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Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan Brief

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Introduction

The Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan is designed to ensure that every child in Iowa achieves literacy proficiency by the end of third grade. Recognizing that literacy is the foundation for all learning, the plan outlines a strategic, evidence-based approach to support literacy development from birth through high school. It focuses on equipping educators, engaging families, and aligning resources to create a coherent system that addresses the needs of all students. Iowa is committed to preparing students for lifelong learning and success.

Purposes of the Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan

The Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan:

- Provides a clear, evidence-based framework for effective literacy instruction from birth through grade 12, ensuring all students experience excellent instruction.
- Aligns stakeholders, including schools, communities, and families, to create a cohesive approach to literacy education.
- Supports ongoing professional learning and technical guidance for educators, promoting best practices and evidence-based methods.
- Implements Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) for early identification, differentiated instruction, and targeted interventions.
- Fosters partnerships to extend literacy support beyond the classroom, creating a culture of lifelong learning.
- Utilizes continuous assessment to guide decisions and adapt to changing needs.

State of Literacy in Iowa

Out of the 50 states, Iowa ranks number 10 in adult literacy, with 85.1% of adults proficient or above in literacy. In addition, 14.8% of Iowa's adults are without a high school diploma ([Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 2019](#)). Nine out of 10 students who did not complete high school were struggling readers in 3rd grade ([Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2011](#)).

While within the top quarter of the nation, the state of adult literacy in Iowa reflects both achievements and ongoing challenges. Certain segments of the population, particularly those in rural areas and communities experiencing socioeconomic challenges, continue to face significant literacy challenges. For example, national survey data shows that 70% of all incarcerated individuals cannot read at a fourth-grade level, "meaning they lack the reading skills to navigate many everyday tasks or hold down anything but lower (paying) jobs" ([National Adult Literacy Survey](#)).

The state of Iowa has prioritized addressing these gaps through various Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) programs. Supported by the [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act](#), these initiatives focus on improving basic literacy and numeracy skills, English language acquisition, and preparing adult learners for postsecondary education and the workforce.

Statewide Student Data and Needs

The Iowa Department of Education (Department) [2024 Condition of Education Condition of Education Report](#) underscores Iowa's increasing student diversity and the achievement gaps experienced by student groups, especially students with disabilities and students who are English Learners (ELs).

Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) represent 41.8%, students with disabilities represent 13.6%, and ELs represent 7.4% of the student population. Despite Iowa's overall reading proficiency rate of 72.7% on Iowa's 2024 Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP), significant gaps exist between student groups. Data results indicate that 58.8% of FRL-eligible students, 27.6% of students with disabilities, and 35% of ELs reached proficiency in English Language

Arts (ELA). During the 2023–2024 testing session, 60.15% of students with disabilities had a reading goal indicated on their individualized education plans. Data suggest that 45.6% of Black/African American students, 58.6% of Hispanic/Latino students, 67.1% of multi-racial students, and 77.8% of White students tested proficient in ELA (Department, 2024).

Iowa’s Comprehensive State Literacy Plan focuses on ensuring all students achieve grade-level reading by third grade and maintain this trajectory through Grade 12, aiming to increase graduation rates and support long-term success. This effort requires collaboration across the Department’s divisions, the State Board of Education, and partners across early childhood education through postsecondary education, strengthening literacy for all learners. By improving literacy proficiency and growth for all students, Iowa can narrow and close achievement gaps and bolster socioeconomic outcomes for students, families, communities, and our state.

Iowa Literacy Legislation

In recent years, Iowa passed major legislation designed to bolster literacy from early education through high school.

Statewide Literacy Plan

[HF 2545](#), an Act relating to education, requires a statewide literacy plan to increase student proficiency using systematic and sequential approaches to teaching phonetic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and text comprehension. The statewide literacy plan shall address standards for practitioner preparation programs under HF 2545, established under section 256.16, that promote evidence-based reading instruction and practical application. These standards should be direct, systematic, explicit, responsive, and consist of phonetic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension. Such standards shall not include instruction or practical application that is designed to teach students using the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing system.

Personalized Reading Plans and Parent Empowerment

On May 7, 2024, Governor Reynolds signed [House File \(HF\) 2618](#), which requires personalized reading plans for students in kindergarten through sixth grade who are not reading proficiently. (Please see the Department’s [Model Personalized Reading Plan](#).)

[HF 2618](#) also requires a school district to provide written notice to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student in kindergarten through grade 6 who is not reading proficiently, including the option for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to elect to retain the student at grade-level. A school district is required to retain the student at grade level for the subsequent school year upon parent(s)/guardian(s) request.

Educator Preparation

[HF 2618](#) also requires a higher education institution with a practitioner preparation program accredited by the State Board of Education to assess the foundational reading knowledge of teacher candidates utilizing the Foundations of Reading Assessment for a variety of K–12 and PK–8 endorsements. To promote transparency and accountability, each higher education institution with an accredited practitioner preparation program must report on the aggregate number of teacher candidates that scored above, at, and below the passing score established by the Department of Education by August 1 annually. The institution must also report on services and opportunities to retake the assessment.

[HF 2545](#) also requires standards for practitioner preparation programs that promote evidence-based reading instruction and practical applications that are direct, systematic, explicit, responsive, and that consist of phonetic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and text comprehension. Such standards shall not include instruction or practical application that is designed to teach students using the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing system.

Universal Screening Grades K-3

Iowa's comprehensive approach to literacy is further supported by policies outlined in Iowa Code sections [279.60](#) and [279.68](#), which require universal screening for kindergarten through grade three students and continuing for any student persistently at-risk until the student is reading at grade level. This early intervention strategy, legislated in 2012, ensures that students receive at least 90 minutes of research-based reading instruction daily if they are persistently at risk. Additionally, parents are kept informed and provided with strategies to support their child's reading development at home.

