activities that are designed to invite families into student learning experiences.
- Connect families with opportunities outside of school that will build and support student's background knowledge, vocabulary acquisition, and experience of the world around them.

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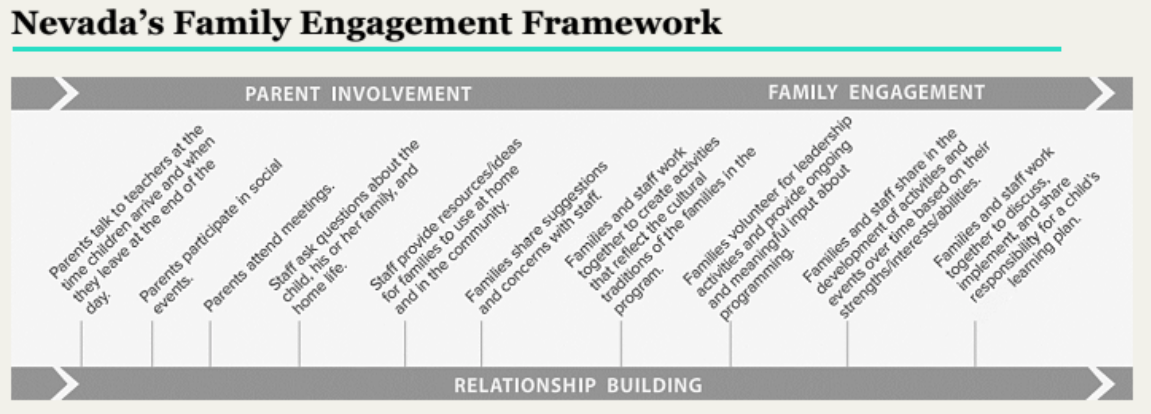
### *Key Component #4: Sharing Power (Involvement vs Engagement)*

In Nevada's Family Engagement Framework, a continuum was developed to show the continuum of family engagement. According to the Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development- ASCD, there is a difference between family involvement and family engagement. The Oxford English Dictionary definition of involvement states, "the act of taking part in something or dealing with somebody" as opposed to the definition of engagement which states, "the action of engaging or being engaged" (Oxford Dictionary, 2024). ACSD says this implies that involvement is *doing to* and engagement is *doing with*.

Our continuum of engagement begins with social contact and event participation.As relationships are built engagement progresses to families providing meaningful input to decisions and sharing responsibility for their child's learning plan. For literacy improvement, this shift requires that LEAs and schools engage with parents as knowledgeable partners in supporting their children's literacy development.

Figure . Continuum of Family Engagement




**Actions for Implementation:**

- Solicit feedback from families on the impact of strategies, tools, and/or resources shared with the intent of supporting their engagement with their child's learning.
- Include families in the process of creating school-wide goals.
- Create opportunities for families to play a decision-making role in school governance and explore opportunities to develop parents into school leaders.
- Recognize and publicly appreciate the efforts and contributions of parents in the school community through awards, and public acknowledgment on your school webpage or social media.

### *Key Component #5: Connections with the Community*

Trusting, inclusive, and responsive community programs complement the partnerships between schools and families. Community programs and organizations can provide additional access to books and

essential literacy activities for students, such as opportunities to be read aloud to. Many of our lower income students have limited access books. In 2005, the ratio of age-appropriate books per child available by neighborhood was 13 to 1 in middle income neighborhoods and 300 to 1 in low income neighborhoods.[104] LEAs and schools cannot address all of the needs of a community in isolation, which is one of the reasons why community schools are an evidence-based strategy for school improvement.[105]

Building and developing connections with community organizations, philanthropic groups, and businesses to support literacy initiatives, can increase the resources available to address community needs. Schools with strong community partnerships see improvements in academic performance, attendance, and opportunities for learning outside of the school environment.[106] Community partnerships can help identify community needs and gaps that some families may be experiencing. Understanding students' in-and out-of-school experiences allows school systems to work in partnership to create equitable learning environments for all students.[107]

**Actions for Implementation:**

- Develop a cohesive community engagement plan built on identified literacy needs from the school and community resources available in your area.
- Connect families with local organizations that provide literacy support outside of the school day.
- Partner with community organizations that support the whole child. Students learn better when their basic needs are met.
    - Coordinate with health and wellness organizations to bring support to students and families.
    - Connect families with food banks.
    - Assist families with outside resources for social/emotional and behavioral support.

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[104] Dickinson, D. K., & Neuman, S. B. (2005, November 30). *Handbook of Early Literacy Research. volume 2.* Guilford Publications. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED496470.

