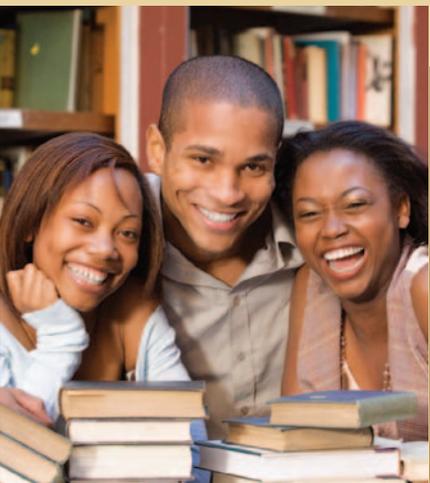




Louisiana's
COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY
PLAN



MAY 2011



Louisiana Department of
EDUCATION

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Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan Sections

- Louisiana's Emergent (Birth – PreK) Literacy Plan
- Louisiana's Elementary Literacy Plan
- Louisiana's Adolescent Literacy Plan

Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan Introduction



Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLiP) is grounded in the recognition that literacy is an absolutely essential set of skills for success in life. Recent projections show that by 2018 63% of all jobs will require at least some college (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010). A strong implication of this statistic is that all students now need to graduate high school adequately prepared for higher education, employment, and citizenship in the 21st Century. To prepare for such a future, Louisiana must deliver a high quality education for all students, with literacy as the cornerstone. To accomplish this goal, LACLiP accepts the basic premise that success in literacy is a combination of early care and experiences before school, followed by formal education in school settings. A system that involves these two contexts requires coordination and collaboration among many different institutions. This is a complex undertaking, but the current body of research provides a strong and solid foundation for development and implementation of such a statewide comprehensive literacy program.

Louisiana's State Literacy Team (SLT), comprised of multiple stakeholders with expertise in literacy development and education of children from birth through grade 12, offered substantial advice and guided efforts in creating LACLiP. This plan builds upon successful elements that have been tested, and represents a natural evolution in how the formal education system conceptualizes its role in helping children succeed in literacy, as well as life. **LACLiP represents a plan of action for a concrete and comprehensive approach to ensure Louisiana's students meet the literacy expectations set forth in the Common Core State Standards that will prepare them to enter college and the workforce ready to succeed.**

Louisiana's strategy for achieving *literacy for all* is driven by performance goals approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE):

- » Students enter kindergarten ready to learn;
- » Students are literate by third grade;
- » Students enter fourth grade on time;
- » Students perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts by eighth grade;
- » Students perform at or above grade level in math by eighth grade;
- » Students graduate on time;
- » Students enroll in post-secondary education or graduate workforce-ready; and
- » Students successfully complete at least one year of post-secondary education.

To reach these goals, the Louisiana Legislature has passed legislation, Act 54 (www.Act54.org), to ensure that effective teachers and leaders serve in every classroom and school. The knowledge base for teaching reading and writing is constantly changing. Act 54 monitors and improves teacher quality and teacher preparation, with attention to current and future developments in research related to literacy instruction.

LACLiP recognizes that literacy is a continuous developmental progression from birth through at least high school. To support transitions for students at critical times (i.e., transition to kindergarten and self-contained classroom instruction and from self-contained classrooms to content area classes with different teachers for each class), **LACLiP is comprised of three levels to draw attention to the different emphases in each level: Emergent Literacy, Elementary Literacy, and Adolescent Literacy.** Emergent Literacy describes the development of literacy from birth, when communication and language develop within social interactions. Building on Emergent Literacy, Elementary Literacy refers to the development of literacy from kindergarten to third grade, when formal literacy instruction begins. Adolescent Literacy continues the development from fourth grade through high school, when students face increasingly challenging or advanced text in different disciplines. Although the plan is presented in three levels, many schools include grades from more than one level. It is important that implementation of any level consider the other levels. For example, it is critical that implementation of Elementary Literacy consider the outcomes of Emergent Literacy. In a parallel fashion, Adolescent Literacy must consider the development through Elementary Literacy.

Recognizing that diversity among individuals is the norm, LACLiP addresses evidence-based strategies and best practices designed to meet the needs of all learners, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities. To ensure consistency and continuity across all ages and grade levels, LACLiP is comprised of five key components that provide a deep, well-informed orientation toward improving outcomes for all students:

- » Leadership and Sustainability
- » Standards-Based Curriculum
- » Assessment System
- » Instruction and Intervention (RTI)
- » Professional Learning and Resources

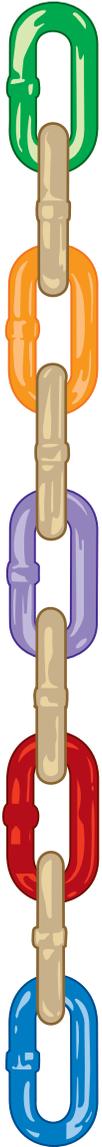
These components embody Louisiana’s School Improvement Strategies, as illustrated and described on the following pages. Each level of LACLiP (Emergent, Elementary, and Adolescent) contains an Implementation Guide addressing these components in tables that include action steps organized into a cyclical progression: *Beginning to Plan*, *Beginning to Implement*, *Expanding Emphasis*, and *Sustaining the Plan*. The action steps offer suggestions for implementing best practices that schools and childcare providers, supported by district and state actions, can incorporate into a school-wide or system-wide model for improving literacy outcomes for students. Each table is accompanied by a narrative that provides a concise description of best practices to ensure a common understanding of concepts.

A *Literacy Capacity Survey* at each level serves as the starting point for taking stock of current practices and resources and identifying strengths and challenges for implementing a school improvement plan. School or site-based leadership teams should use the results of the literacy survey, as well as other sources of internal data, to prioritize decisions and actions for implementing a school improvement plan. Once a school has planned for and has begun to implement its School Improvement Plan, it is important to take steps to sustain the literacy improvements that show positive impacts on attaining state performance goals. Such constant improvement in literacy instruction is essential for success in preparing students for college or work to assume productive and satisfying roles in society.

Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan Components

After carefully reviewing the research, policies, and promising practices on literacy, Louisiana has developed a Comprehensive Literacy Plan which describes five interconnected components important to improving literacy for all.

The five core components are:



Leadership and Sustainability

Creating shared leadership and plans for organizing, implementing, and sustaining an effective approach to literacy

Standards-Based Curriculum

Examining Louisiana's Standards and Comprehensive Curriculum through the lens of literacy

Assessment System

Identifying and using valid and reliable measures to screen, progress monitor, and diagnose literacy needs

Instruction and Intervention (RTI)

Implementing research-based strategies, promoting active engagement, and establishing systems of support

Professional Learning and Resources

Developing learning opportunities, resources, and coordinated support services that enhance literacy learning for children and educators

Literacy Plan Components and School Improvement Strategies Matrix

School Improvement Strategy	Leadership and Sustainability	Standards-Based Curriculum	Assessment System	Instruction and Intervention	Professional Learning and Resources
1 Data-Driven Decision Making	•	•	✓	•	•
2 Job-Embedded Professional Development	•	•	•	•	✓
3 Response to Intervention (RTI)	•	•	•	✓	•
4 Curriculum Alignment	•	✓	•	•	•
5 Meaningful Engaged Learning	•	•	•	✓	•

- ✓ This is the primary component most useful to implementing the school improvement strategy.
- This component provides additional information to support the school improvement strategy.

The following are brief descriptions of the five research-based strategies the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) recommends for use in the school improvement process:

1. Response to Intervention (RTI)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a general education process that provides students with high-quality research-based instruction and interventions that are matched to the student's specific needs. Data are used to drive decisions about student progress and to determine the appropriate instructional plan necessary for a student to achieve grade-level success. Daily instruction is delivered to maximize instruction and intervention benefits.

RTI in Louisiana follows a three-tiered process – Tier I provides high-quality instruction that is differentiated to meet each student's needs in the general education setting. Tier II provides targeted interventions for students who need support in addition to Tier I instruction. Tier III, also in addition to Tier I instruction, provides intensive interventions for students significantly below grade level, and/or to students who do not respond to Tier II instruction. RTI is a dynamic process that has dramatically improved the skill level of students in Louisiana and across the country, as measured by state assessment.

2. Data-Driven Decision Making

Data-driven decision making is the ongoing process of collecting, analyzing, and using numerous types of data effectively. Changes driven by data have a better chance of assisting school leaders in meeting school improvement goals. For districts and schools to identify and meet the specific needs of students, detail data must be collected and disaggregated (Boudett, City, & Murnane, 2004).

3. Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development (e.g., study groups, coaching, job shadowing) is also known as on-the-job-learning. It occurs while school leaders and staff engage in their daily work. Research shows traditional methods of professional development, such as attending in-services and conferences, are not always effective. Job-embedded learning maximizes time efficiency, promotes immediate application of what is learned, and is more sustainable and cost-effective than “one-shot” workshops (e-Lead: Leadership for Student Success, 2005).

4. Curriculum Alignment

Curriculum alignment has been defined as the “congruence of the content, context, and cognitive demands present in the written, taught, and tested curriculum” (English & Steffy, 2001). Addressing curriculum alignment includes: 1) the scope of the content covered, 2) the level of sophistication and complexity of the content, 3) the sequence of the content to be presented, and 4) the richness of the content (Reeves, 2003; English & Steffy, 2001). Research indicates an aligned curriculum increases student achievement, engagement, attendance, and graduation rates. In addition, curriculum alignment allows teachers to focus on lessons and meaningful content (Reeves, 2003).

5. Meaningful Engaged Learning (MEL)

Current research indicates that students learn when they are highly motivated in meaningful tasks. Student motivation is one aspect of MEL; however, motivation is more than a quality within students. In fact, motivation is greatly affected by the attitudes and actions of the educators themselves. Recognizing this and the changing needs of the 21st century, researchers have determined that reform of instruction and strategies is necessary. Three models that have been recognized as leaders in MEL are:

- » North Central Educational Laboratory (NCREL), which includes specific indicators of engaged learning:
 - › Vision of Engaged Learning
 - › Tasks for Engaged Learning
 - › Assessment of Engaged Learning
 - › Instructional Models and Strategies for Engaged Learning
- » Learning Context for Engaged Learning
 - › Grouping for Engaged Learning
 - › Teacher Roles for Engaged Learning
 - › Student Roles for Engaged Learning (<http://www.ncrel.org>)
- » Schlechty Center for Leadership in School Reform, which is based on theories of change and of engagement
- » Mike Muir of the Maine Center for Meaningful Engaged Learning (McMEL), which has identified four key components of MEL:
 - › Relationship and Rapport
 - › Experience
 - › Motivation
 - › Meaning

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Introduction

Literacy development begins very early in life when babies begin to learn the turn taking “dance” of communication exchange. These “conversations” begin as glances and stares and soon take on a verbal quality. Unintentional communication techniques such as cooing, babbling, and crying gradually expand to more intentional techniques, which range from pointing and use of words to “reading” from pictures and “writing” with scribbles (Bardige & Segal, 2005; Im, et al., 2007). These early behaviors are examples of emergent literacy and are an important part of children’s literacy development. With the support of parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and teachers, as well as exposure to a literacy-rich environment, children successfully progress from emergent to conventional reading.

Although literacy is a continuous developmental progression from birth through at least high school, the early childhood years are the most important period for literacy development. Pre-reading skills develop best in a world that is rich with sounds, sights, and consistent exposure to the speech and language of others. Study of the effect of speech and language development shows that the amount and quality of spoken interactions between adults and young children is a great predictor of a child’s success in school and later life (Hart and Risley, 1999).

With evidence showing that children learn early literacy skills from birth, state education staff, with a team of literacy experts, examined the most recent research-based strategies and policies to create **Louisiana’s (Birth-PreK) Emergent Literacy Plan** to boost early childhood language and literacy practices. Other stakeholders, including parents and policy makers, also offered input and reviewed the plan. This action plan **recognizes that in order for all students to meet the literacy expectations set forth in the Common Core State Standards, each child’s potential must be recognized and developed from infancy.**

The plan is grounded in the recognition that early care and education is a multifaceted system that involves more than a single institution. It builds on successful elements that have been tested and represents a natural evolution in how the education system conceptualizes its role in helping children succeed in literacy, as well as life.

The plan is informed by recommendations in *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel* (2008) and two National Academy of Science reports, specifically *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development* (2000) and *Eager to Learn: Educating Our Preschoolers* (2000), which include:

- » Full inclusion of the learning needs of children in the first five years as a central activity for all participants in all settings

and viewing infants, toddlers, and young children with a real connection to schools and later literacy development;

- » Early and continuous engagement of families, so they can become fully knowledgeable, empowered partners who effectively support their children’s literacy and learning;
- » Proactive intercession to prevent problems associated with transition times when children are highly vulnerable – specifically, the first transition into “big school;” and
- » Active implementation of data collection activities at the child, family, childcare, Early Head Start, Head Start, school, and school system levels to provide timely feedback about the degree to which recommended activities are implemented.

The recommendations and actions offered in Louisiana’s Emergent Literacy Plan emanate from these basic understandings and findings from the research on early literacy showing that all the domains of a child’s development, including literacy, are interrelated and interdependent. Key early literacy predictors of reading and school success, including oral language, alphabetic code, and print knowledge, are emphasized and include clear adaptations for children with special needs.