Overall, these legislative efforts reflect Iowa's unwavering commitment to advancing literacy for all students, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to achieve reading proficiency and succeed academically.

Seal of Biliteracy

The introduction of the Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes students who achieve proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation, also marked an important milestone. Governor Kim Reynolds signed [Senate File 475](#) into law during the 2018 legislative session, setting the stage for further reforms aimed at strengthening literacy across the state of Iowa. The biliteracy seal is important because using more than one language is a critical 21st-century skill ([Iowa Seal of Biliteracy Guidance, 2024](#)).

The biliteracy seal recognizes language as a valuable resource and highlights the importance of multiple languages and cultural identity. It prepares students with essential skills for success in the global workforce and provides evidence of their world language proficiency to employers, higher education institutions, and scholarship providers.

Recent Iowa Department of Education Efforts to Improve Literacy

Statewide LETRS® Professional Learning

The Department invested more than \$9 million in the critical work of equipping educators with knowledge of the Science of Reading to improve literacy outcomes for all students through providing LETRS® professional learning to up to 6,600 educators at no cost. In May 2024, the Department expanded this work to include LETRS® for Early Childhood Educators, focusing on administrators and teachers providing Statewide Voluntary Preschool Programs, Shared Visions Preschool Programs, and/or Early Childhood Special Education. In June 2024, the Department included middle school teachers of special education, or who provide literacy interventions, and higher education faculty who teach literacy courses and prepare teacher candidates in Iowa practitioner preparation programs.

Revised Iowa Academic Standards Aligned with the Science of Reading

On June 20, 2024, the Iowa State Board of Education (ISBE) adopted revised [Iowa Academic Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects](#) aligned with the Science of Reading and focused on increasing access to grade-level text and cognitive rigor. Iowa's English Language Arts standards were first adopted in 2010, with minimal revisions in 2016 and no substantive revision since their initial adoption. These revised 2024 standards were supported by a robust public consultation process that included:

- A first review committee of educators, administrators, and content experts, especially those with backgrounds in the Science of Reading, to review the state's ELA standards and provide suggestions for revisions.

- Statewide public comment and listening sessions to collect feedback on the first revised ELA standards draft supported by the first review committee.
- A second review committee of educators, content specialists, administrators, families, industry and community partners, and representatives from higher education institutions to support the second revised ELA standards draft following the standards public comment process.

The second revised ELA standards draft was then presented to the ISBE for a first reading in May 2024, providing another opportunity for public comment and a fourth public input step. The ISBE then adopted revised ELA standards on June 20, 2024. Moving forward, the Department will support the ISBE in substantively reviewing and revising each set of standards at least every five years. The Department is now providing standards overview and implementation of professional learning on the revised ELA standards for elementary, middle, and high school educators and administrators throughout the summer and school year 2024–2025.

ELA High-Quality Instructional Materials

The Iowa Department of Administrative Services (DAS) published a request for proposals on behalf of the Iowa Department of Education for K–12 literacy instructional materials. The Department also supported the purchase and district-wide implementation of evidence-based curriculum and high-quality instructional materials in school districts with Extended Comprehensive Support and Improvement (E-CSI) schools, identified as CSI, for three or more years. Please refer to the [Department Literacy page](#) for more information (Department, 2024).

Evidence-based Summer Reading Programs

In the Summer of 2024, the Department launched a new Summer Reading Grant that provided up to \$2 million in competitive grants to support schools in creating, expanding, and sustaining evidence-based summer reading programs. These grants support school districts as they address summer learning loss to advance student achievement and narrow and close achievement gaps. Schools serving students most in need were given priority consideration, including schools identified for additional support and improvement to meet the requirements of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which is based on the overall performance of all students or a subgroup of students, such as students with reading disabilities or students who are English learners.

Intelligent, Personalized Tutoring Program

The Department selected EPS Learning, featuring Amira, to provide an innovative, intelligent literacy program to Iowa schools at no cost, with up to 200,000 licenses. Firmly grounded in the Science of Reading, Reading Assistant delivers personalized reading practice and in-the-moment tutoring. It uses safe, effective artificial intelligence (AI) to listen, assess, and tutor students in foundational reading skills based on each student's zone of proximal development. As students read aloud, a digital avatar named Amira listens, assesses, and intervenes when they struggle, providing corrective feedback and encouraging support. Amira provides a child's classroom teacher with initial and progress data to further support differentiation while immediately scaling personalized tutoring. The program's initial roll-out as a tool for summer school literacy programs will extend access for all students through the 2024–25 school year.

Decodable Books

The Department made a statewide investment of over \$3.5 million to provide every first grade student with two Just Right Reader decodable book packs with ten books each. Students will take home and keep the book packs, reinforcing classroom instruction. In addition to all first-grade students, kindergarten through second grade students in need of support who attended a Department-funded high-quality summer reading program or a Learning Beyond the Bell out-of-school program this year will also receive decodable book packs to further advance their reading gains. In total, more than

100,000 book packs containing over one million books have been sent to all public and accredited nonpublic schools across Iowa.

Grounded in the Science of Reading, the decodable book packs are sequential, progressively introducing more complex skills, and are available at multiple reading levels. Each decodable book includes a QR code with access to video lessons for active family engagement. Information about Just Right Reader can be found on the Just Right Reader Iowa Hub. Please refer to the [Department Literacy page](#) for more information (Department, 2024).

Institutions of Higher Education: Literacy Coursework

Iowa's institutions of higher education (IHEs) are in the process of a comprehensive review to recommend revisions addressing practitioner preparation standards to transition literacy coursework and practical applications to align with the Science of Reading (SoR). While the work has begun, critical steps remain to bring additional institutions and coursework into alignment. As noted earlier, recent legislation has outlined the expectation that all institutions of higher education promote evidence-based reading instruction and practical applications that promote preparation in the Science of Reading. In 2023, through an initial review of curriculum exhibits and syllabi submitted by institutions, 74% of IHEs expose future educators to the SoR, and 30% (8) of the institutions that prepare K–8 educators are aligned with the SoR. The next steps in legislation implementation include:

- Program self-study and evaluation followed by peer and Department reviews of the curriculum, and
- Update of textbooks, syllabi, and curriculum for 100% literacy curricular alignment with the SoR.