[105] Maier, A, Daniel, J., Oakes, J. & Lam, L. (2017). *Community schools as an effective school improvement strategy: A review of the evidence*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-effective-school-improvement-report

[106] Gross, et al., (2015), Strong School–Community Partnerships in Inclusive Schools Are "Part of the Fabric of the School.…We Count on Them,"School Community Journal, 2015, Vol. 25, No. 2, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1085646.pdf.

[107] Sepanic, S., and Boeown, K., (2021 ), *MDRC School-Community Partnerships. MDRC. (n.d.). https://www.mdrc.org/work/publications/school-community-partnerships.*

# Appendix 1: Considerations by Grade Span

[ Current includes a sample One-Pager for grade bands (we will create one each for PK-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12)]

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## Overview of Tier 1 Literacy Instruction for Grades 6-8

This figure outlines how to apply the five key practices for effective literacy instruction in grades 6-8. Notably, this figure applies to all classrooms and content areas in grades 6-8. In the secondary space, *all* Tier 1 teachers in every content area are responsible for supporting the literacy development of students.

| | |
|---|---|
| Key Practice 1. Center All Students as Expert Language Users | • Learn about the linguistic, cultural, and experiential knowledge students bring to the classroom and help students make connections to what they already know.<br>• Position all language as valuable - clarify there is no "right" way to use language, just different ways that are useful for different audiences. |
| Key Practice 2. Provide Rich Oral Language Experiences | • Create structured opportunities every day for students to use the language of the content areas in small group and whole class discussions.<br>• Use a variety of multimodal resources to help students develop vocabulary and listening comprehension in the disciplines, and ask students to discuss their developing language knowledge. |
| Key Practice 3. Explicitly teach the prerequisite foundational skills for engaging with print. | • Essential instructional targets for these grades includes: advanced word reading and spelling, advanced fluency.<br>• When reading and writing, identify challenging, multisyllabic words and help students read and pronounce them, and point out specific roots and affixes that students can use to read words and make connections to other words.<br>• When reading challenging texts, have students engage in repeated readings, with each reading for a different purpose to help them build fluency and content-area knowledge simultaneously. |
| Key Practice 4. Scaffold the reading comprehension of complex texts across formats, genres, and disciplines. | • Essential instructional targets for these grades include: vocabulary, morphology, text structure, knowledge, and comprehension strategies.<br>• When reading, identify key concepts to use for vocabulary instruction. Provide explicit instruction and multiple opportunities to practice using key terms. Identify roots and affixes in key terms and help students make connections to other words.<br>• Teach specific text structures students can use to understand the purpose of a text and how the ideas within it relate to each other.<br>• Activate and build topical knowledge related to text.<br>• Support students with making inferences and summaries of texts. |
| Key Practice 5. Model and guide the **expression of written ideas** for a variety of audiences. | • Essential instructional targets for these grades include: crafting sentences, paragraphs, and texts for different purposes and audiences, as well as self-regulation in the writing process.<br>• Always state a clear purpose and audience for every piece of writing<br>• Provide models and scaffolds for syntax for writing for different purposes and different audiences.<br>• Help students identify how word choice and use of specific details can support the overall writing purpose of a piece.<br>• Scaffold every stage of the writing process with models, graphic organizers, and feedback. |

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# Appendix 2: Additional Resources to Support Implementation

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### *Tier 1 Resources*

- Nevada Academic Content Standards.
- Resource roundup: Supporting early literacy development
- Resource roundup: Supporting student literacy at the secondary level
- Tier 1 Instructional Strategies to Improve K-4 Reading Comprehension
- AdLit.org: All About Adolescent Literacy
- Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School
- Equitable Environments and Relationships: Cultivating Strong Tier 1 Practices in Multi-Tiered System of Supports (Recorded Webinar)

### *Assessment Resources*

- Literacy Leadership Brief: Literacy Assessment: What Everyone Needs to Know
- Assessment Literacy Defined
- Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making

### *MTSS Resources*

**Elementary/All**

- Assisting Students Struggling with Reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and Multi-Tier Intervention in the Primary Grades
- Three-Tiered Instructional Intervention Model to Promote Literacy Success (Video)
- Webinar Series: Data-Driven Implementation of Tiered Interventions with English Learners (Recorded Webinar Series)

**Secondary**

- Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9
- Primary Considerations for Adolescent Literacy (Tier 2 and 3)
- Explicit Morphology Instruction to Improve Overall Literacy Skills in Secondary Students
- Implementing MTSS in Secondary Schools