To ensure consistency and continuity across all ages and grade levels, the Emergent Literacy Plan describes and aligns appropriate and effective elements with those in the Elementary Literacy Plan using five core components:

- » Leadership and Sustainability
- » Standards-Based Curriculum
- » Assessment System
- » Instruction and Intervention (RTI)
- » Professional Learning and Resources

In addition to the State Literacy Team listed inside the front cover, the Louisiana Department of Education acknowledges the following stakeholders for their input on the Emergent Literacy Plan:

Anita Ashford	Rachelle Carlock	Renese Jackson	Deborah Nelson	Mary Sciaraffa, Ph.D.	Emily Williamson, Ed.D.
Kay Arceneaux	Jo Carroll	Shelia Matute	Stacy Patrick	John Warner Smith	Faye White, Ph.D.
Julia Bland	Renee Casbergue, Ph.D.	Patrouchka Moise	Catherine Robin	Pam Sund	

Emergent (Birth - PreK) Literacy Plan Components

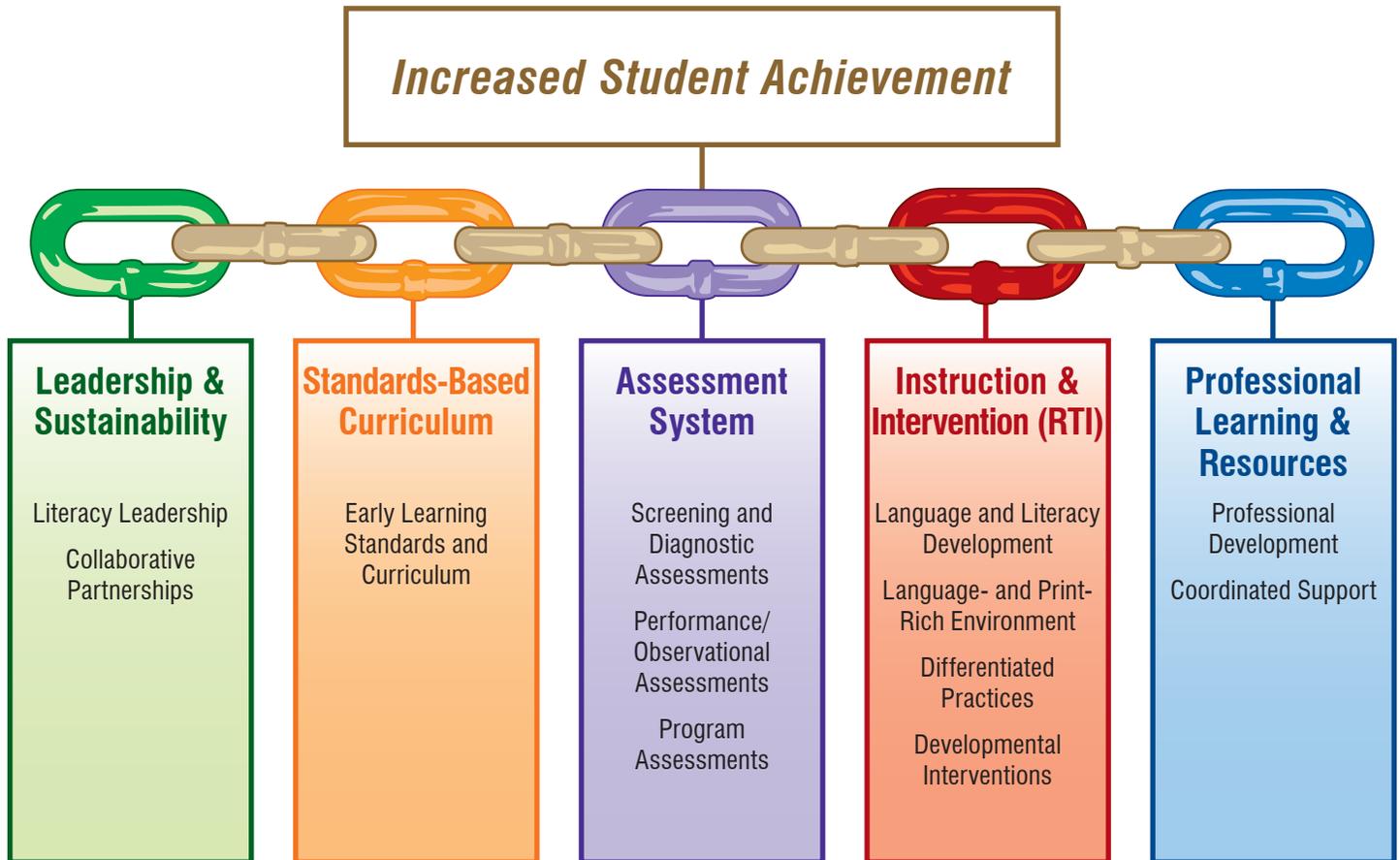
Key Elements		Leadership and Sustainability	Standards-Based Curriculum	Assessment System	Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	Professional Learning and Resources
INSTRUCTION	1 Language and Literacy Development	•	•	•	✓	•
	2 Language- and Print-Rich Environment	•	•	•	✓	•
	3 Early Learning Standards and Curriculum	•	✓	•	•	•
	4 Differentiated Practices	•	•	•	✓	•
	5 Developmental Interventions	•	•	•	✓	•
	6 Screening and Diagnostic Assessments	•	•	✓	•	•
	7 Performance/Observational Assessments	•	•	✓	•	•
INFRASTRUCTURE	8 Professional Development	•	•	•	•	✓
	9 Program Assessments	•	•	✓	•	•
	10 Collaborative Partnerships	✓				•
	11 Literacy Leadership	✓	•	•	•	•
	12 Coordinated Support	•				✓

✓ This component in the plan explains the steps necessary to implement the element.

• This component provides additional information to support the element.

Emergent Literacy Plan Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide consists of a Narrative and Table for each of the five components. The narrative provides a concise description of each element to ensure a common understanding of concepts. The table includes action steps necessary to improve literacy outcomes for children birth to prekindergarten.





Successful implementation of a research-informed, comprehensive early childhood literacy plan requires effective leadership that promotes shared responsibility and commitment for supporting children’s literacy development. Leadership reaches into the community to involve all partners who work with and serve young children and their families (i.e., school districts, private childcare, parents, family home care, Early Head Start, Head Start, non-public and faith-based programs). Collaboration among these partners is a critical first step to ensure all children, including English language learners and those with exceptionalities (e.g., disabilities, gifted/talented), have access to early childhood programs with strong literacy components. This partnership also involves strong coordination and collaboration between the Department of Education; the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS); the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH); and BrightStart (<http://www.brightstartla.org/>), Louisiana’s early childhood advisory council.

Ideally, school districts take the lead in establishing community-based, collaborative partnerships to strengthen school readiness for all children. These partnerships give schools and districts opportunities they would not otherwise have. Genuine partnerships are mutually beneficial experiences (Killion, 2011). The investment in time and effort provides added value to schools, partners, and, most importantly, high-quality early childhood experiences for all children.

Collaborative partnerships support the development of early literacy skills and future academic success by ensuring children are prepared to have a successful kindergarten experience. To ensure a common understanding of the skills necessary for success, the Louisiana Department of Education engaged a variety of stakeholders in developing an explicit definition of kindergarten readiness. This definition (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/17986.pdf>) addresses all domains of learning, with emphasis on language and literacy skills. To nurture this readiness and success beyond kindergarten, policy makers, early childhood professionals, and district leaders must work together to create “enduring ties” that focus on ready schools, ready families, and ready communities.

Literacy Leadership

Literacy leadership is focused on promoting and supporting partnerships between schools and childcare services that support families and early learning for young children. Findings from research on the benefits of joint planning and delivering of early childhood programs show that such schools and communities are able to maximize resources, improve and expand services, minimize barriers to implementation, and provide higher quality programs (Patton, 2004). Literacy leadership is key; therefore, essential to implementing and sustaining early literacy initiatives are literacy leaders who:

- » Create a common vision and mission of quality early childhood education;
- » Include early care and education providers;
- » Develop common understandings on best practices in early childhood education;



- » Create safe environments that build trusting relationships with partners;
- » Recognize and use the strengths and assets of each partner;
- » Identify community needs around preschool services;
- » Establish channels of ongoing communication, such as regularly scheduled meetings and site visits; and
- » Involve families as important partners in their children’s development.

Equally important are leaders who work to establish, support, and sustain quality assurances (i.e., mechanisms and processes) to ensure accountability for investments to produce lasting, positive changes (Stebbins and Scott, 2007). A “mixed delivery model” is an example of investment which offers publicly funded prekindergarten in private childcare or Head Start settings. Quality assurances ensure:

- » Staff and leaders trained in effective, appropriate practices and strategies for supporting young children’s growth and development;
- » Implementation of high-quality, job-embedded professional development;
- » School leadership teams and/or advisory councils that provide feedback and guidance on planning and implementation of programs;

- » On-going review of student progress and outcomes; and
- » On-going evaluation of program effectiveness.

Collaborative Partnerships

Partnerships among childcare providers, parents, caregivers, community members, and schools help to establish consistent expectations and learning experiences to support young children’s literacy development and smooth transition into kindergarten.

According to Wat and Gayl (2009), a solid partnership leverages partners’ expertise and resources to support:

- 1. Basic program features**, such as duration, target population, location, and budget;
- 2. Quality standards** related to curriculum, classroom environment, staffing, assessments, and professional development; and
- 3. Comprehensive and supportive services**, including family involvement; before and after care; transportation; and screenings, referrals and other interventions (e.g., health, special needs, mental health).

Successful collaborations require strategic action and a sustained commitment from all partners to create a quality education plan that meets the needs of children and families. To maximize resources, minimize barriers to quality childcare access, and provide comprehensive services for all children and families, community partners should consider key questions to drive improvement efforts (Demma, 2010):

- » Are children on track to succeed when they enter kindergarten?
- » What are the characteristics of effective programs?
- » Is the quality of programs improving?
- » Which children have access to high-quality early care and education programs?

- » How prepared is the early care and education workforce to provide effective education and care for all children?
- » What policies and investments lead to a skilled and stable early care and education workforce?

A close partnership between the home and the early childhood program is essential to foster children’s optimal development (Im, et al., 2007). Parents must be engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive to the unique needs of families. Providing families with guidance on supporting their child’s early literacy development is instrumental in fostering the home and school partnership. The following links offer easy tips for parents to help build their child’s language and literacy: <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17210.pdf>, http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Parents/pb1070_ready.sflb.ashx, and <http://www.pbs.org/parents/readinglanguage/>.

Inherent in successful collaboration is a commitment to provide mentoring and transition programs between preschool and kindergarten, being sensitive to the effect these changes have on children. Leadership is key to establishing a coordinated transition plan, with input from all partners and stakeholders, to ease shifts between educational settings for both children and parents.

Early childhood settings can use a number of transitional activities to help children and parents adjust to new school settings. These activities include visits by preschool teachers and children to kindergarten classes; orientation sessions for preschool children and their parents; and individual meetings between teachers and parents. Activities that directly involve children tend to be more effective in helping them adjust to new school environments (Daniels, 2011).

In general, more is better, especially for children with disabilities (Fenlon, 2011) and those who are economically at risk (LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer, & Pianta, 2008). For example, for several months before the transition to school, sending and receiving teachers and staff should visit one another’s school and the child’s home. This kind of collaboration helps build trust and facilitates good working relationships.

Leadership and Sustainability:

Creating shared leadership and plans for organizing, implementing, and sustaining a comprehensive approach to literacy

Positive literacy outcomes start with strong leadership committed to implementing, supporting, and sustaining a quality literacy plan. Leadership from committed administrators, teachers, caregivers, community members, and parents can promote sustainability by anticipating, influencing, and effectively responding to changing conditions that affect progress. Additionally, collaborative partnerships can sustain an effective literacy plan by identifying *what* is to be sustained, *what resources* are needed, and *how to access* those resources.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Literacy Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the Literacy Capacity Survey and other local child and program data to evaluate current practices to determine strengths and needs Involve parents in literacy improvement efforts Provide stakeholders and partners with the State's kindergarten readiness definition (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17986.pdf) and use it to plan literacy improvements for children from birth to prekindergarten Study research-based strategies and resources aligned with early learning guidelines and standards and stages of language development Create a common vision and goals for language and literacy development Promote shared fiscal accountability and responsibility to accomplish vision and reach goals Plan targeted, sustained professional development of staff and/or caregivers, as well as principals, directors, and other administrators on age-appropriate language and literacy practices Plan for ongoing data collection and analysis to inform program development and improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that stakeholders understand literacy goals and their roles in meeting these goals Support use of research-based practices aligned with early learning guidelines and standards Establish a system of communication for sharing information with all partners (e.g., e-mails, newsletters, Web site) Build relationships with all providers of care and education services Create a culture and environment among all stakeholders that promotes and celebrates positive outcomes for children and families Model and communicate high expectations for all partners through commitment and careful implementation of sound practices Establish a climate of collaboration and shared decision-making Use information from program assessments to guide development and improve program quality Provide time and support for staff to participate in job-embedded professional development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze child performance and observational data to refine literacy goals and plans aligned to early learning guidelines and standards Provide stakeholders and partners access to program assessment results and guide analysis of data for program improvements Provide follow-up professional development and technical assistance based on data Reassign staff as needed, matching staff strengths to the needs of children Enlist experienced teachers and trainers in modeling developmentally appropriate practices Provide opportunities for staff, caregivers, and families to visit settings successful in implementing high-quality programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refocus literacy goals and actions based on child outcome data and mastery of standards Analyze program assessment data and determine programmatic improvements aligned to the standards Retain strong leaders and provide them with opportunities to model appropriate strategies and activities for peers and families Leverage funds to maximize efforts and to ensure adequate highly-qualified staff, materials, and resources necessary to reach language and literacy goals Identify new avenues of funding Share program data with partners and stakeholders, including families and policymakers