Please refer to the [Department's Education Preparation Programs Resources](#) for the [Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook](#).

Goals

Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan Goals

Iowa's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan focuses on ensuring that all students develop strong literacy skills, starting from early childhood and continuing through high school graduation. The plan emphasizes high-quality instruction, proficient and growing literacy abilities, and readiness for college and career opportunities. It highlights the need for well-trained educators, effective use of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities to foster success in literacy outcomes and to narrow and close achievement gaps experienced by student groups across the state.

The state of Iowa will ensure:

1. All students are proficient and showing growth in all assessed areas of reading, writing, and language development.
2. Every student graduates from high school with the literacy skills that prepare them for multiple pathways to postsecondary success.
3. Early childhood programs provide high-quality early literacy instruction to support kindergarten readiness.
4. Every school has effective, qualified, and well-trained leaders and teachers who provide evidence-based literacy instruction across grades K–12.
5. Every learning community effectively uses Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to provide evidence-based interventions and supports, building upon high-quality universal instruction that improves students' literacy outcomes.

6. Every learning community effectively partners with families and community members to develop stakeholders' literacy knowledge and collectively improve literacy outcomes for all students.

Alignment with Iowa State Board of Education Goals and Outcomes



Vision: Building an excellent education system that empowers all students to achieve their full potential

Mission: Ensuring all students experience a world-class education

The Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan (SLP) is aligned with the [Iowa State Board of Education's overarching goals](#), particularly in promoting equity in education by closing achievement and opportunity gaps, as well as ensuring high-quality teachers in every classroom and leaders in each school. These goals are foundational to the vision of building an excellent education system that empowers all students to achieve their full potential and ensures that all students experience a world-class education. The SLP outlines specific strategies and goals that directly support these broader educational objectives.

Key Partnerships

The work to improve literacy achievement for students across Iowa leverages a robust network of partnerships to drive systemic improvements in literacy outcomes for all students. These partnerships form the foundation of the initiative, ensuring alignment with evidence-based practices and creating a coordinated effort across the state to promote literacy development from birth through grade 12.

These Key Partnerships include organizations critical to early childhood, higher education, and specialized education initiatives. Early Childhood Iowa plays a vital role in preparing children for kindergarten by ensuring that young learners acquire foundational literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness and early concepts of print. The Iowa Reading Research Center (IRRC) provides evidence-based resources and professional learning to guide literacy efforts. The Iowa Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (IACTE) supports the alignment of teacher preparation programs with the Science of Reading (SoR), equipping future educators with the skills to implement high-quality literacy practices. The IMPACT Consortium addresses the unique needs of migratory students and their families, while the Divisions of Special Education and Higher Education ensure that literacy instruction is aligned with the latest research.

Iowa CSLP benefits from the statewide literacy leadership networks, including the Iowa Department of Education's Literacy Team, the Statewide Literacy Leadership Team, the Iowa State Dyslexia Board, and the IRRC Advisory Council. These entities have helped provide feedback on the Iowa CSLP and provide guidance on the implementation of the plan to ensure that it is grounded in the SoR and responsive to Iowa's student populations. Literacy experts within these networks provide critical

guidance to support the direction of professional development, alignment with evidence-based practices, and the adoption of implementation of high quality instructional materials.

Together, these partnerships ensure a cohesive and impactful approach to literacy, ensuring access to high-quality instruction and resources for all Iowa learners, especially those in disadvantaged or underserved communities. By aligning efforts across early childhood, K-12, and higher education systems, the Iowa CSLP aims to create lasting improvements in literacy outcomes statewide.

Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan Outcomes



Short Term Outcomes 1–3 Years

- School districts develop Literacy Leadership Teams (LLTs) with key leadership of building principals.
- School districts complete comprehensive needs assessment around literacy aligned with the Self Assessment of MTSS Implementation (SAMI).
- School districts develop high-quality local literacy plans aligned with the Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan and include Evidence-Based Practices.
- School districts adopt High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIMs)
- School districts develop coherent and comprehensive MTSS around literacy for all students and tiers of instruction, which include data-driven decision-making.
- Leaders and practitioners engage in high-quality, job embedded professional learning to increase knowledge and skills around the Science of Reading and comprehensive literacy.

Long Term Outcomes 6–8 Years

- Achievement gaps in literacy close to within 10% for all educationally disadvantaged student groups based on Iowa state assessment data.
- Achievement for all students increases by 5% on Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) reading and writing assessments.

Mid Term Outcomes 4–5 Years

- Leaders and practitioners continue to engage in high-quality, job-embedded professional learning to increase knowledge and skills around the Science of Reading and comprehensive literacy and refine their instructional practices through collaborative systems and structures.
- School districts and educators implement HQIMs with integrity and integrate evidence-based literacy practices aligned with their local literacy plans.
- Proficiency across the five components of reading and the skill of writing increase for all student populations, and narrow and close achievement gaps experienced by the most for educationally disadvantaged students.
- Student growth in literacy, based on assessment data (fall to spring), increases from year to year for all educationally disadvantaged student groups.

Iowa's Comprehensive Literacy Framework

Defining Comprehensive Literacy

Comprehensive literacy is an approach to literacy instruction that addresses the full range of skills and knowledge necessary for reading, writing, and critical thinking (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013; Duke & Cartwright, 2021). This model integrates evidence-based practices to build foundational literacy abilities in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, along with skills in writing, speaking, and listening (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), 2000; Moats, 2020). A comprehensive literacy framework supports students in becoming confident, capable readers, writers, and communicators who can navigate various texts and contexts, an outcome shown to be vital for academic and lifelong success (Snow et al., 1998).