### *Leadership Resources*

- Learning Forward Action Guide for the Superintendent
- Learning Forward Action Guide for Central Office
- Learning Forward Action Guide for the Principal
- School Leaders Walkthrough Tool
- Overview video
- Guide and Checklists for a School Leader's Walkthrough During Literacy Instruction in Grades 4-12
- School Reading Specialist Endorsement
- Nevada Educator Performance Framework

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### *Professional Learning Resources*

- Nevada's Standards for Professional Development
- Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning.
- The Multiple Roles of School-Based Specialized Literacy Professionals
- Learning Forward Action Guide for the Coach
- Using Inquiry Cycles in PLCs to Improve Instruction
- Developing Early Literacy PLCs
- PLC Facilitator's Guide for the WWC Practice Guide: Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade
- PLC Guide for Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School

### *Literacy Coaching Guidance*

- The Multiple Roles of School-Based Specialized Literacy Professionals
- Learning Forward Action Guide for the Coach

### *Continuing Education Opportunities*

- Reading Specialist Endorsement
- University of Nevada Reno Online Master's Program in Literacy Studies
- University of Nevada Las Vegas Master of Education- Curriculum and Instruction

### *Family Engagement Resources*

**Resources for LEAs**

- Nevada Birth to Grade 12 Family Engagement Framework
- Northeastern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program- Family Engagement Resources
- Family Engagement: Authentically Integrating Essential Competencies
- Early Childhood Parent Involvement and Family Engagement
- Toolkit of Resources for Engaging Families and the Community as Partners in Education
- Joining Together to Create a Bold Vision for  Next Generation Family Engagement Engaging Families to Transform Education
- Using Social Media to Engage Families
- Planning for Family Engagement in the Charter School Lifecycle
- A Kindergarten Teacher's Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills
- A First Grade Teacher's Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills
- A Second Grade Teacher’s Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills
- A Third-Grade Teacher's Guide to Supporting Family Involvement in Foundational Reading Skills

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**Resources for Schools**

- Decision-making Roles School Organizational Teams (Clark County School District )
- Home visits: Parent Teacher Home Visits Model
- Shared leadership roles: Family Leadership
- Welcoming all families: Community Maps

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# Appendix 3: State Demographic and Needs Assessment Data

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### *State Demographics*

The state system for Nevada education is unique in that there are 479,240 students across 17 districts with an additional number (or portion of total number) who reside across all districts under the authorization of the State Public Charter School Authority. Encompassing an area of approximately 110,000 square miles, they range from Esmeralda County School District with only 4 schools and 89 students to Clark County with over 300,000 students and the fifth-largest school district in the nation. The two densely populated urban districts, Clark and Washoe, serve the greatest proportion of students, while smaller populations in rural districts are often separated by wide open spaces of undeveloped land. During the 2023-2024 school year approximately 14% of students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), 14% were Multi Language Learners, and 16% of Nevada residents, age 18 and younger, live in poverty.

**Table 1. State Student Enrollment Data by Race/Ethnicity**

| | Am IN/AK Native | Asian | Hispanic | Black | White | Pacific Islander | Two or More Races | Total Enrollment |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2022-2023** | 3,717 | 26,628 | 213,795 | 59,194 | 137,495 | 7,172 | 36,239 | 484,240 |
| **2023-2024** | 3,602 | 26,798 | 215,221 | 58,495 | 131,859 | 7,013 | 36,589 | 479,578 |

**Table 2. State Student Enrollment by Special Populations**

| | Students with IEPs | English Learners | Foster | Homeless |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2022-2023** | 62,623 | 65,388 | 1794 | 10,270 |
| **2023-2024** | 65,918 | 66,528 | 1835 | 10,551 |

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### *Access to Pre Kindergarten Programs*

In the 2023-24 school year, Nevada enrolled 13,516 students in Pre Kindergarten programs.

**Table 3. 2023-2024 Pre Kindergarten Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity**

| School Year | Am IN/AK Native | Asian | Hispanic | Black | White | Pacific Islander | Two or More Races |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2023-2024 enrollment** | 64 | 625 | 6731 | 1842 | 3087 | 105 | 1062 |

**Table 4. Pre Kindergarten Enrollment by Special Populations**

| School Year | Students with IEPs | English Learners | Free or Reduced Lunch Eligible | Foster | Homeless |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2023-2024 enrollment** | 5132 | 2 | 12,800 | 81 | 249 |

### *Access to Highly Qualified Teachers*

A national teacher shortage, occurring since COVID-19, has strongly impacted Nevada in both urban and rural settings. Nearly 10 percent (9.58%) of teacher and educational professional positions were vacant during the 2022-2023 school year, with those vacancies concentrated in urban areas where there is a higher concentration of low income, Black and Latinx students.[108] There was also a higher concentration of vacancies for teachers in rural areas of the state, which tend to be more challenging to staff. Nevada's geographical and size variations and persistent staffing shortages have proved to be a challenge to maintaining high quality literacy instruction.