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Collaborative Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult the Louisiana Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (http://www.laccrra.org/) to assist in establishing partnerships with local childcare providers and to streamline professional development efforts Study research on “diverse” or “mixed” delivery settings (http://nieer.org/psm/index.php?article=254) Disaggregate and use subgroup data to strengthen literacy outcomes for all children, including English language learners and those with exceptionalities Study methods to engage families Schedule and provide time for partners to collaborate and review child outcomes and program goals Plan professional development to build understanding of meaningful relationships and routine-based play Plan transition activities (home visits, phone calls, orientation meetings) for children as they move across settings and from one level to the next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure partnerships include stakeholders from various early care and education settings and that members meet regularly Provide opportunities for staff to practice effective strategies in non-threatening situations Determine assessment measures that address the language and literacy needs of all children Provide families with links to resources that inform them of appropriate reading practices for very young children (e.g., http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17210.pdf) Provide transition activities for children as they move across settings and from one level to the next 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enlist support of literacy coaches, instructional specialists, speech-language pathologists, mentors, and other community professionals to implement effective strategies for language and literacy development Promote peer observations and debriefing sessions to analyze effectiveness of literacy practices Study child assessment results to make adjustments that support children’s language and literacy development Monitor effectiveness of cross-setting collaboration and transition efforts Develop new partnerships with professionals (e.g., public school and local library staff, museum staff) who work with families and can help support literacy efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize and celebrate staff/stakeholder accomplishments Continue to seek new partners to obtain fresh ideas and enhance sustainability Continue to study current research related to language and literacy development and share with stakeholders across settings Provide differentiated professional development (i.e., modeling, coaching, training, mentoring) based on needs of caregivers and teachers Promote public support for collaborative partnerships through mixed delivery settings



Early learning guidelines and early learning standards are essential elements of a quality literacy plan – one that will improve the quality and equity of literacy development for all children. Early learning guidelines identify expectations for intentional, high-quality experiences that early childhood practitioners and families provide young children. Early childhood standards provide the physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy milestones children reach at each developmental level. These milestones represent a continuum of abilities that, due to the uniqueness in development of children, are possibly attained at varying ages. Parents and caregivers can check a child’s development in relation to the milestones and provide opportunities and experiences that help build the language foundations needed for ongoing school success. Resources such as <http://www.yic.gov/earlychildhood/langdev.html> provide insight into ways parents and caregivers can interact with children to support their language development.

Evidence-based research identifies key skills in an early literacy curriculum that are essential for all children – oral language development, understanding of the alphabetic code, and knowledge and understanding of print and its use. Early learning guidelines and standards reinforce these skills and the potential for learning and growth in the infant, toddler, and preschool years. Louisiana’s guidelines and standards are articulated with K-12 programs to ensure consistency and continuity with overall literacy goals. Rich curriculum content and teacher and early care provider preparation are crucial to ensure guidelines and standards lead to child outcomes.

Early Learning Standards and Curriculum

Infants and Toddlers

The early childhood years are the most important period for literacy development. Early or emergent literacy refers to the foundational skills that children develop from birth. Babies babble, engage in “conversations” involving cooing, and imitate the tones and rhythms of adult talk. They soon begin to manipulate board books and alphabet blocks in their play, from which they learn to use a variety of symbols.

Emergent literacy is based on the premise that literacy is a continuum of abilities that children develop as they learn to use symbols to represent aspects of reality (Bardige and Segal, 2005). An established curriculum offers guidance for teachers, caregivers, and parents to develop young children’s literacy. Although children learn and develop at different rates, all children go through similar stages. *Louisiana’s Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three* serves as a framework for high quality practices and includes adjustments within the framework to support language and literacy development for infants and toddlers (<http://www.dss.state.la.us/assets/docs/searchable/OFS/LAEarlyLearningGuide.pdf>). These guidelines specify expectations for and provide information related to:

- » Development;
- » Supportive environments; and
- » Effective interactions and communication that promote positive outcomes.



Curriculum for children from birth through age three should be culturally and linguistically sensitive. Program staff should speak with parents to learn more about the environment, traditions, and language in the home, as well as about the skills and interests of the child. Additionally, staff should ask parents what sounds and words their toddler uses, in order to understand what the child is saying when the home language is not the language of the curriculum.

Best practices for infants and toddlers emphasize a routine-based approach in which “routines and play” are the curriculum. Positive relationships with caring adults who engage in many one-on-one, face-to-face interactions with children facilitate exploration and stimulate communication – the most important practice in children’s literacy development. Activities are intentional and emerge as a result of reflection on the child’s cues, needs, and interests. A relationship-based curriculum is embedded throughout the *Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three*.

Pre-Kindergarten

The *Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children* (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/17057.pdf>) serves as a major framework for literacy instruction in prekindergarten programs, childcare centers participating in the Quality Start Childcare Rating System, and Head Start Programs. The standards have been aligned with the Common Core State Standards and are designed to provide comprehensive support for all children, including English language learners and children with exceptionalities (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/18503.pdf>). Additionally, *The Head Start Child Development and Learning Framework: Promoting Positive Outcomes in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children 3-5 Years*

Old http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ecdh/eecd/Assessment/Child%20Outcomes/HS_Revised_Child_Outcomes_Framework.pdf) identifies developmental outcomes that Head Start and delegate agencies are responsible for addressing. Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum, based on the standards, supports reading, writing, listening, and speaking development through each content area and is available at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/2108.html>.

Whether in developing a curriculum or purchasing an existing curriculum, there are many decisions to make. Frede and Ackerman (2006) suggest various dimensions to consider when selecting a curriculum for young children:

- » Is it appropriate for the ages and abilities of the children?
- » Is it aligned with standards and evidence-based?
- » Does it provide guidance for differentiating teaching to meet the learning needs of every child?
- » Is it comprehensive, integrated, and thorough in addressing all domains?
- » Does it focus on relationships, and are there a range of strategies?
- » Does it include and inform families?
- » Does it link to timely and appropriate assessments?
- » Does it outline flexible routines, transitions, environment, materials, and experiences?

A standards-based curriculum also provides opportunities to support children's home culture and language. Such opportunities include the use of books and pictures that represent people of different races, ages, abilities, and genders in various roles.

A language- and print-rich environment, differentiated practices,

and developmental interventions are also key factors in an effective early literacy curriculum (addressed in detail in the Instruction and Intervention section). To maximize program effectiveness, teachers and caregivers establish routines, schedules, and management systems so children know what to expect and what is expected of them (Heroman and Jones, 2004). Children should be aware of and familiar with established daily routines, and positive behavior should be expected and supported. Young children need opportunities throughout the day to self-select materials, activities, and peers with whom to engage in literacy experiences. To set the stage for enhanced language and literacy development, programs should offer:

- » Inviting areas where children's work is displayed;
- » Opportunities for literacy experiences, including development of writing, throughout the day;
- » Engaging literacy activities using flannel boards and puppets;
- » A variety of technologies to help children develop new concepts (i.e., recorded books, computer games/activities, and music);
- » Activities that extend literacy beyond the classroom or care setting (puppet shows, trips to visit the library or bookmobile);
- » Room arrangements that support safe, easy movement of teachers or caregivers and children;
- » Space and sufficient materials for learning/activity/interest centers that are rotated periodically based on children's interests;
- » Schedules that support children's engagement in meaningful play, with embedded literacy and writing experiences;
- » Clear, positive routines and procedures; and
- » A positive behavior support system that is familiar to children.

Standards-Based Curriculum:

Examining Louisiana’s Standards and Comprehensive Curriculum through the lens of literacy

Louisiana’s Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three, Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children, the Comprehensive Curriculum, and supporting resources serve as a framework for attaining quality early learning environments necessary to meet the needs of young children.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Early Learning Standards and Curriculum (Infants and Toddlers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that families, staff, and caregivers are familiar with the Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines http://www.dss.state.la.us/assets/docs/searchable/OFS/LAEarlyLearningGuide.pdf Research and/or develop age-appropriate curriculum for each stage of development that addresses the early learning guidelines Provide professional development on age- and developmentally-appropriate activities Show families how to use developmentally-appropriate materials and strategies to promote children’s language and literacy development Ensure availability of a variety of books, media, and other literacy materials related to themes, projects, and topics of interest Develop collections of songs, language games, and stories Organize environments into interest areas or centers that facilitate literacy development Develop a daily schedule that includes routines and many opportunities for literacy activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in literacy activities with children individually and in small groups (2-3 children), aligning with early learning guidelines Provide children with opportunities to talk to and interact with others throughout the day Ensure that children have opportunities to experience verbal and nonverbal cues of language throughout the day Read to children frequently throughout the day, making story time a special part of everyday activities Model for children appropriate use of materials and interest areas Use rhymes, chants, and finger plays to promote language and literacy development Model how gestures, facial expressions, and body language can be used during communication opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a variety of literacy materials to reflect the child’s interest Provide opportunities outside of the regular setting to develop children’s literacy skills (e.g., trip to store/ restaurant/library, garden activities, nature walks) Engage in conversations with children in a variety of settings (e.g., meal times, getting dressed/undressed, outdoor play) that promote conversations Talk with families about children’s progress and provide them with strategies they can use to support their children’s literacy Ensure staff/caregivers read or tell stories multiple times throughout the day Read books and stories that have rhyme and repetition and encourage children to join in Refine literacy activities, materials, and interest centers, based on needs and interests of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide ongoing professional development focused on positive relationships and routine-based play Ensure that staff and caregivers, as well as families, receive information on the latest research related to effective literacy practices Enlist the support of librarians/ media specialists, and children’s museum staff to acquire adequate literacy materials and resources Allocate funding for literacy experiences that extend beyond the regular setting Continually update literacy materials and resources Scale up efforts to help all families and caregivers gain knowledge of how to support children’s language and literacy development
<p>Early Learning Standards and Curriculum (PreK)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study and discuss state early learning standards http://www.louisianaschools.net/ldc/uploads/17057.pdf Study curriculum that integrates literacy across all developmental domains Identify and plan intentional instructional strategies to teach vocabulary and background knowledge to support literacy development across all learning domains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based strategies aligned with early learning standards Provide opportunities for children to learn and practice routines Provide whole class, small group, and individual instruction for short periods of time, based on student needs and interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for staff and caregivers to determine progress toward addressing early learning standards Increase the variety of literacy materials, rotating based on student interest and topic of study Use assessment data to adjust teaching practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all staff receive ongoing professional development in literacy instruction and early learning standards Expand meaningful opportunities for children to write, speak, and listen Continue to celebrate and publish children’s work

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Early Learning Standards and Curriculum (PreK) <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask children open-ended questions to prompt conversations • Study a variety of strategies to incorporate writing into all areas of the curriculum • Develop a daily routine that includes many opportunities for literacy activities • Create inviting settings where children have opportunities to engage in literacy and writing activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select engaging, culturally diverse texts and other media that are age- and topic-appropriate • Use transition periods as opportunities for children to engage in a variety of literacy activities, such as rhymes, chants, and finger plays • Provide opportunities for children to manipulate sounds and words throughout the day • Provide opportunities for children to see that print has a variety of functions • Ensure multiple experiences throughout the day that engage children in letter naming activities and fluency activities, such as repeating chants and rhymes • Promote sustained, interactive conversations between teachers/children and children and their peers • Provide repeated exposure and practice for children to learn new words • Provide settings and activities that allow children to question, predict, hypothesize, and use language to process information. • Incorporate daily writing activities throughout the day • Ensure that literacy materials are accessible and encourage initiative and independence • Arrange interest areas for optimum movement of adults and children • Model appropriate use of materials and interest areas • Rotate materials and activities periodically to meet the needs and interests of children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities to include community members in activities that promote literacy (guest authors, dramatic readings, book fairs, creative productions) • Provide opportunities to access experiences outside of the regular setting that develop children's literacy skills (e.g., field trips, museum visits, garden activities, nature walks, writing in non-typical media) • Involve parents and families in their children's literacy experiences and provide opportunities for them to gain knowledge of the early childhood standards, as well as teaching methods that could be used to support children's literacy experiences • Provide opportunities for children to engage in conversations in various settings (meal times, outdoor play) that promote reciprocal conversations • Model how gestures, facial expressions, and body language can be used during communication opportunities • Publish children's writing products (dictated stories, simple sentences) • Continue to practice routines that will enable children to manage their activities and behaviors, both in and out of the regular setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create opportunities for staff to observe one another demonstrate lessons and dialogue about literacy instruction and early learning standards • Allocate funding to expand the collection of literacy materials • Enlist the support of librarians/media specialists and children's museum staff to acquire adequate literacy materials and resources • Develop additional literacy activities, materials, and interest centers guided by the needs and interests of children throughout the school year



Assessing the development of children is an important part of a quality early childhood education program. A comprehensive assessment system is ongoing, allowing for continued appraisal of children's progress, as well as the quality of programs. Accurate and timely assessment, along with analysis of assessment data, is essential for identifying children's needs, making instructional decisions, monitoring progress toward goals, evaluating the overall effectiveness and impact of the early literacy instruction, and reporting results to stakeholders. Screening, diagnostic, and performance/observational assessments are tools used to observe, document, analyze, and respond to children's early literacy and developmental needs. Those who administer these assessments should be adequately trained in administration.