The core of comprehensive literacy is the Science of Reading, which combines research from education, linguistics, psychology, and neuroscience to provide effective strategies for teaching reading. This approach emphasizes that literacy is not a singular skill but a combination of interconnected abilities that develop through explicit, systematic instruction (Seidenberg, 2017; Castles et al., 2018). Key components include decoding (phonics) for word recognition, language comprehension for understanding, and fluency for efficient reading, all of which work together to promote literacy success (Erhi, 2005; Foorman et al., 2016; McCandliss & Noble, 2003; Moats, 2020; National Reading Panel, 2000; Wolf, 2007). The comprehensive literacy approach aligns with frameworks like Scarborough's Rope, which illustrates how multiple skills interact to produce proficient reading (Scarborough, 2001). Please refer to the [Department Literacy page](#) for more information.

Comprehensive literacy also encompasses writing instruction, focusing on the development of writing processes, conventions, and organization (Hochman & Wexler, 2024; Sedita, 2009, 2023). Integrating writing across subject areas allows students to deepen their understanding of content and build literacy in varied contexts, with research indicating the importance of embedding writing into other academic disciplines to strengthen both reading and writing skills (Graham & Hebert, 2010). Students learn to express themselves, construct arguments, and respond thoughtfully to text, developing critical thinking skills and a command of written communication (Shanahan, 2016).

In addition to reading and writing, comprehensive literacy includes oral language development. Speaking and listening are foundational to literacy as they build vocabulary, comprehension, and interactive communication skills (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Structured discussions, storytelling, and vocabulary-rich conversations enhance students' language proficiency, benefiting both their reading comprehension and expressive abilities (Beck et al. 2013; Murphy et al., 2009).

A comprehensive literacy framework emphasizes access and providing all students—regardless of background or ability—with the instruction they need (Erickson & Koppenhaver, 2020). This is achieved through differentiated instruction, which adapts teaching methods and materials to meet students' needs (Tomlinson, 2014). Interventions, such as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), ensure that students who need additional help receive targeted support while advanced learners are challenged appropriately (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2006).

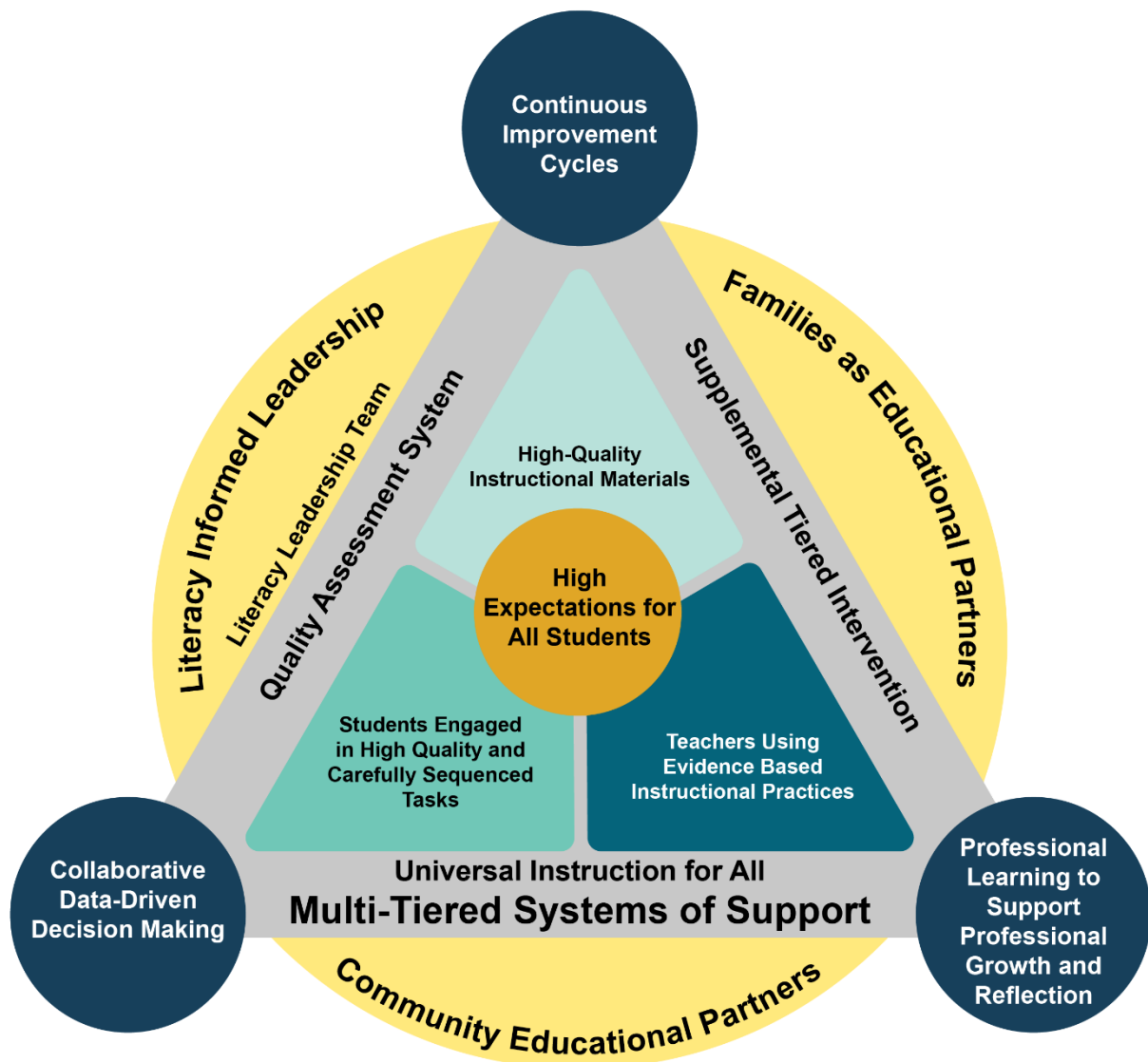
Professional learning for educators is a crucial element of comprehensive literacy. Teachers must be well-prepared to use evidence-based practices, assess student progress, and respond effectively to individual needs (Knight, 2007). Continuous training on current research and instructional strategies allows educators to improve their teaching and foster a strong literacy foundation for every student (Walsh et al., 2006). Comprehensive literacy also encompasses writing instruction, focusing on the development of writing processes, conventions, and organization (Hochman & Wexler, 2024; Sedita, 2009, 2023). Integrating writing across subject areas allows students to deepen their understanding of content and build literacy in varied contexts, with research indicating the importance of embedding writing into other academic disciplines to strengthen both reading and writing skills (Graham & Hebert,