**Table 5. Percent of Teacher Vacancies**

| School Year | Total Number of Reported Positions | Total Number of Reported Vacancies | Percent of Vacancies |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2021-2022** | 30,034.91 | 3,437.07 | 12.44% |
| **2022-2023** | 30,491.00 | 2,922.20 | 9.58% |

[108] Nevada Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2024, January). Teacher and Professional Staff Shortages and Equity in Education in Nevada. United States Commission on Civil Rights. https://www.usccr.gov/reports/2024/teacher-and-professional-staff-shortages-and-equity-education-nevada

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**Table 6. Distribution of Teachers by Title 1 Free and Reduced Lunch Status**

| Title 1 Schools Free/Reduced Lunch Status | % Teachers Rated Ineffective | % Teachers Out of Field | % Inexperienced teachers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2019-2020 High Free/Reduced Lunch** | 1.03% | 3.48% | 10.00% |
| **2019-2020 Low Free/Reduced Lunch** | .30% | 4.20% | 3.32% |
| **2020-2021 High Free/Reduced Lunch** | .71% | 4.15% | 12.20% |
| **2020-2021 Low Free/Reduced Lunch** | .35% | 3.87% | 9.05% |

**Table 7. Distribution of Teachers by Title 1 Minority Populations**

| Title 1 Schools Minority Populations | % Teachers Rated Ineffective | % Teachers Out of Field | % Inexperienced teachers |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2019-2020 High Minority Population** | 1.19% | 3.28% | 10.64% |
| **2019-2020 Low Minority Population** | .57% | 3.74% | 4.43% |
| **2020-2021 High Minority Population** | .57% | 3.72% | 13.17% |
| **2020-2021 Low Minority Population** | .53% | 5.10% | 8.61% |

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### *Academic Performance in Literacy*

Despite showing marginal overall growth in 2022 – 2023 in ELA, Nevada has much work to do to meet the needs of all students. In grades 3-8, a state average of 58.9% of students assessed on the Smarter Balanced ELA assessment scored below standard. When disaggregated, several student groups show significantly fewer students meeting standard: American Indian/ Alaskan Native 76% below standard; African American 74.4% below standard; Hispanic 67% below standard; Pacific Islander 64% below standard.[109]

All other vulnerable student groups showed even greater gaps in performance on the Smarter Balanced Assessment: Low Income 90.9% below standard; English Learners 90.5% below standard; Homeless 79.2% below standard, and Foster Youth 78.8% below standard. Many students in Nevada are ill prepared for the incredible opportunities that await them.

**Table 8. Percent of Students at Each SBAC ELA Achievement Level by Grade**

| Level | Emergent /Developing | Approaching Standard | Meets Standard | Exceeds Standard |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State Average** | 35.1% | 23.8% | 25.5% | 15.5% |
| **8** | 32.8% | 27.8% | 29.4% | 10.0% |
| **7** | 31.9% | 26.1% | 29.8% | 12.3% |
| **6** | 36.0% | 25.6% | 25.7% | 12.7% |
| **5** | 36.4% | 19.9% | 26.4% | 17.3% |
| **4** | 39.1% | 19.2% | 20.8% | 20.8% |
| **3** | 34.6% | 24.4% | 20.7% | 20.3% |

**Table 9. Grade 3 – 8 Average Percent of Students at Each SBAC ELA Achievement Level by Racial/Ethnic Group**

| Racial/Ethnic Group | Emergent /Developing | Approaching Standard | Meets Standard | Exceeds Standard |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State Average** | 35.1% | 23.8% | 25.5% | 15.5% |
| **Am Indian/Ak Native** | 50.8% | 25.2% | 16.9% | 7.1% |

[109] Source: Nevada Accountability Portal, 2022–2023 ELA Smarter Balanced Criterion Referenced Test (CRT)

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| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Black** | 50.8% | 23.6% | 18.1% | 7.5% |
| **Hispanic** | 41.7% | 25.5% | 22.9% | 10.0% |
| **Pacific Islander** | 37.2% | 26.4% | 25.1% | 11.3% |
| **Two or More Races** | 27.5% | 22.4% | 28.8% | 23.1% |
| **White** | 23.6% | 22.7% | 30.7% | 23.0% |
| **Asian** | 15.7% | 18.3% | 33.1% | 33.0% |