Snow and Van Hemel (2008) describe two key principles to guide appropriate assessment of young children:

1. Use assessments to:
 - › ensure the environment, curriculum, and activities support development in all domains of learning;
 - › determine how each child is developing;
 - › identify exceptionalities and special needs; and
 - › provide families/caregivers with information on the development of their children.
2. Conduct assessments within a system of medical, educational, and family support services to promote optimal development for all children.

Technology is an efficient way to manage and use assessment data to inform policy, instructional, and management decisions. A coordinated early childhood education system provides data to parents and other stakeholders in a timely and easily-interpreted manner. The Louisiana Department of Education and the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) are working together to create and implement a coordinated cross-agency data system. While initial efforts are focused on gathering data related to programs (e.g., enrollment and demographic data), the data system will eventually be enhanced to share information related to child outcomes. As the effort grows, it will include data from many other agencies to streamline resources and maximize services.

Screening and Diagnostic Assessments

Screening and diagnostic assessments are beneficial when appropriately selected and administered as part of a well-planned early childhood system. Screening assessments objectively inform teachers, caregivers, and families about a child's development and facilitate collaborative planning to appropriately meet each child's needs. Such assessments include those for vision and hearing, speech and language development, general cognition, early literacy and mathematics development, and social-emotional development. A wide battery of screening assessments exists, and providers can seek guidance on selecting appropriate tools through the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (<http://nectac.org/topics/earlyid/screeneval.asp>).

Childcare centers participating in the Quality Start Childcare Rating System screen children for social-emotional development within 45 days of enrollment and annually thereafter. Head Start and Early Head Start conduct comprehensive screenings within 45 days of enrollment and recommend services based on results. Louisiana's public school PreK programs conduct vision and hearing screenings on all PreK students.

The EarlySteps system of the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) (<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/139/n/139>) provides services to families with infants and toddlers aged birth to three years who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. Once a child is screened for any possible developmental delays, it is then determined if there is need for a more comprehensive, diagnostic developmental assessment (with parental consent). Formal diagnosis of special needs or disabilities requires specialized expertise and should not be based on routine universal screening or teacher or parent assessment.

Performance/Observational Assessments

Performance or observational assessment is an ongoing process of gathering evidence that documents a child's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional growth to make informed decisions. It is comprised of two processes - documentation and evaluation - which measure and monitor a child's progress in the context of daily interactions and activities.

Documentation for these measures (sometimes referred to as "authentic assessment") is collected by carefully observing the ways in which children express themselves, interact with their environment and other children and adults, and understand and make meaning of their experiences. The assessment data are gathered during activities and periods that occur naturally within the daily schedule or by structuring an activity with the intent of gathering information about the child's knowledge or level of development. Observational assessment is a popular approach with many early childhood educators, because it systematically documents children's behaviors and interactions in a familiar setting, with familiar activities, alongside other children and familiar adults.

Typically, documentation from performance/observation assessments, along with screening and diagnostic measures, is entered by the classroom teacher into a portfolio on a regular basis over time. Information from all sources is summarized periodically to document the child's developmental progress and used for the purposes of evaluation, adjustments to instruction/activities or the environment, and for informing parents of their child's progress.

Program Assessments

A comprehensive assessment system also includes observational tools to gauge the overall quality of programs. Such assessments measure classroom environment, teaching practices, and learning opportunities provided to children. Depending on the age and setting, early childhood programs in Louisiana utilize one or more program assessments:

- » Infant Toddler Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS);
- » Family Childcare Environment Rating Scale – R (FCCERS-F);
- » Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R);
- » Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS); and
- » Early Language & Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO).

Data collected from program assessment are used to improve teacher proficiencies, shape reform, and set goals for improvement. In addition to increasing teacher effectiveness, these instruments are designed to highlight areas where additional professional development for staff could contribute toward improved child outcomes. Providers also assess the effectiveness of their curriculum and activities by utilizing “fidelity of implementation” checklists or other district, center, or teacher-made observation tools.

Assessment System:

Identifying and using valid and reliable measures to screen, progress monitor, and diagnose literacy needs

Comprehensive assessment practices support effective instruction and provide teachers and other stakeholders with information on children’s developmental progress and the quality of programs. The main objectives of assessment in early childhood are to determine a developmental baseline for each child, to monitor each child’s progress toward specific learning goals, to plan intentional instruction that supports language and literacy development, and to strengthen programs. These objectives are achieved through data analysis and use of screening, diagnostic, on-going performance/observational, and program assessments.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Screening and Diagnostic Assessments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and discuss statements from National Academies of Science and NAEYC on appropriate assessments for young children • Inform families and caregivers of services available through Louisiana EarlySteps http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/139/n/139 for children up to 3 years of age • Inform families, staff, and caregivers of the need for screening, diagnostic, and developmental assessments and the purposes of each • Study screening and diagnostic assessments used to assess growth and development (e.g., vision/hearing, cognitive, language) • Identify protocol and procedures for staff and caregivers to follow when specific screening assessments may be necessary • Determine resources and professional development needs on specific interventions that are necessary to support children’s growth and learning once screening assessments are complete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with families to involve them in screening processes (i.e., parent surveys, checklists) • Review and use results of screening and diagnostic assessments to make informed decisions about instruction and interventions • Seek resources to support children’s learning and development based on data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use child assessment data to assist in setting learning goals and monitoring progress toward those goals • Make necessary adjustments in the program (i.e., schedule, environment, groupings, approach to learning styles) to meet the needs of all children • Ensure that assessment occurs regularly to inform parents and families on children’s progress • Recognize and celebrate individual children’s incremental improvements toward reaching goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge staff’s efforts in using assessment data to inform instruction • Provide continued professional development on assessments and interventions to promote positive child outcomes • Continue to inform parents of their children’s progress and collaborate with them to strengthen positive outcomes

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Performance/ Observational Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select an observational assessment that is aligned with the early learning standards • Design a data collection plan for maintaining, analyzing, and utilizing assessment results • Train staff who will administer assessments to ensure standardized collection and analysis procedures • Ensure that appropriate technology is available to input and organize assessment data • Plan family conferences to share assessment results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer assessments according to established timelines • Specify explicit data collection procedures for staff • Input results into data system accurately and timely • Create procedures, time, and expectations for staff to review and analyze assessment results • Use results to make informed decisions about intentional instruction • Build technology capacity to support portfolio assembly and storage • Conduct and organize assessments, so that results can be provided at parent conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form appropriate teams inclusive of speech-language pathologists and district appraisal staff to analyze data, develop and review instructional plans • Focus discussions on changes that can be made to improve programs and settings for all children, including ELLs and students with exceptionalities • With families, use child assessment data to assist in setting learning goals and monitoring progress toward those goals • Use child assessment data to differentiate instruction and reassess progress • Celebrate children's progress with families and peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide continued professional development to staff who administer assessments to ensure standardized procedures and accurate data recording • Monitor and acknowledge staff's efforts in using assessment data to inform instruction • Use multiple means to communicate with parents about their children's progress and provide them ways to build on identified strengths
Program Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the leadership team, determine goal, purpose, and use of the assessment • Select an assessment tool such as <i>ITERS-R</i>, <i>ECERS-R</i>, <i>FCCERS-R</i>, <i>CLASS</i> or curriculum "fidelity of implementation" checklists aligned to program goals • Seek guidance from state agency personnel on working to align assessments across programs, so that quality implementation is more uniform and to prevent duplication of services • Provide professional development for all staff, including principals and/or directors, on the program evaluation tool and methods of administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use results of program assessments to plan professional development activities • Report results to parents and other stakeholders in a timely and easily interpreted manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to monitor program quality • Allow teachers/caregivers opportunities to visit exemplary programs • Make necessary adjustments to the program based on assessment data • Share program practices with parents to help them establish comparable environments and interactions at home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use results to determine follow-up professional development and to gauge improvements in settings and educational experiences • Review systemic issues related to program quality across all settings to determine policy and funding needs • Use program assessment data to refocus efforts on areas needing improvement



The path to literacy begins in infancy. From the earliest years, everything that adults do to support children’s language and literacy development is critical. Research analysis indicates the specific skills of children ages birth through five years that predict later reading outcomes (Strickland & Riley-Ayers, 2006; Strickland & Shanahan, 2004). These include proficiency in: **oral language**, **alphabetic code**, and **print concepts**. Teachers and caregivers can help children acquire these skills through age- and developmentally-appropriate activities.



Early language and literacy develop within a social context – everyday exchanges with family, teachers, and caregivers. These shared experiences in which verbal communication is modeled and encouraged lay important language foundations and predict future school success. Children imitate the behaviors and speech that surround them. Differences in the quantity, quality, sources, and variety of conversation opportunities have a long-lasting effect. Children learn the form of language that they have been loved in (Glaser and Moats, 2008, p. 41). That is, children who are encouraged to speak and hear rich words spoken in a positive, caring manner will learn and repeat that speech. Conversely, if a child is spoken to primarily in commands or negative language, his oral language will be limited, placing him at a distinct disadvantage by the time he enters preschool.

A language- and print-rich environment is essential to support children’s language and literacy development. No matter the setting – home, school, or community site – an environment that supports emergent literacy provides children not only with a wealth of spoken and written words, but also many opportunities to engage in singing, storytelling, reading, and writing activities. Differentiated practices and developmental interventions are also necessary to support each child’s specific needs and interests.

Language and Literacy Development

Language and literacy develop concurrently and influence one another. From birth, children acquire language and literacy through meaningful interactions with the adults in their lives. Specific suggestions for preparing babies for later success in reading include (Armbruster, et al., 2006):

- » Talking to babies – for children to become readers, they need many opportunities to listen and talk
 - › Sing songs to babies from birth;
 - › Respond to babies’ babbles, coos, and gurgles;
 - › Play simple talking games together;
 - › Point to objects and name them; and
 - › Encourage babies to talk with you.
- » Reading to babies – this should be a warm, pleasant experience that begins to build a lifelong love of reading:
 - › Read aloud often throughout the day;
 - › Show enthusiasm as you read;
 - › Talk with babies while reading together;
 - › Encourage exploration of books; and
 - › Read favorite books again and again.

“Infant care should be based on relationship-planning, not lesson-planning – and should emphasize child-directed learning.”

WestEd’s Program for Infant and Toddler Care, 2007

Toddlers and preschoolers grow rapidly in their language use – they learn the meanings of many new words and begin to use words in more complicated sentences when they speak. Caregivers should continue to talk and read with toddlers, adding new and more challenging activities (Armbruster, et al., 2006). For example, when:

- » Talking and listening to toddlers and preschoolers
 - › Find ways to introduce new places and new experiences;
 - › Capitalize on their natural curiosity by answering their questions;
 - › Teach the meanings of new words;
 - › Provide simple directions for them to follow; and
 - › Engage in wordplay.
- » Reading together with toddlers and preschoolers
 - › Use predictable books;
 - › Read poetry and rhyming books;
 - › Ask what will happen next in the story;
 - › Talk about books; and
 - › Build a personal book collection.

- » Teaching toddlers and preschoolers about print and letters
 - › Point out words and letters everywhere you can;
 - › Teach name recognition using fun activities (e.g., Find Your Name game, spell names with letter manipulatives);
 - › Teach the alphabet song;
 - › Place magnetic letters on the refrigerator or other smooth, safe metal surface; and
 - › Play games using the alphabet and read alphabet books to them.

The National Institute for Early Education Research (2006) identified key predictors for reading and school success. These include **oral language**, **alphabetic code**, and **print concepts**.

Oral Language involves listening comprehension, verbal expression, and vocabulary development. Conversing with adults and other children, as well as listening and responding to stories, facilitate oral language development. Dialogic reading (<http://www.readingrockets.org/article/400>) is a specific strategy shown to improve oral language (Whitehurst, 1998). In dialogic reading, adults:

- » Use a variety of questions to prompt conversation;
- » Evaluate the child's response;
- » Expand on the child's language by rephrasing and adding to the response; and
- » Encourage the child to repeat the expanded language.

Through repeated readings, adults help children become storytellers by reading less, listening more, and gradually using higher level questions. Children move beyond naming objects in pictures to thinking more about what is happening in the pictures and how this relates to personal experiences.

Alphabetic code is the awareness that the letters we write represent the sounds of the language we speak. Teachers, parents, and older siblings can foster knowledge of alphabet letters and phonological awareness (the ability to distinguish the sounds within words) by providing activities and materials to help the child recognize and name letters and sounds, particularly beginning letters in familiar words (such as the child's name) and by providing activities that require him/her to match spoken words with letters.

Print Concepts is awareness and understanding of environmental print and an understanding of concepts of print, such as where to begin to read a book or page and in what direction to read. This skill is developed through being read to on a daily basis, experimenting with writing, exposure to environmental print (e.g., functional signs, labels, and charts), and effective modeling of the reading and writing process. It is essential that children develop an understanding that print serves a variety of purposes (functions of print), has distinct features and forms (forms of print), and is organized in a particular way (print conventions).