2010). Students learn to express themselves, construct arguments, and respond thoughtfully to text, developing critical thinking skills and a command of written communication (Shanahan, 2016).

Ultimately, comprehensive literacy extends beyond basic reading and writing skills to develop critical thinkers, effective communicators, and lifelong learners. By addressing the wide range of literacy skills across reading, writing, speaking, and listening and grounding instruction in research-based practices, comprehensive literacy prepares students for academic success and engaged citizenship (Duke et al., 2018).

Literacy Framework

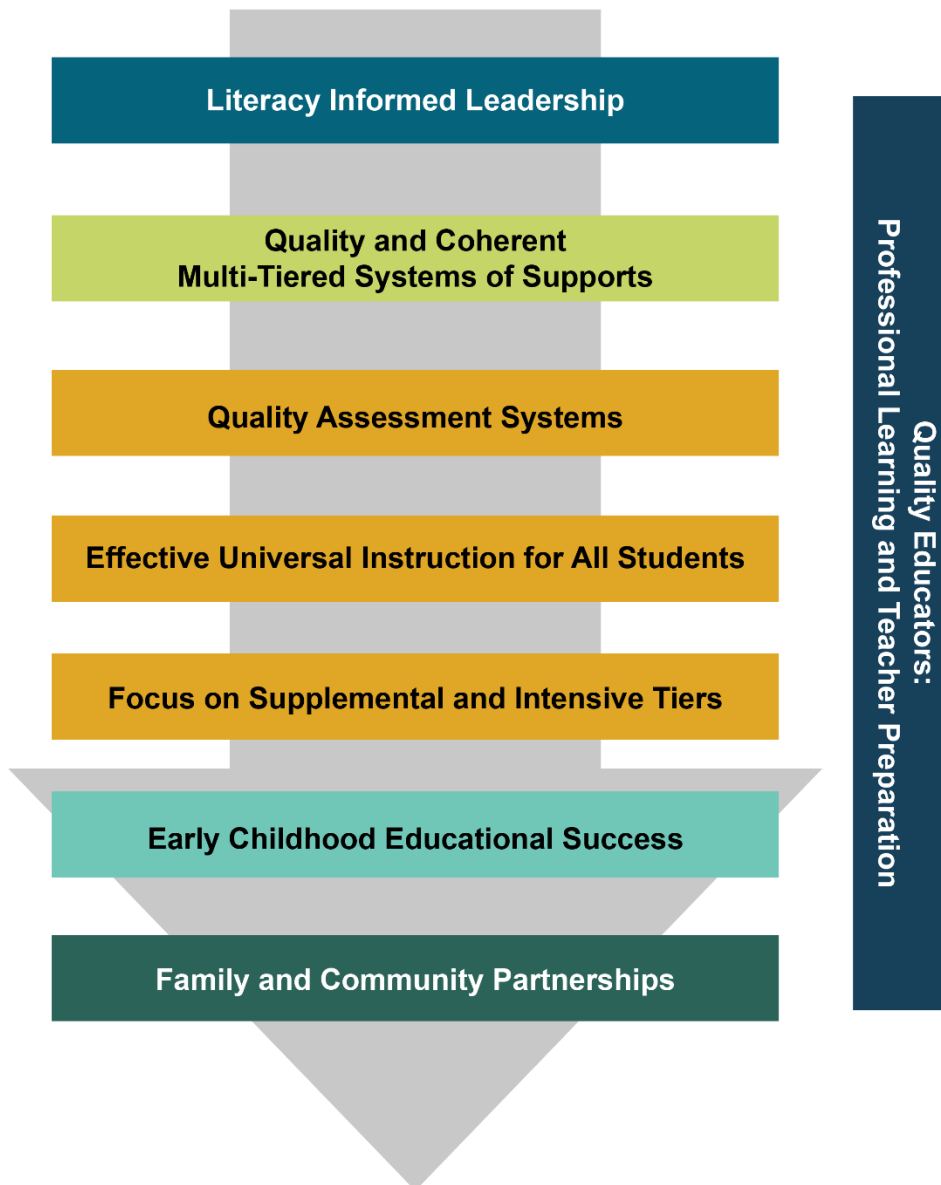
The Iowa CSLP is built upon a literacy framework designed to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and that the current gaps in achievement and growth rates between student groups are eliminated. At the core of this plan is the unwavering commitment to high expectations for all students. Teachers' beliefs in students' abilities to perform at high levels (Ferguson, 2003; Hattie, 2008; TNTP, 2018) grounds this framework and literacy plan. The Iowa CSLP outlines a cohesive approach to literacy that integrates five key levers to advance literacy achievement and growth for all Iowa children and students from birth to grade 12: 1) literacy-informed leadership, 2) Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), which includes quality assessment systems, effective universal instruction for all students, and a focus on supplemental and intensive tiers of instruction; 3) early childhood educational success, 4) family and community partnerships, and 5) improved educator effectiveness through professional learning opportunities and teacher preparation. Each component plays a critical role in the collective goal of strengthening early literacy through evidence-based reading instruction that improves learning and life outcomes for every student in Iowa.