**Table 10. Grade 3 – 8 Average Percent of Students at Each SBAC ELA Achievement Level by English Learner Status**

| EL Status | Emergent /Developing | Approaching Standard | Meets Standard | Exceeds Standard |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State Average** | 35.1% | 23.8% | 25.5% | 15.5% |
| **All EL** | 66.9% | 21.1% | 9.5% | 0.0% |
| **Long-term EL** | 72.3% | 15.2% | 9.9% | 0.0% |
| **Newcomer EL** | 75.8% | 20.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

**Table 11. Grade 3 – 8 Average Percent of Students at Each SBAC ELA Achievement Level by Socioeconomic and Housing Situation**

| EL Status | Emergent /Developing | Approaching Standard | Meets Standard | Exceeds Standard |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **State Average** | 35.1% | 23.8% | 25.5% | 15.5% |
| **Not FRL** | 23.7% | 22.4% | 30.8% | 23.1% |
| **FRL** | 44.8% | 25.1% | 21.0% | 9.1% |
| **Not Foster** | 35.1% | 23.9% | 25.5% | 15.6% |
| **Foster** | 59.1% | 19.7% | 15.9% | 5.3% |
| **Housed** | 34.5% | 23.9% | 25.8% | 15.8% |
| **Homeless** | 57.4% | 21.8% | 15.6% | 5.3% |

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# Appendix 4: Current Legislation, Initiatives, and Policies

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## *Current Legislation, Initiatives, and Policies*

Nevada's Legislature and Board of Education have consistently supported initiatives to improve literacy. Current and ongoing legislation and initiatives include:

Legislation

- Nevada State Standards in ELA (2010) – Nevada adopted the Common Core State Standards in ELA, referred to as the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS). The standards provide guidance for what each student should learn at each grade level to be successful in college, career, and life.

- AB 289 (2019) a revision of SB391 (2015) Read by Three Initiative – was established to enhance the statewide comprehensive system of early reading instruction and intervention aimed at accelerating the reading growth of students reading below grade level in kindergarten through third grade. AB 289 provides guidance and support for early literacy, particularly in foundational skills.
- AB 400 (2023): Commission on School Funding – Establishes a new oversight commission to review student progress and recommended reading strategies and programs including the Early Childhood Literacy and Readiness Program, Read by Grade Three, intensive intervention instruction, statewide assessments, and summer school for non-proficient second and third graders. AB 400 provides revisions, funding oversight and accountability to statewide reading initiatives and will be effective in 2028.

  A summary of AB 289 and AB 400 and how they relate to each other may be found in this crosswalk.

- NRS 388.159 – Requires schools to conduct early literacy assessments for students in kindergarten through third grade to identify those who require additional support, allowing for timely and targeted interventions.

- NRS 388.160 – Requires regular reporting to parents and guardians about their child's literacy progress, ensuring they are informed and involved in the intervention process.

- NRS 388.161 – Requires schools to provide intensive reading interventions for students identified as at-risk, with continuous progress monitoring to adjust strategies as needed.

- NRS 391.512 – Identifies three Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) to provide high quality professional development across the state; Northeastern Nevada RPDP, Northwest RPDP, and Southern Nevada RPDP. The primary mission of the RPDPs is to provide training to teachers and administrators concerning the statewide academic standards. In addition, the

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RPDPs implement the Nevada Early Literacy Intervention Program (NELIP), which provides professional learning on evidence-based reading methods.

- NAC 391.285 – Specifies the requirements for holding an Endorsement to teach Reading.
- NAC 391.290 – Specifies the requirements for a Reading Specialist Endorsement.

Recent Initiatives

- Pathway to Reading Excellence at School Sites (PRESS) – A partnership between the NDE and the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, provides job-embedded professional learning and support for teachers and site-based literacy specialists. PRESS supports educators with the implementation of evidence-based practices using the science of reading and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) to ensure students are receiving high-quality and meaningful instruction grounded in the most current reading research.
- Nevada Integrated Systems of Support – A partnership between the NDE and the Nevada Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) Technical Assistance Center to build infrastructure both at the SEA and LEA levels to integrate all of Nevada's school climate practices and initiatives including PBIS, Social Emotional Academic Development (SEAD), and School Mental Health within an integrated Multi-tiered System of Support. SEAD provides a framework for supporting the whole child, which evidence shows practice helps to improve academic growth.
- Reading Apprenticeship Training (2022-23) – The Nevada Department of Education provided professional Learning for teachers in the Reading Apprenticeship Model, to support the teaching of cross disciplinary literacy for adolescents. It provides training for content area teachers to support literacy learning.
- Nevada Reading Week

Collectively these legislation and initiatives provide funding, policy, support staff, and professional learning to support the literacy improvement across the state.

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# Appendix 5: References

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