Language- and Print-Rich Environment

Language- and print-rich environments provide consistent exposure to inviting literacy materials (e.g., books, storybooks, magazines, newspapers, and environmental print), accompanied by stimulating and nurturing interactions with caring adults. This environment should offer children a pleasurable setting in which to develop early reading, language, and print skills. A language- and print-rich environment for young children is one in which:

- » Time and opportunity for multiple literacy activities are provided during the day;
- » Adults model reading and writing;
- » Books and writing materials are placed in various accessible places;
- » Comfortable places are provided to read and write;
- » Adults read to and listen to students read often; and
- » Students are exposed to fiction and nonfiction book selections.

Whether setting up a classroom, a family child-care home, or a space for child and parent activities, the space should be a cozy and welcoming environment that supports relationships and invites exploration. Creating a language- and print-rich environment is usually a three step process:

- » Create spaces for quiet and intimate gatherings, as well as spaces for active play and large group activities;
- » Furnish the spaces with equipment, books, and materials that are age- and developmentally-appropriate; and
- » Make the environment "print rich" by adding decorations and learning materials that demonstrate various functions of print. Provide children with multiple opportunities to explore the print in its various forms (Bardige and Segal, 2005).

Technology use in early childhood settings is a way to expand, enrich, implement, individualize, and differentiate language and literacy development and can be a valuable addition to a language- and print-rich environment if incorporated appropriately. Computer activities are selected based on suitability of the task and the developmental needs of children. For example, when preparing infants and toddlers for naptime, calm music can be provided to facilitate falling asleep. In prekindergarten, a child may explore print by locating letters on a computer keyboard and displaying them on a computer screen. Appropriate use of technology ensures that activities:

- » Are age appropriate and meet the developmental needs of the child;
- » Include realistic representations of a diverse community (cultures, gender, ages, families);
- » Allow children to manipulate the pace and direction;
- » Are not used to replace adult interaction; and

- » Provide opportunities for children to work independently and with other children.

Young children are introduced to computers individually or in small groups to allow ample opportunity for modeling and hands-on experiences with software programs. Once each child has had this hands-on experience, the computer center becomes one of many equally-important learning centers used to support and extend the learning domains. When integrated appropriately and meaningfully, technology becomes an integral part of the curriculum and a means of supporting educational goals and outcomes for children.

Differentiated Practices

Supporting language and literacy development of infants, toddlers, and young children requires families, staff, and other caregivers to understand the unique and diverse needs of individual children. Young children are more successful when they are taught on their own developmental levels, interests, and learning needs (Tomlinson, 2004). It is often necessary to modify the curriculum, teaching strategies, resources, learning activities, and the environment, based on individual differences. Differentiated practices are effectively implemented by adults steeped in understanding of age-appropriate practices, as well as the developmental standards for young children. Differentiated practices require the use of assessment as a critical tool to inform instructional decisions. Differentiated practices for very young children include:

- » Providing a variety of materials and activities that can be scaffolded to support language and literacy development;
- » Flexible scheduling to meet children's individual health, physical, and social/emotional needs;
- » Access to a wide array of literacy materials to support children's visual, auditory, and kinesthetic needs;
- » Activities and materials that are linguistically and culturally sensitive to children's backgrounds; and
- » Opportunities for children to communicate their learning through a variety of means, such as drawing, re-enacting, re-telling, role playing, creating and/or dictating stories.

Differentiated practices benefit all children, including those with special needs (e.g., developmental, oral language, hearing, different language or dialect). Specific strategies, multimedia approaches, and modifications accommodate children's different developmental levels. Such accommodations increase the likelihood that children with special needs are included in a vast array of classroom activities that help develop their language and literacy.

Developmental Interventions

A knowledge base that informs parents, teachers, and caregivers of the appropriate progression of language and literacy development is critical. While consideration is given to stages of language development, it should be noted that every child's level of development is fluid and will vary based on many factors. There are numerous resources on developmental stages, including the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, which posts a simple checklist of milestones to determine whether a child's language development is progressing: <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/speechandlanguage.html#milestones>. If parents or caregivers suspect a child may be exhibiting signs of developmental delay, then the child's physician or other referral systems should be consulted for further evaluation.

EarlySteps is Louisiana's early intervention system (<http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/139/n/139>) that provides services to families with infants and toddlers aged birth to three years who have a medical condition likely to result in a developmental delay, or who have developmental delays. EarlySteps services are provided in the child's home, daycare, or community setting.

For a variety of reasons, young children entering preschool may not have the language, early literacy, or social-emotional regulation skills expected for a child of that age. Response to Intervention (RTI), also known in preschool as Recognition and Response, is a means of preventing these early delays from becoming learning disabilities.

RTI is a tiered approach to meeting the needs of children beginning in preschool. A tiered approach allows for increased intensity of supports and services as the child's needs increase (Coleman, et al., 2006). Louisiana's model for supports and services includes:

Tier I – a foundation of high quality, evidence-based early childhood programming for all children

Screening and progress monitoring measures are administered to all children. Assessment data are used to obtain baseline information about each child, to determine which children might benefit from additional support, and to verify that the child is progressing according to established developmental milestones.

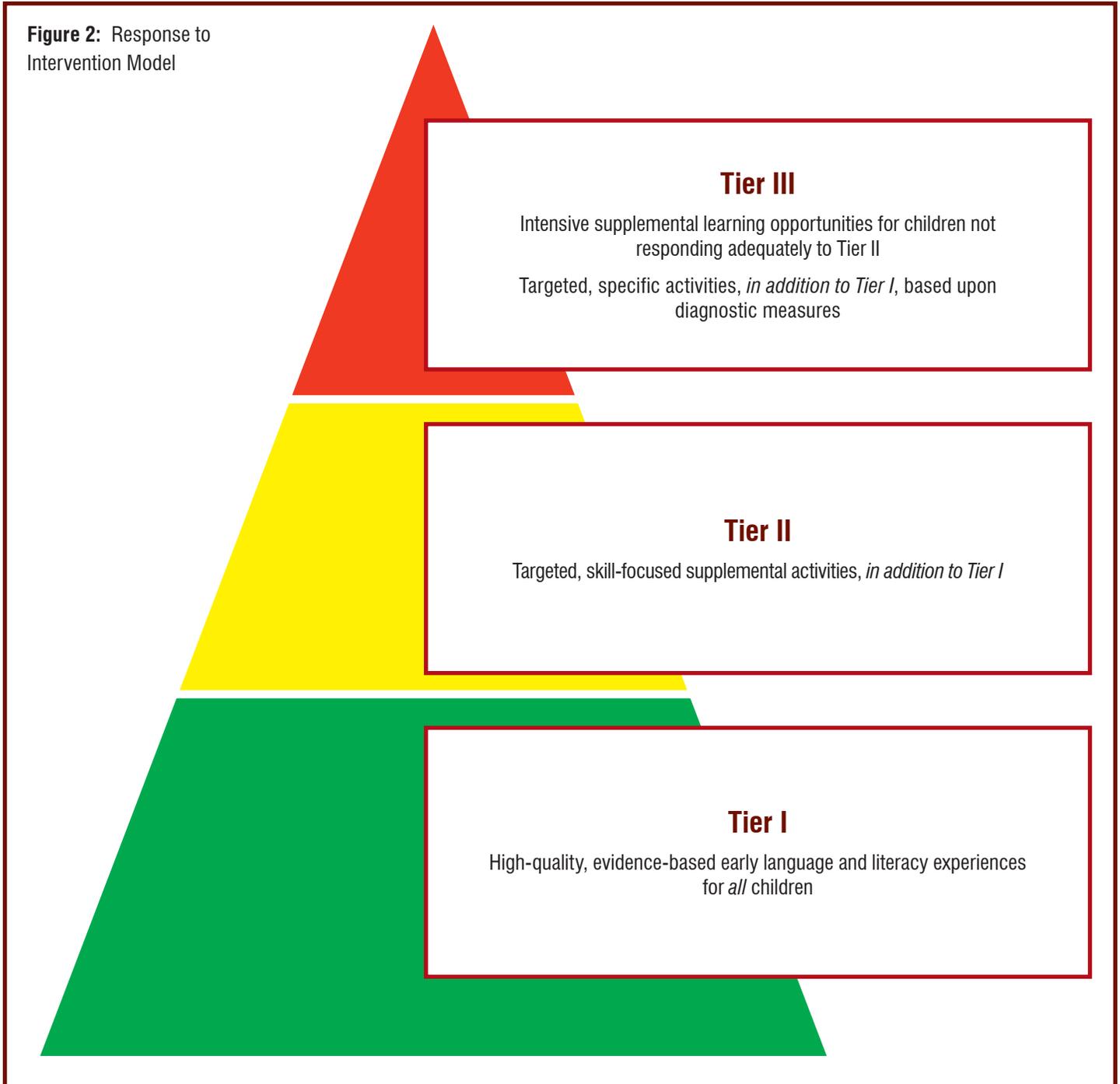
Tier II – targeted learning opportunities that are supplemental to Tier I for children who need additional support

Skill-focused activities are delivered in small groups of 3-5 children. Progress monitoring is conducted frequently and is used to guide and refine interventions.

Tier III – more intensive and individualized intervention, provided in addition to Tier I, focusing on children who have not made expected progress through the support of Tier II interventions

In Tier III, services are provided one-on-one or in small groups of children. Progress monitoring is conducted more frequently and used to guide decisions about the child's instruction and intervention needs.

Louisiana's three-tiered approach of instruction and intervention is shown in Figure 2.



Instruction and Intervention (RTI):

Implementing research-based strategies, promoting active engagement, and establishing systems of support

Intentional and appropriate instruction is the key to promoting literacy development in young children. Modeling, opportunities for practice, and exposure to a print- and language-rich environment enhance literacy learning. Developmental interventions provide an inclusive, systematic approach to respond to early learning difficulties in an effort to support the literacy development and meet the needs of all children.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Language and Literacy Development (Infants and Toddlers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate information to parents and caregivers on developmental milestones for language development http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/speechandlanguage.html#milestones Share with parents and caregivers strategies for literacy development (i.e., talking with children, engaging in word play, rhyming, naming things in the environment, reading to children, and discussions and questions related to books and other experiences) and its connection to future academic success Plan age-appropriate language and literacy development activities to incorporate throughout the day Plan training for parents and caregivers to increase the use of age-appropriate literacy materials in the home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage children in age-appropriate language and literacy activities throughout the day Introduce books (cloth and vinyl books with large, simple pictures) in children's everyday routines Read books to children that portray familiar objects, routines, and experiences Talk, sing songs, and respond to children during daily activities Play simple word games and introduce new words and concepts through play Ensure children engage in verbal and non-verbal interactions with children and adults Model appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and body language during communication Provide repeated exposure and practice for children to learn the meaning, uses, and forms of new words Display and draw attention to materials that encourage language and literacy activities, such as nursery rhyme posters and pictures of children Provide dramatic play props for role playing and creative expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with community resources to build a collection of books (picture, auditory, cloth, board, touch-and-feel, interactive rhythm/sound, and predictable pattern) to share with families Involve community and family members in childcare setting activities that promote literacy development Teach parents and caregivers to use everyday experiences (e.g., routines and outings) to develop children's language and literacy skills Create books that include photographs of children with their favorite things and people Point to words and pictures on the page while reading to children Focus children's attention on letter names and sounds Listen attentively to children and expand their sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sing new rhyming songs, listen to new children's music, and play new rhyming word games with children Add books to children's collections and reread favorite books to them often Encourage children's story writing efforts by encouraging them to draw pictures and scribbles and by scribing their dictated words Find new ways to converse with children during everyday experiences Allocate funding to expand language and literacy materials and replace, as necessary Keep abreast of the most current research and best practices related to early language and literacy development
<p>Language and Literacy Development (PreK)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disseminate information to parents and caregivers on developmental milestones for language development http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/voice/speechandlanguage.html#milestones Align strategies and resources to early learning standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use strategies and activities that address early learning standards Select high-interest, culturally-diverse texts that support the standards Make transition periods opportunities to extend literacy learning time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with community resources to provide a variety of books (large, picture, auditory books) for student exploration Provide ongoing opportunities to build parental capacity to support children's language and literacy development (e.g., training, school activities, modeling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage children in increasingly complex conversations Continue to describe and discuss events and everyday routines with children Encourage children's writing attempts by scribing and publishing their words and drawings