Literacy-Informed Leadership

Effective leadership is foundational to the success of literacy initiatives. Literacy-informed leaders at all levels, from superintendents to principals, are equipped with knowledge and strategies to support high-quality literacy instruction. By guiding schools to adopt evidence-based practices and by fostering a culture of literacy, these leaders are essential in ensuring that literacy goals align with the highest standards. Their leadership also promotes accountability, collaboration, and continuous improvement across districts and schools.

Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan Flowchart



Quality and Coherent Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

A well-structured MTSS framework ensures that all students, regardless of their needs, receive appropriate and timely support. This system includes three essential elements:

Quality Assessment Systems to monitor progress and identify students in need of additional support, enabling educators to make data-driven decisions.

Effective Universal Instruction for all students, emphasizing high-quality instruction, engagement in sequenced tasks, and the use of evidence-based practices. Universal instruction provides a strong foundation where all students benefit from high-quality materials and teaching strategies.

Targeted Support based on supplemental and intensive tiers for students who require additional assistance, ensuring that interventions are carefully aligned with each student's unique needs. This layered approach supports students to reach their full potential and addresses any barriers to literacy success.

Early Childhood Educational Success

Early literacy development is crucial for long-term academic achievement. By investing in quality early childhood education, Iowa's literacy plan ensures that foundational skills are in place from the start, setting students on a trajectory of success. Early literacy experiences—whether through play-based learning, language-rich environments, or early exposure to books—establish the cognitive, social, and behavioral groundwork for future literacy and learning.

Family and Community Partnerships

Families and communities are vital partners in supporting literacy development. By involving families in literacy efforts, schools can extend learning beyond the classroom and encourage literacy-rich activities at home. Community organizations and educational partners also provide valuable resources and support, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and reinforcing the message that literacy is a community-wide priority.

Quality Educators with Ongoing Professional Learning

Highly skilled and well-prepared educators are at the heart of effective literacy instruction. The Iowa Literacy Plan emphasizes the importance of professional learning and improved teacher preparation programs focused on literacy instruction. By investing in ongoing training, educators stay updated on the latest research, instructional practices, and effective literacy interventions. When teachers are well-equipped, they can deliver high-quality, evidence-based instruction that engages all students, fostering a love for learning and ensuring that every student can thrive.

In addition, the Iowa CSLP focuses on improving teacher preparation programs across university and college systems in the state of Iowa. Educators at institutions of higher education will receive additional professional learning around the Science of Reading and comprehensive literacy through the support of the CLSD Grant and will work collaboratively to ground their syllabi and course content in the vast body of knowledge known as the Science of Reading.

These five components form an interconnected framework designed to support literacy development at every stage and level. Each component reinforces the others, ensuring that Iowa's approach to literacy is robust and effective. Together, they uphold the core value of high expectations for all students, ensuring that every child in Iowa has the opportunity to become a confident, capable reader and learner.

Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan

Recommendations

Note: The professional learning component is threaded throughout each of the first four components and is indicated in the following way: **Professional Learning |**

Literacy Informed Leadership

The first component of Iowa's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan is Literacy Informed Leadership, emphasizing that high literacy achievement requires strong, literacy-aware leaders at the district and school levels, such as superintendents and principals. These leaders, knowledgeable about literacy research and practices in assessment, instruction, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and professional learning, set the vision for literacy aligned with evidence-based practices (ILA, 2019). Principals, second only to teachers in their impact on student achievement, play a crucial role (Fullan & Pinchot, 2018; Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2008).

Literacy Leadership Teams (LLT) further support literacy improvement by fostering collaboration and ensuring research-based practices in classrooms. They guide the school-wide literacy mission, promote shared responsibility, and model effective practices through collaborative learning (Morgan & Clonts, 2008). This distributed leadership framework encourages commitment from all staff, aligning with the Internal Coherence Framework for sustainable literacy initiatives (Education Northwest, 2021; Forman et al., 2017; Stosich et al., 2019).

Recommendations

1. Bolster the literacy knowledge of superintendents and school administrators through professional learning experiences.
 - Attend [Iowa LETRS® Administrator](#) training.
 - Review the [Iowa Standards Professional Learning Opportunities](#) recordings and content to support implementation of the revised 2024 Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.
 - Utilize state resources such as:
 - i. [Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook](#)
 - ii. [Iowa Dyslexia Handbook](#)
 - Utilize national resources such as:
 - i. [International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards](#) (2018)
 - ii. [International Literacy Association Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals](#) (2017)
 - Join a cohort of the National Institute for School Leadership (NISL) training (offered to CLSD grantees).
2. Develop district and/or school-level Literacy Leadership Team (LLT).
 - **Professional Learning |** Identify key literacy learning resources to explore and study as a team.
 - **Professional Learning |** Develop a set of resources and learning activities to support teacher learning.
3. Complete a Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment of the current system (aligned with the district SAMI results), including instruction in literacy courses, interventions, and content areas, including support for ELs, instructional materials, and MTSS plans (CLSD grant work).
4. Develop a five- to eight-year Local Literacy Plan.

State Resources

1. Guide for developing Local Literacy Teams, sets of resources for teams to study, and study guides (To Be Developed—TBD—CLSD grant work).
2. Comprehensive Literacy Needs Assessment Template that coincides with the SAMI (TBD, CLSD grant work).
3. Professional Learning | Provide a list of Literacy Professional Learning support providers who have been trained to complete literacy audits (TBD, CLSD grant work).
4. Asynchronous webinars that teach districts, community schools, and early childhood education programs how to create local literacy plans (TBD, CLSD grant work).
5. Local literacy plan templates (TBD, CLSD grant work).
6. Iowa's Literacy and Evidence-Based Clearinghouse on the Department website (TBD, CLSD grant work).
7. Monthly publication of [Literacy News You Can Use](#).

Quality and Coherent Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)

Quality Assessment Systems

Recommendations

1. Administer an [approved universal screener](#) three times a year.
2. Identify and implement diagnostic assessments to support the more targeted, supplemental, and intensive tiers of instruction.
3. Implement an assessment or system of assessments for monitoring student growth and progress on supplemental and intensive tiers of instruction.
4. Use formative assessments to make day-to-day instructional decisions.
5. Develop quarterly curriculum-based and/or standards-aligned assessments to measure students' grade-level performance.
6. Ensure that learning communities are in place to engage in data-based discussions and decision-making.

State Resources

1. FastBridge, an assessment suite from Renaissance Learning, to support the implementation of Early Literacy Iowa and MTSS.
2. Guide for additional [Literacy Assessments Meeting the Requirements of 279.68/ELI](#).
3. Central location for district and school data: [Iowa School Performance Profiles](#) (ISPP).
4. Iowa's Panorama Student Success to be used for an MTSS data platform.
5. [Every Student Succeeds Act: Iowa School Performance Profile Data Review Guide](#). This data review guide supports schools in the annual review and analysis of ISPP data. It provides basic steps and guiding questions to support teams in review and initial interpretation.
6. ESSA Data Review for Designated Schools [online learning module](#) that can be used to support the data review process.

Universal Instruction for All Students

In the Iowa CSLP, Universal Tier I instruction is foundational, ensuring that all students receive access to high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction in alignment with state standards. At the heart of Universal Tier I MTSS lies a commitment to delivering rigorous and responsive instruction tailored to meet every student's learning needs. This tier serves as the core instructional framework that all

students experience, designed to promote literacy growth and proficiency from early childhood through graduation.

To achieve literacy outcomes that prepare students for lifelong success, Tier I instruction must incorporate high-quality instructional materials (HQIMs), systematically aligned with Iowa's standards, ensuring consistency, clarity, and comprehensiveness across all classrooms. These materials not only meet academic requirements but are thoughtfully selected to reflect various perspectives, supporting an environment where all students feel represented and empowered to learn.

Tier I instruction includes setting and maintaining high expectations for every student. Through well-trained educators, consistent access to resources, and a commitment to continuous improvement, Iowa's approach prioritizes literacy for all, regardless of background or prior achievement.

Recommendations

1. Bolster universal instruction by integrating high-leverage, evidence-based practices across all levels of instruction and all disciplines in all educational entities from birth to grade 12.
2. Implement evidence-based, universal, Tier I support for ELs and students with reading disabilities across literacy and content area classrooms from grades PK–12.
3. Adopt a set of HQIMs for literacy and ELA aligned with comprehensive literacy instruction and [Iowa's Academic Standards for ELA and Literacy](#).
4. Engage in regular data-based decision-making conversations to analyze the impact of the universal materials and instruction.
5. **Professional Learning** | Ensure that learning communities are in place to provide educators with collaborative structures for engaging in continuous improvement conversations around new materials, curriculum, lesson plans, and student work.
6. **Professional Learning** | Provide curriculum-based coaching for educators.

State Resources

1. Provide stakeholders with an Evidence-Based Practice Guide (CLSD grant work).
2. Provide stakeholders with HQIM review tools and rubrics (CLSD grant work).
3. Provide a list of recommended HQIMs for ELA and literacy interventions (CLSD grant work).
4. Provide districts with [Iowa's Universal Tier Guide](#) (Department, 2023) and corresponding professional learning modules, which includes:
 - a. Support for planning, organizing, and leading MTSS and the Continuous Improvement process (CIP).
 - b. **Professional Learning** | Iowa's just in time learning, professional learning cycle, unit planning, lesson planning, scaffolding unfinished learning.
5. **Professional Learning** | Develop a list of approved professional learning providers who can support districts with professional learning services and content aligned with evidence-based practices and provide curriculum-based coaching (CLSD grant work).
6. **Professional Learning** | Continue to partner with the IRRC to develop high-quality professional learning resources.

Focus on Supplemental and Intensive Tiers

Within Iowa's state literacy plan, the supplemental (Tier II) and intensive (Tier III) tiers of the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) play critical roles in ensuring that every student receives the tailored instruction they need to thrive. These tiers provide additional layers of support beyond the core (Tier I) instruction, addressing the needs of students who require targeted or intensive interventions to achieve literacy success. By delivering these supports in a systematic, evidence-based manner, the

MTSS framework creates a pathway for all students to progress in their literacy journey, regardless of initial skill level or learning challenges.

The supplemental Tier II level provides targeted support in small group settings, designed for students who need more focused instruction to address specific literacy gaps. This tier is intended to provide timely, research-driven interventions that align with core instruction, enhancing students' access to the essential skills they need to progress toward grade-level proficiency.

For students requiring even more personalized, sustained support, the intensive Tier III level offers individualized instruction tailored to the student's unique needs. This tier emphasizes high-frequency, data-driven interventions that closely monitor progress and make adjustments based on each student's response. Through these targeted approaches, Iowa's MTSS structure upholds a commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of their starting point, have the opportunity to succeed.

Recommendations

1. Prioritize time within school schedules to support supplemental and intensive tiers.
2. Ensure that district and school budgets allow for hiring literacy specialists and interventionists.
3. Use data-based decision-making to determine the level of intensity needed for student placement in interventions.
4. Ensure that scientifically and evidence-based materials are utilized for Tiers II and III.
5. Align instruction and evidence-based practices across Tier I, Tier II, and Tier III.
6. Continue to leverage personalized reading tutors, such as Reading Assistant featuring Amira.
7. Monitor student progress frequently to assess intervention effectiveness.
8. Base decisions for student progress on demonstrated growth.
9. Utilize Personalized Reading Plans with students who are not proficient with literacy.