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Language and Literacy Development (PreK) <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey and observe staff's knowledge of appropriate language and literacy development strategies Provide professional development on oral language, alphabetic code, and print concepts Develop activities and materials to help children recognize and name letters and sounds, particularly beginning letters in familiar words (such as the child's name) Schedule and protect time for staff to collaboratively analyze child data to plan for appropriate instruction Ensure the setting has a variety of books, media, and other materials to support language and literacy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide children with opportunities to hear and manipulate phonemes in words throughout the day, starting with beginning sounds Provide activities and materials to help children recognize and name letters and sounds, particularly beginning letters in familiar words Provide activities that require children to match spoken words with letters Show children various print functions (e.g., signs, storybooks, informational text) Model appropriate gestures, facial expressions, and body language during communication Provide repeated exposure and practice for children to learn the meaning, uses, and forms of new words Provide opportunities that encourage children to question, predict, hypothesize, and use language to process information Incorporate daily writing activities throughout the day (e.g., creating a story with pictures, creating class stories after shared experiences) Encourage children to re-enact, retell, or role play stories Use various methods to record children's stories and role play activities (e.g., videotaping and photographing) Read to children individually and in small groups throughout the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with community resources to provide a variety of books (large, picture, auditory books) for student exploration Provide ongoing opportunities to build parental capacity to support children's language and literacy development (e.g., training, school activities, modeling) Share effective lessons and strategies with others Partner with museums and libraries to provide optimal experiences for children and families Include community and family members in activities that promote reading and literacy (guest authors, dramatic readings, book fairs, creative productions) Provide experiences outside the regular setting that develop children's literacy skills (e.g., field trips, garden activities, nature walks, writing in non-typical media) Encourage children to talk about recent events Provide word banks, word walls, and books with words to expand children's exploration of writing Encourage imaginary, dramatic, and pretend play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage children in increasingly complex conversations Continue to describe and discuss events and everyday routines with children Encourage children's writing attempts by scribing and publishing their words and drawings Encourage children to retell stories with plots, events, characters, and settings Analyze program data to determine impact of intentional teaching strategies on student achievement Refine teaching strategies based on data Provide staff with information on new practices based on research related to early language and literacy development
<p>Language- and Print-Rich Environment (Infants and Toddlers)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize and prepare the environment for children's access to engaging, age-appropriate, literacy materials Enlist the support of the librarian/media specialist and other community resources in acquiring literacy materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide exposure to books and environmental print Label objects in the environment Introduce children to alphabet songs and letter names Use manipulatives that are safe, attractive, inviting, and relevant to children's experiences and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide collaborative opportunities for staff to create new interest areas and literacy activities to support children's ongoing development Provide guidance for parents and family members to set up a home- or center-based environment that supports children's language development and fosters a love for reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek funding sources (e.g., community action agencies) for provision and expansion of appropriate literacy materials Provide opportunities for children to develop listening and speaking skills through activities outside of the regular program (while running errands, traveling, outdoors)

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Language- and Print-Rich Environment (Infants and Toddlers) <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cozy and inviting areas where literacy activities can occur • Read literature on appropriate use of technology for young children http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSTECH98.PDF • Choose software that is age- and culturally-appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to a variety of age-appropriate writing materials for toddlers to explore and manipulate • Model exploration of literacy materials for children 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow staff opportunities to examine stellar programs that promote literacy development both within and beyond the regular setting
Language- and Print-Rich Environment (PreK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize and prepare learning spaces for using literacy materials that are engaging, relevant, and challenging • Assess the PreK setting for a variety of books, media, and other literacy materials related to themes, projects, and topics of interest • Examine and develop management plans relative to organization, routines, and transitions to support children's emerging literacy skills • Enlist the support of the librarian/media specialist in acquiring an adequate number of materials and resources • Read literature on appropriate use of technology for young children http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSTECH98.PDF • Establish expectations for the use of technology to support young children's learning and development • Select developmentally-appropriate software • Provide professional development on the appropriate use of available technology and on ways to integrate technology into the curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to a variety of writing materials • Ensure a variety of writing opportunities for children (e.g., making lists, writing notes and messages, and writing their names) • Provide children with engaging experiences using books and print in the environment • Use a wide variety of fiction and nonfiction storybooks that reflect children's experiences • Select and use literacy materials that are attractive, inviting, and relevant to children's experiences and culture • Model exploration of literacy materials for children • Use technology to enhance literacy practices and support learning in all domains (e.g., social-emotional, cognitive) • Model the appropriate use of technology (e.g., how to play a game or hear a song, maneuver through software, use a mouse, create stories and pictures) • Monitor proper use of technology to ensure children are actively engaged • Provide opportunities for children with special needs to use computers and assistive technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design literacy activities that encourage children to work collaboratively and share ideas with peers • Continuously evaluate the environment to ensure centers and curricular activities support children's ongoing literacy development • Evaluate child progress on the use of technology and determine additional supports and instruction that may be necessary • Rotate literacy materials periodically to ensure they reflect various student interests and topics of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funding to expand available texts and materials • Provide opportunities for children to develop print awareness skills through activities outside of the regular program (e.g., field trips) • Plan site visits to examine stellar early childhood programs • Continue to evaluate current use of technology and its effectiveness • Explore new technology and tools available to support literacy development
Differentiated Practices (Birth – PreK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train staff and caregivers on use of observational data to support differentiated practices • Examine child assessment and observational data to determine areas where differentiation will be required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use intentional teaching strategies that will support diverse needs, including ELLs and children with exceptionalities • Carefully select literacy materials based on the differentiated needs and levels of development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share differentiated instruction and practices with families and others involved in the care and education of children • Monitor differentiation practices to ensure the needs of all children are met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for families and other caregivers on differentiated techniques • Invest in professional books and journals to stay abreast of differentiated practices and methodologies

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Differentiated Practices (Birth – PreK) <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine options for differentiation of activities, materials, and the learning environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that adjustments are made to selected materials, activities, and the environment, when necessary 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine and/or modify teaching and interaction practices, as appropriate Provide continued ongoing professional development related to differentiation of instruction
Developmental Interventions (Infants and Toddlers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional development to staff and caregivers on essential early literacy skills Provide information on Louisiana EarlySteps services to all stakeholders Plan professional development on observing and recording children’s growth in language development Inventory available literacy resources and list those that need to be acquired Provide intervention information to staff and caregivers who serve young children with disabilities http://tnt.asu.edu/files/March2010.pdf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that all health screenings and health evaluations are up to date, particularly those related to vision and hearing Provide guidance on the use of multiple assessment measures that are developmentally appropriate, including how to recognize individual variations in development Plan and implement a method for systematically collecting and using information on children’s growth and development Take advantage of opportunities to reflect on literacy activities that are taking place in the environment and what changes or additions need to be made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor progress frequently to determine a child’s response to intervention Adapt intervention activities and materials as needed, based on observations and other appropriate data Collaborate with other caregivers and staff to refine strategies to support children’s optimal language and literacy development Communicate with families on children’s progress Work with families and specialists to tailor necessary interventions and adaptations to learning environment to support children’s development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to seek ways to provide ongoing assistance for parents and caregivers to implement appropriate learning opportunities for children in need of additional support Continue to seek and implement new strategies and teaching activities to replace those that are not successful
Developmental Interventions (PreK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional development to staff and caregivers on essential early literacy skills Provide information on Louisiana EarlySteps services to all stakeholders Develop professional development on observing and recording children’s growth in language development Identify resources currently available for literacy development and resources that need to be acquired Provide information for staff on working with young children with disabilities http://tnt.asu.edu/files/March2010.pdf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to ensure that all health screenings and health evaluations are up to date, particularly those related to vision and hearing Provide guidance on the use of multiple assessment measures that are developmentally appropriate, including how to recognize individual variations in development Plan and implement a method for systematically collecting and using information on children’s growth and development Reflect on the effectiveness of current literacy activities and determine changes or additions needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on observations and other appropriate assessments, adapt activities and materials to promote intended growth Collaborate with other caregivers and staff to refine strategies to support children’s optimal language and literacy development Communicate children’s progress to families Work with families and specialists to tailor necessary interventions and adaptations to learning environment to support children’s development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to seek ways to provide ongoing assistance for parents and caregivers to implement appropriate learning opportunities for children in need of additional support Continue to seek and implement effective strategies and teaching activities



An early childhood setting is only as good as its teachers and caregivers. High quality professional learning – ongoing, organized around adult learning principles, and relevant to teachers’ and caregivers’ settings and situations – is critical for providing quality care to young children. Early childhood teachers and caregivers need a wide range of competencies to effectively foster the language and literacy development of young children. These core competencies refer to the most essential skills needed by adults to provide quality early care and education for each child and promote:

- » Healthy, respectful, and challenging learning environments;
- » Supportive family and community relationships;
- » Appropriate assessment and data-usage processes;
- » Developmentally-effective teaching and learning approaches;
- » Design, implementation, and evaluation of challenging curriculum; and
- » Continuous, collaborative learning and professional growth.

Professional learning involves systemic, sustainable, and positive changes in early childhood teachers’ and caregivers’ competencies to support children’s early literacy development and later achievement. Professional growth is an ongoing process involving rigorous pre-service training and experiential opportunities, along with continued in-service professional development, including both formal professional development and job-embedded activities. Long-term professional growth requires sufficient resources and a coordinated support system to sustain positive outcomes for children. Such resources and support commonly focus on securing adequate staff, instructional materials, and funding. A strong collaborative culture based on partnerships among the family, the community, and the school is one of the most powerful and affordable variables that stakeholders can use to ensure quality care and effective language and literacy development for all children.

Professional Development

The early learning curriculum, environment, and materials available to children are important elements of quality, but it is the teacher’s or caregiver’s ability to implement the curriculum and to use effective practices that result in long-term gains for children. Formal training in supporting and expanding children’s cognitive and language skills is highly desirable and necessary for maximizing effectiveness of instruction. Intensive, on-going professional development that includes such job-embedded strategies as coaching and mentoring can give early childhood educators the skills they need to help prepare young children for school success.

Professional development that improves teaching (for both pre-service and in-service teachers) is based on understanding the principles and practices of effective professional learning, such as those recommended by Learning Forward (<http://www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm>). The design of effective professional development in literacy instruction also takes into account a general framework for the context (the learning

environment), the content (the what), and the process (the how) as key considerations.

Context

Early childhood educator and caregiver involvement in the planning and design of professional development greatly increases the level of buy-in and commitment to the plan. Teachers (including university staff) and caregivers work



together to determine needs, decide on a course of action, and implement and support a plan that leads to improved teaching and learning (Guskey and Huberman, 1995).

Structures that support ongoing professional learning provide and protect adequate time for teachers and caregivers to meet and collaborate regularly. Research shows that benefits of participating in collaborative professional learning include building shared knowledge, intellectual purpose, and collective responsibility for children’s learning (Calkins, et al., 2007).

Content

It is critical that early childhood educators and caregivers are grounded in the knowledge of what young children need to know and are capable of doing at various stages of development. Teacher/caregiver preparation programs and continuous professional learning opportunities develop content knowledge of how to support children’s growth across all domains of learning to positively impact child outcomes.

Those working with infants and toddlers must have core content knowledge in (Bardige & Segal, 2005):

- » Ages and stages of language and literacy development beginning at birth;
- » Building relationships and supporting emergent language and literacy skills through responsive interactions and daily routines within a culturally sensitive context;
- » Strategies, materials, and activities that support language and literacy development;

- » How to make connections between caregivers and families;
- » Addressing the individual needs of children (i.e., cultural, linguistic, children with exceptionalities); and
- » Planning high-quality literacy environments that engage children with appropriate materials and experiences.

Those working with preschoolers must have content knowledge in (Pianta, 2010; Vukelich & Christie, 2004):

- » The principles and standards of child development, growth, and learning;
- » Designing learning experiences that promote language and literacy development for all children, particularly oral language and vocabulary, knowledge of letters and print-related knowledge, and phonological awareness;
- » Fostering supportive relationships with children and their families to promote learning;
- » Multiple methods of monitoring and assessing children’s literacy development;
- » The importance of oral language competencies, early literacy experiences, and family literacy in learning to read;
- » Using a variety of instructional methods that are age- and developmentally-appropriate;
- » Appropriate direct instruction of core literacy concepts and skills;
- » How to differentiate and adjust instructional methods to meet the needs of individual children; and
- » Supporting families in their child’s language and literacy development.

Process

Methods of providing professional learning for early childhood educators vary based on their needs and include (Neuman & Kamil, 2010):

- » Pre-service experiences that provide current knowledge and concepts related to the development of literacy (e.g., 4-year degrees, Associate’s Degree, CDA);
- » Targeted support based on individual teacher/caregiver needs via face-to-face workshops and classes, on-line modules, blogs, Wikis, video conferences, Webinars, and job-embedded professional development that may include mentoring, coaching and/or consultation;
- » Advice on setting clear goals and plans for personal professional learning and career pathways;
- » Collaborative planning focusing on specific language and literacy goals; and
- » Observation of model lessons and methods of instruction.

Coordinated Support

A coordinated system of support is essential for developing the emergent literacy skills of all children. Community providers, including Louisiana’s EarlySteps system, early interventionists, speech-language pathologists, pediatricians, mentors, and allied health professionals, serve as the backbone of coordinated support services for young children. Additional support resources to promote family literacy and engagement include community partners, such as public libraries, universities, and museums. Such partnerships can provide support and guidance for families’ use of everyday activities to build their children’s early language and literacy skills.

Other supports include:

- » Protected time for planning literacy experiences;
- » Time, materials, and technology for professional learning;
- » Resource personnel, paraprofessionals, and volunteers to work with teachers/caregivers, children, and families;
- » Engaging literacy materials for every child, including English language learners and those with exceptionalities;
- » Accessible technologies and resources for families related to language and literacy development; and
- » Adequate funding to support on-going literacy efforts.

The quality of parent-child interactions and family environments is central to a child’s development in all learning domains. Parents strengthen their child’s language and literacy development and school-related competencies when they engage in healthy, loving, language-rich parent-child communications, have many pleasurable parent-child reading interactions, and hold appropriate expectations of their child’s learning and development. Explicit training for parents in effective language- and literacy-building behaviors provides mutually-beneficial support for parents and children. Parents and other family members are encouraged to do the following with their children:

- » Read and re-read stories;
- » Engage in conversations and help them name objects in their environment (labeling);
- » Recount experiences and describe ideas that are important to them;
- » Visit the library and museums; and
- » Engage in drawing and printing, using a variety of implements, such as markers, crayons, and pencils.

Program staff should encourage and facilitate parents’ engagement in all aspects of the program and meet with them to discuss their

child's language and literacy, physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development.