State Resources

1. Provide an [MTSS Supplemental and Intensive Tier Guide](#).
2. Provide guidance and tools for intervention materials adoption (CLSD grant work).
3. Provide recommendations for interventions and evidence-based practices within the Literacy and Evidence-Based Practices Clearinghouse (CLSD grant work).
4. See prior support for data provided by the Department under Assessment.

Early Childhood Educational Success

Early childhood success supports lifelong literacy achievement and academic readiness, marking a critical period where foundational skills in language, communication, and cognitive development are formed. The Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan recognizes that the early years—birth through age five—are essential for setting students on a path toward reading proficiency and overall academic success. During this formative stage, children's experiences with language and literacy directly impact their ability to engage with more complex learning in later grades. By investing in early literacy instruction upon which Iowa's broader literacy initiatives build, Iowa creates a seamless transition into the state's literacy standards and expectations at every stage of education.

Recommendations

1. Ensure that there is a strong understanding of the [Iowa Early Learning Standards](#).
2. Include early childhood literacy in your district's Birth to 12 Literacy Plan.
3. Provide families and caregivers with early literacy resources to support literacy and language development at home.
4. Ensure that scientifically aligned and evidence-based materials are being used to support preschool literacy programs.

State Resources

1. Provide [We are ECI: Early Literacy Plan 2023-2026](#).
2. Identify a set of approved kindergarten readiness assessments (CLSD work).
3. Provide an annual “State of the State in Early Childhood” report (go to [“Annual Reports”](#)).
4. Identify quality family resources on the Early Childhood Iowa Website: [National Association for The Education of Young Children](#) [blog].
5. Develop an [integrated data system](#) for Iowa’s early childhood system to effectively and efficiently coordinate the work of health, social services, and education agencies, directly benefiting families.

Family and Community Partnerships

Strong family and community partnerships are essential to building a comprehensive literacy framework that supports student success across all stages of development. In the Iowa state literacy plan, family and community involvement is key to reinforcing literacy skills and fostering a culture that values lifelong learning. When families and communities actively participate in literacy development, students benefit from a more cohesive and supportive learning environment that extends beyond the classroom, creating multiple pathways to reinforce literacy in meaningful, everyday contexts.

Family and community partnerships promote a shared responsibility for literacy education, bridging the gap between school initiatives and home practices. These partnerships are also essential for creating access to resources, particularly for families facing economic, linguistic, or other barriers. By fostering open communication, offering family-centered resources, and embracing community involvement, Iowa’s literacy plan aims to build networks of support that empower families and communities as partners in education. This collaborative approach enhances literacy development and contributes to a well-rounded foundation of support, helping students to thrive and realize their full potential.

Recommendations

1. Partner with Early Childhood Iowa, Head Start, and other local educational and community organizations to complete the following:
 - a. Collaboratively, create a vision for family and community partnerships as part of your local literacy plan from birth to grade 12.
 - b. Identify responsible parties for leading the work.
 - c. Budget and plan for continuous progress monitoring, adjustments, and financial success.
2. Engage in the development and implementation of the Personalized Reading Plan for students not proficient in literacy.
3. Partner with educators in decision-making including retention.
4. Utilize decodable take-home book packs to reinforce reading skills.
5. Provide families with multilingual literacy resources, including newsletters, instructional videos, and tips on supporting literacy at home. Ensure that these resources are accessible, and usable, and help all families understand how they can play an active role in their child’s literacy development. Consider creating a digital hub with easy-to-access resources and information in multiple languages.

State Resources

1. Family and Community Literacy Partnership Guide for Birth to Grade 12, which includes a list of potential statewide partners (TBD, CLSD grant work).
2. [IRRC Caregivers Resource Hub](#) for eLearning content specially designed for the caregivers of K–12 students.

3. Iowa Academic Standards Parent Guides, in English and Spanish, provide an overview of what students will learn by the end of each grade level as directed by our [Iowa Standards for ELA and Literacy](#).

Educator Success

Educator success is a fundamental pillar of the Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan, recognizing that skilled, knowledgeable, and supported teachers are the most powerful drivers of student literacy achievement. The goal of ensuring educator success reflects Iowa's commitment to providing high-quality professional learning, ongoing support, and resources that equip educators with the tools they need to deliver effective, evidence-based literacy instruction. When educators have access to the best practices in literacy instruction, they are better prepared to meet the needs of their students, foster academic growth, and instill a lasting love for reading and learning.

This focus on educator success emphasizes the importance of building strong instructional teams across all levels, from early childhood through high school. Iowa's plan supports educators through professional learning communities, coaching, and collaborative problem-solving initiatives, all aimed at fostering a culture of continuous growth and excellence. By investing in the development and retention of highly trained literacy educators, Iowa is not only strengthening the quality of instruction in its schools but also ensuring that all students receive consistent, high-quality literacy education that prepares them for academic and life success.

Recommendations

1. Attend [LETRS®](#) for Elementary Educators or Early Childhood professional learning.
2. Review the [Standards Professional Learning Opportunities](#) recordings and content to support implementation of the revised 2024 Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects.
3. Utilize the national resources such as [International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards](#) and the [International Literacy Association Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals](#).
4. Higher Education Institutions align syllabi and content to comprehensive literacy and the Science of Reading for all literacy coursework, including the integration of disciplinary literacy instructional practices within content specific practicum courses. Institutions of Higher Education align syllabi with Science of Reading principles through use of the [Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook](#) or similar tools such as [Rhode Island Science of Reading and Structured Literacy Syllabi Refinement Tool](#) or those offered by [The Center for Reading Science](#).

State Resources

1. The Institute of Higher Education, Science of Reading Convening each summer, 2025–2029 (CLSD grant work).
2. [Iowa Reading Research Center Science of Reading Summit](#).
3. [IRRC eLearning Modules](#).
4. Development of the Iowa Literacy and Evidence-Based Clearinghouse (TBD, CLSD grant work).
5. Publication of the monthly [Literacy News You Can Use](#).

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