Reaching out to parents and caregivers is a *family literacy intervention* that can have a positive influence on a child's school success. Family literacy intervention can take many forms, such as (Snow, et al., 1998):

- » Conducting home visits to provide valuable information on child development;
- » Providing specific resources and activities on language and literacy development;
- » Offering guidance on how to get children ready for kindergarten;
- » Making referrals to health care services for women who are pregnant;
- » Providing books to preschoolers, along with parent guidance on how to read to children effectively;
- » Providing literacy training to parents themselves;
- » Sponsoring Read-Aloud Parent Clubs where parents learn helpful techniques and confidence for reading with their children;
- » Taking tours of the local public library and securing a library card; and
- » Visiting the bookmobile.

The need to provide an organized approach to prepare and support early childhood educators has become evident and has evolved into a systems approach. Louisiana's professional development system helps stakeholders organize and coordinate existing efforts, helps practitioners enter the workforce and continue to grow professionally, and helps accomplish other specific goals by:

- » Aligning the content across sectors, so that a consistent core is delivered via the various preparation and continuing education opportunities;
- » Creating links between professional qualifications, connecting credentials, and laying visible pathways between them;
- » Examining professional development delivery pathways in the subsystems, eliminating overlapping efforts, and reducing complexity and barriers; and
- » Creating a unified public engagement message.

Effective coordinated support augments collaboration with early child care providers and the local community to provide greater support and expand the quality and quantity of children's language and literacy experiences. Creative approaches are necessary to overcome issues related to limited time, personnel, materials, and technology. Strategic allocation of resources

is a tool for achieving teacher/care giver, child, parent, and community support for early literacy.

When adults work together to support children's progress, this has implications for their current and future learning and well-being. Moreover, such support will ease children's transition into kindergarten.

Professional Learning and Resources:

Developing learning opportunities, resources, and coordinated support services that enhance literacy learning for children and educators

The knowledge, skills, and practices of early childhood providers and teachers are critical factors in providing high-quality experiences for young children. Effective professional development addresses best practices in early language and literacy development and is based on the needs of the children being served. Professional development is most effective when it is ongoing, includes adult learning principles, and is closely linked to teachers' and caregivers' settings and situations. Engaging parents as partners by providing them with resources and tools to support their child's literacy development is an important aspect in strengthening the home-school connection and in increasing parent's skills in language development.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect and analyze a variety of data (e.g., student assessments, teacher needs assessment, teacher observations, professional training) to determine content of professional development Align content of training to early learning standards to prepare teachers and staff for implementation Establish a long range professional development plan that includes job-embedded strategies, such as modeling, coaching, and constructive feedback Schedule and protect time for teachers and caregivers to collaboratively analyze data, share expertise, study the standards, plan lessons, examine student work, and reflect on practice Involve administrators in literacy trainings to learn how to promote change in practice and how to provide specific feedback aligned with early learning guidelines and standards Provide parents with resources and tools to support their child's language and literacy development (i.e., modeling and suggestions of appropriate actions and activities that support children's literacy development, websites, book shares) Develop methods to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional development based on children and teacher needs, and aligned early learning standards and guidelines Meet in collaborative teams to study data and plan curriculum and literacy strategies effectively Schedule time for the coach or mentor to meet with teachers individually and in collaborative teams to co-plan, model, practice, and provide feedback Provide opportunities for teachers/caregivers to practice techniques in non-threatening situations Use checklists when conducting observations and walkthroughs to ensure clear expectations and specific feedback on student learning Assess quality and nature of adult/child interactions and adjust program to ensure quality and quantity of interactive opportunities Build a professional library that includes research-based books, journals, magazines, and videos for ongoing professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for staff to participate in professional learning activities offered by district, region, and/or state that address identified needs and early learning guidelines and standards Assist staff in use of child assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching strategies gained through professional learning opportunities Revisit and revise the content of professional learning based on children's progress toward early learning standards and guidelines Use observation and walkthrough data to determine additional support needed by staff and to adjust professional development plans Partner experienced teachers with pre-service and beginning teachers Encourage teachers/caregivers to participate in post-secondary schooling that results in credentialing or a degree Promote membership in professional organizations, such as NAEYC, the Louisiana Early Childhood Association (LAECA) http://laeca.org/, or the Louisiana Association for the Education of Young Children (LAEYC) http://www.laeyc.com/ Use results of evaluations of professional development to make adjustments and determine next steps 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize resources in the professional library as a vehicle to encourage ongoing "professional talk" about current research and best practices in early childhood literacy development Partner with higher education to build networks of support for applying research-based strategies in early childhood literacy practices Use mentors to maintain teachers' focus on context specific practices for literacy development Ensure staff are trained to meet cultural and linguistic needs of all children Provide professional development and resources that support differentiated learning opportunities for all students, including those with exceptionalities and those whose home language is not English

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Coordinated Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map available fiscal and human resources related to support services, highlighting where gaps occur Evaluate all funding sources to determine what can be leveraged to support literacy efforts Enlist the help of all partners to consider ways to effectively coordinate funding sources to support early literacy programs in schools and other settings Plan a family resource center to offer literacy resources and tools for families and to build their skills in literacy development to help their children Plan parent and caregiver activities through school or community resources to provide support and guidance for families Identify learning supports within the home, school, and community that will support families and improve student outcomes Develop a survey to identify needs of parents, teachers/caregivers, and students that can be used to match available resources to actual need Schedule and conduct hearing and vision screenings for all students, according to established norms Plan for extended learning opportunities for students (e.g., tutoring, afterschool and summer learning programs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish strategic and systemic partnerships in the community that can help promote child and family outcomes Establish a workgroup (teaching staff, counselors, speech-language pathologists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, special education staff, bilingual service providers, parents, community representatives, etc.) that focuses specifically on how learning supports can be used Use results from needs survey to match available resources to actual need Design methods to connect students to the proper service providers in the community Utilize all available staff, family, and community members to support literacy instruction Provide parents with practical guidance and opportunities to practice good reading habits at home regularly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information on how to access family-focused services and outreach that engage parents and family members in literacy programs and services Sponsor activities that celebrate families and that support their efforts to promote children's language and literacy development Incorporate communication that is culturally- and linguistically-sensitive to all families (i.e., notes and newsletters in dual languages, using interpreters for parent/teacher conferences, establishing communication preferences – e-mail, cell or home phone, written notes) Conduct home visits to support parents with knowledge and skills to foster their children's early literacy development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Galvanize local communities to support early childhood literacy efforts in schools and other settings through public awareness campaigns and links to information on early literacy development Increase the frequency of home visits Create book bags with age- and culturally-appropriate books to leave with the child and family during visits Pursue funding sources for specialized literacy staff, training, and materials Continue to build capacity of early childhood literacy efforts throughout all settings in communities Seek community partners to heighten awareness about reading or literacy topics in their places of business or service Foster partnerships with community resources and higher education to provide guidance and support relative to pre-service teachers entering the early childhood field Continue to upgrade tools and materials to keep pace with best practices, the changing economy, and needs of parents and families

Resources for English Language Learners and Students with Exceptionalities

English Language Learners

- › Bowman, B. T. (1990). Educating language-minority children. *Clearing House on Early Education and Parenting – Children Research Center*. Retrieved January 12, 2011, from: <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/ecearchive/digests/1990/bowman90.html>.

This resource provides information and guidelines for teachers and caregivers who work with children from different cultures.

- › Colorín Colorado (2007). Vocabulary development with ELLs. *Reading Rockets – Launching Young Readers*. Retrieved January 12, 2011, from: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/32556>.

This resource provides a variety of effective teaching methods to increase the student's ability to learn new words.

- › Restrepo, M.A., & Towle-Harmon, M. (2008). *Addressing emergent literacy skills in English-language learners*. Rockville, MD: The American Speech and Hearing Association Leader. <http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2008/080923/f080923a.htm>.

This article provides information on supporting literacy development of young children whose home language is other than English. It supports teacher/caregiver understanding of the processes of second language acquisition and how to support children's literacy development.

- › U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Administration for Children and Families. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners>.

This webpage includes resources for providing support to dual language learners in all areas of development. Information is provided related to early childhood development, disabilities, health, family and community partnerships, program design and management, and professional development.

Students with Exceptionalities

- › American Speech, Language and Hearing Association (2008). Activities to engage speech and language development. *Reading Rockets – Launching Young Readers*. Retrieved January 12, 2011, from: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/26632>.

The article offers age-appropriate ways that parents and caregivers can engage young children to develop speech and language skills.

- › National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY) (2009). Developmental delay. *Reading Rockets – Launching Young Readers*. Retrieved March 3, 2011, from: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/37635>.

This article provides information and resources concerning screening and evaluation of young children for possible development delays.

State Actions for Improving Emergent Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a State Literacy Team composed of literacy experts and key stakeholders across sectors to support the implementation of Louisiana’s Emergent (Birth-PreK) Literacy Plan • Involve administration and support staff of all state agencies (e.g., Department of Education, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Health and Hospitals) in aligning policies and programs to maximize service to children and families • Involve stakeholders at every level, including faculty representing teacher and caregiver preparation programs, in the discussions on emergent literacy • Provide guidance to local providers on how to access information on potential collaborative partners available in their geographic area (e.g., Resource and Referral Agencies, Early Head Start, Head Start, childcare centers) • Engage media in building public awareness and advocacy for emergent literacy • Provide Webinars and face-to-face sessions for childcare and preschool leaders on early learning guidelines and standards and how to support teachers • Develop and disseminate both print and electronic messages, brochures, and flyers documenting the importance of early literacy development • Set expectations, guidelines, and oversight to ensure strong implementation of the emergent literacy plan at the local level • Disseminate the emergent literacy plan at professional meetings (including those for stakeholders outside the Department of Education); post the literacy plan on the Louisiana Department of Education’s Web site • Promote integration of the literacy plan with other school improvement and cross agency collaboration efforts • Explore and encourage the creation of funding streams to support early literacy development and professional development for early childhood staff and caregivers • Develop a technical assistance plan to support districts and schools with emergent literacy efforts • Establish guidelines for all support staff that implement local literacy efforts • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and children with exceptionalities, a priority • Increase awareness and capacity of leadership within systems to understand and address the needs of English language learners • Work with administrators of teacher/caregiver preparation programs to ensure candidates have knowledge, skills, and competencies to deliver strong, research-based literacy instruction • Evaluate the impact of emergent literacy efforts and refine them based on multiple indicators of literacy performance (e.g., child outcomes, program evaluations)
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness and provide support and guidance for districts, schools, and early childcare providers to implement the <i>Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three</i>, as well as the <i>Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children</i> • Work with stakeholders to update the English Language Arts (ELA) section of the <i>Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children</i> to align with the ELA Common Core State Standards for kindergarten • Align the Comprehensive Curriculum to reflect the updated ELA Standards from the <i>Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children</i> • Identify curriculum resources and best practices for building emergent literacy • Work with teacher/caregiver preparation programs to ensure that literacy development expectations are included in curriculum

<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and use a coordinated early childhood education data system to inform policy, instructional, and management decisions • Provide data to stakeholders (as appropriate) in a timely and user-friendly format • Build the capacity of stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, policy makers) to use data for continuous improvement • Provide professional development and technical support on using developmentally-appropriate assessment measures
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction/practices aligned with early learning guidelines and standards • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all children, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Provide information for stakeholders on appropriate resources to identify and intervene with children who need additional supports in literacy skill development • Ensure that staff and caregivers working with young children have access to appropriate materials and activities to promote literacy development • Promote public awareness of the three critical skills (oral language, alphabetic code, and print concepts) that young children must acquire in order to experience later reading success • Engage families in the ongoing literacy development of their children; provide resources or linkages to available resources that would support the family's efforts • Work with districts to provide model sites that provide effective language- and print-rich environments for young children
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an integrated professional development system of preparation and ongoing development and support that crosses sectors (e.g., childcare, Head Start, and public schools) and serves professionals preparing to work with and currently working with young children and their families (i.e., direct and non-direct service staff) • Include career pathways in professional development systems to support the continuous development of the early childhood workforce • Align higher education and professional development systems to create a seamless structure that facilitates movement from one level of professional development and career advancement to the next • Create and disseminate research-based resources, materials, and tools aligned to the early learning guidelines and state standards that prepare teachers, caregivers, and other stakeholders to provide literacy activities to all infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including English language learners and children with exceptionalities • Provide professional development and technical support for district and school leaders, caregivers, and other stakeholders, including media specialists, speech-language pathologists, librarians, and museum staff in the implementation of the emergent literacy plan • Align core knowledge and competencies with early learning guidelines to ensure that practitioners know how to support and are able to support children's learning and development • Explore the content and quality of teacher preparation and best practice in early childhood settings to design innovative in-service and pre-service supports for early childhood educators • Expand cross-sector professional development opportunities to bring together practitioners who work with children from different disciplines and programs • Ensure that state-level professional development advisory structures collect cross-sector data on the early childhood workforce to support system-building and evaluate the effectiveness of investments in professional development • Look at the processes that link preparation and best practice, including mentoring, or coaching, and on-site technical assistance • Develop a clearinghouse for early childhood workforce data that highlights the links between research, practice, and children's outcomes • Increase investment in systems that support workforce development and appropriate levels of compensation • Provide professional development for district appraisal staff, paraprofessionals, and higher education staff to support literacy efforts

**Professional
Learning
and
Resources**
[continued]

- Implement research-based standards for early childhood professional development
- Identify demonstration sites with strong literacy programs to serve as models that teachers, caregivers, and families could visit
- Provide incentives for preschool programs that have demonstrated quality practices
- Collaborate with higher education and other preparation providers regarding pre-service and in-service support for teachers and caregivers on effective literacy practices
- Embed professional development training requirements or credentials in licensing requirements
- Encourage colleges and universities to transfer professional development credentials, courses, credits, and degrees from one program or institution to another
- Encourage colleges and universities to make articulation agreements that assist early childhood professionals in moving seamlessly through and across undergraduate and graduate degree programs
- Develop and conduct multi-site evaluations of early childhood programs in institutions of higher education to determine best practices and challenges from a professional development perspective
- Establish and promote core knowledge and competencies for the early childhood workforce
- Set certification standards for preschool teachers and early childhood professionals that require qualifications consistent with national standards
- Target intensive support for schools and childcare settings with the greatest need (as defined by poverty or low literacy achievement)
- Reallocate existing funds to support costs that enable at-risk children to participate in preschool
- Continually update and add resources to enhance the state's literacy plan
- Promote connections between schools and public libraries and museums to enhance literacy effort

District Actions for Improving Emergent Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate clearly the district’s goals and shared vision for literacy improvement • Create and implement a plan to enhance literacy practices utilizing literacy leaders • Ensure that principals and childcare administrators act as literacy leaders, keeping the focus on appropriate child outcomes • Participate in Webinars and face-to-face sessions on early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers and state standards for preschoolers • Assist schools and childcare providers in developing learning centers that promote language and literacy development • Examine the impact of current literacy practices on child outcomes • Map out existing collaborative partnerships and create a cross-walk to compare where they are the same, where they differ, and how they might work together to address literacy • Establish community-based, collaborative partnerships that strengthen school readiness for all children and include families, childcare, Early Head Start, Head Start, family home care, and community partners • Provide networking opportunities for school and childcare staff to collaborate on best practices and share successes of literacy efforts • Engage parents as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive • Define the roles and responsibilities of instructional/literacy coaches, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, library media specialists, and appraisal staff to support program- and school-based literacy efforts • Leverage funds to ensure sustainability of literacy efforts • Provide leadership training with a focus on literacy development strategies and instruction • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and children with exceptionalities, a priority • Engage higher education and caregiver preparation programs in the local literacy plan
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote awareness and provide support and guidance for schools and early childcare providers to implement the <i>Louisiana Early Learning Guidelines and Program Standards: Birth through Three</i>, as well as the <i>Louisiana Standards for Programs Serving Four-Year-Old Children</i>, and the <i>Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum</i> • Provide parents and families with opportunities to gain knowledge of the early learning guidelines and/or the prekindergarten standards, as well as methods that could be used to support children’s literacy experiences • Ensure curriculum and activities are developmentally appropriate, support children’s home culture and language, and integrate all domains of learning: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy • Select a research-based curriculum that includes literacy and language skill development • Ensure curriculum and activities focus on developing children’s emergent literacy skills: oral language, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, and print concepts • Disseminate information on early childhood language and literacy development, including major developmental milestones • Promote and support access to a range of appropriate materials and resources necessary to support children’s language and literacy development

<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize an ongoing assessment system that supports literacy development and allows for continued appraisal of children and programs (if applicable) in a timely manner • Ensure that assessment of young children relies on multiple methods (e.g., screening, diagnostic, performance/ observation), and is tailored for a specific purpose • Ensure thorough training in administration and data recording for all who administer screening, diagnostic, performance, and observational assessments to young children • Use program assessments to evaluate effectiveness of instruction and quality of programs • Ensure teachers and caregivers use assessment information to guide practices • Provide opportunities for staff to study and use data to support continued child growth and program effectiveness • Provide timely, user-friendly child and program data to families and stakeholders
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction/practices aligned with early learning guidelines and standards • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on intervention (RTI) to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Ensure language and literacy opportunities are provided to children throughout the day and align with early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers and state standards for preschoolers • Allocate resources to support a high-quality language- and print-rich environment • Set up model sites that provide effective language- and print-rich environments for young children • Ensure differentiated practices and developmental interventions meet the individual needs of children • Encourage teachers and caregivers to read aloud to children daily • Provide opportunities for staff/caregivers to observe exemplary models of language and literacy instruction and intervention practices • Support the use of purposeful and appropriate technology to assist children with language and literacy skills • Provide enrichment experiences for children and families (e.g., museum and library visits, dramatic and musical productions)
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align professional development with the state’s early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers and state standards for preschoolers and identified children’s literacy needs • Provide targeted professional development to teachers and caregivers based on their Professional Growth Plans • Involve teachers and caregivers in the planning and design of professional development • Arrange for quality reviews of preschool classrooms to provide feedback for teachers, including expert supervision and coaching for preschool teachers • Ensure professional learning for teachers and caregivers is ongoing (e.g., study standards, plan activities, review data) • Offer professional development in a variety of formats (e.g., face-to-face, online, mentoring) and at a variety of times • Examine and evaluate the quality of professional development • Partner with higher education faculty and other preparation providers regarding pre-service and in-service support for teachers and caregivers on effective literacy practices • Use partnerships with community-based organizations, including public libraries and museums, to promote and support local literacy efforts • Link early learning resources with those in homes and in the local community

Birth-PreK Literacy Capacity Survey

When planning to improve early learning and literacy outcomes for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, childcare and preschool provider staff can complete this simple survey to help determine current literacy capacity. Analysis of the results can help determine current strengths and provide a starting point for the improvement process that will lead to improved literacy practices and increased child outcomes. It is important to rate each statement based on the degree to which the practices are currently being implemented.

The components of this Web-based survey mirror those of Louisiana’s Emergent Literacy Plan and provide a systemic and holistic approach to establishing an effective literacy framework. **Survey responses are completely anonymous – respondents are not asked to identify themselves.** The survey can be administered annually to explore staff perceptions and to monitor changes.

Directions:

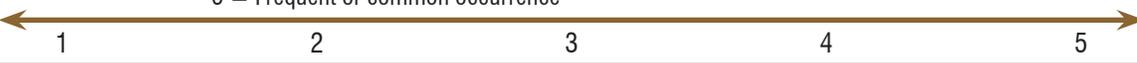
Step 1: Have all school administrators and staff complete the survey at <https://leads13.doe.louisiana.gov/srv/?P1=N&P2=N&P3=12&P4=JMLS5PNErxZU> within a two-week period.

Step 2: Upon completion of the survey by all staff, contact one of the LDOE staff members listed on the online survey, by e-mail, to request a customized report.

In order to receive a customized report, **the survey must be completed online.**

Step 3: Consult the Louisiana Emergent Literacy Plan (Birth – PreK) for detailed action steps for improving emergent literacy, beginning with the component(s) the survey results identify as starting points.

Step 4: For additional information or assistance regarding *Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan*, please contact the LDOE Literacy Office at 225.342.3647.

Current Practice Rating: 1 = An infrequent or rare occurrence 5 = Frequent or common occurrence 	Item Averages
Leadership and Sustainability	
1. The school district takes the lead in promoting community-based, collaborative partnerships focused on strengthening school readiness for all children.	
2. Leadership is focused on promoting activities that support early literacy development.	
3. Leadership encourages teachers and caregivers to collaborate on best practices to ensure consistency of teaching and assessment practices.	
4. Leadership engages parents as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive.	
5. Collaborative partnerships improve literacy development of young children in the program.	
6. A process (e.g., quality assurances) is followed to ensure accountability for investments that produce lasting changes.	
7. Leadership leverages funds to ensure sustainability of improvement efforts.	
Leadership and Sustainability Average	
Standards-Based Curriculum	
1. Staff (e.g., teachers, caregivers) uses the state’s early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers and/or the state’s prekindergarten standards to create high-quality experiences for children.	
2. Parents and families are provided opportunities to gain knowledge of the early learning guidelines and/or the prekindergarten standards, as well as methods that could be used to support children’s literacy experiences.	
3. Curriculum and/or activities reflect developmentally-appropriate practices.	
4. Curriculum and/or activities integrate all domains of learning: physical, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and literacy.	
5. Curriculum and/or activities focus on developing children’s oral language, alphabet knowledge/phonological awareness, and print concepts.	
6. Curriculum and/or activities support children’s home culture and language.	
7. Curriculum and/or activities link to and integrate assessment to identify and meet the needs of individual children.	
Standards-Based Curriculum Average	

Assessment System	
1. Appropriate screening measures are used to assess children’s language and literacy development.	
2. Diagnostic measures are used to provide more in-depth information for individual children, when necessary.	
3. Performance/observational assessments are used to measure and monitor children’s progress in the context of daily interactions and activities.	
4. Program assessments are used to evaluate effectiveness of instruction and quality of programs.	
5. Those who administer assessments are adequately trained in administration and data recording.	
6. Data from assessments are effectively managed and disseminated to parents and other stakeholders in a timely and easily-interpreted manner.	
7. Staff (e.g., teachers, caregivers) uses assessment data to drive decisions.	
Assessment System Average	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	
1. Language and literacy opportunities are provided to children throughout the day.	
2. The early childhood setting provides a high-quality language- and print-rich environment.	
3. Differentiated practices are used to meet the individual needs of children.	
4. Developmental interventions are provided for children needing extra support.	
5. Teachers/caregivers read aloud to children daily.	
6. Technology use is purposeful and appropriate to children’s learning and developmental needs.	
7. Enrichment experiences are provided for children and families (e.g., dramatic and musical productions, museum and library visits).	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI) Average	
Professional Learning and Resources	
1. Professional development is aligned with and directly related to the state’s early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers and/or state standards for preschoolers.	
2. Professional development for staff (e.g., teachers, caregivers) is based on children’s identified literacy needs.	
3. Individual, targeted professional development is based on teachers’ or caregivers’ Professional Growth Plans.	
4. Higher education and other preparation providers collaborate with early childhood educators (e.g., teachers, caregivers) on effective literacy practices.	
5. Professional learning is ongoing (i.e., teachers/caregivers meet to study standards or early learning guidelines, plan activities, review data).	
6. Professional learning is provided through a variety of media (face-to-face, Web-based, text-supported), as well as a variety of methods (mentoring, coaching).	
7. The early childhood setting (e.g., school, center) has a coordinated system of support that links early learning resources with those in homes and in the local community to provide greater support for children.	
Professional Learning and Resources Average	

Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Template for Early Childhood Educators

Name: _____ Position: _____

This sample Professional Growth Plan (PGP) is designed to guide your thinking toward professional growth goals and objectives. It will also guide your planning and consultations. Ideally, your PGP should address **literacy improvement** and the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching <http://www.doe.state.la.us/Lde/uploads/5564.pdf>. An electronic version of this PGP can be accessed at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/18224.pdf>.

Part 1: Possible Goals

When thinking about possible goals for your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *How do my knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances measure up against the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching?*
- » *Where do I need to grow professionally in order to optimize my effectiveness in impacting child outcomes and achievement?*
- » *What areas for professional growth will have the greatest potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning in my program?*

My Possible Goals (3-5)

Part 2: District/School/Program Linkages

When aligning your professional goals with the known needs of your program, school, or district, consider the following:

- » *Which of my professional goals are most directly related to implementing the elements of Louisiana's Emergent (Birth-PreK) Literacy Plan and increasing child outcomes?*
- » *For which of these goals can I identify reasonable outcomes, measures, or products that will serve as evidence of my professional growth?*
- » *How will these goals be supplementary or complementary to the professional growth plans of colleagues in my program or other programs working with young children?*

My goals relate to district/school/program improvement needs in the following ways:

Part 3: Specific Goal(s) and Intended Outcomes

The specific goal(s) for my PGP and intended outcomes are:

Part 4: My Plan

When developing your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *What am I going to do to achieve my goals?*
- » *What are the initial steps in my plan?*
- » *What activities will help me achieve my goals and objectives?*
- » *How will I make the time to do what I plan?*
- » *What district and school resources will I need?*
- » *What evidence will I collect to demonstrate achievement of my professional development goals and how will I organize my evidence?*

A. I will engage in the following activities:

B. I will document my progress in achieving my professional development goal(s) with the following artifacts (e.g., logs, lesson plans, audio and videotapes) and/or outcomes (e.g., evidence of child growth and development):

C. I may require the following resources for the full implementation of my PGP:

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Louisiana's
ELEMENTARY LITERACY
PLAN

Louisiana's **ELEMENTARY LITERACY** *PLAN*

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Introduction

Early literacy is among the most powerful predictors of school success. To fulfill the Louisiana State Department of Education’s vision to *create a world-class education system for all students in the state*, substantial efforts focus on providing our young learners with the reading and writing skills that will enable them to be successful in school from the beginning. Therefore, the most important goal of reading instruction in the elementary years is to help students gain the skills and knowledge they need to read grade-level text fluently and with good comprehension. Emphasis is on teaching students how to read and having them practice those new skills with various narrative and informational texts. **Louisiana’s Elementary Literacy Plan represents a coherent approach to ensure all students develop skills and understandings necessary to meet the rigorous expectations described in the Common Core State Standards.**

Effective approaches supported by research (National Reading Panel, 2002) include:

- » Alphabetics
 - Phonemic Awareness Instruction
 - Phonics Instruction
- » Fluency
- » Comprehension
 - Vocabulary Instruction
 - Text Comprehension Instruction

Results of the research analysis on these topics indicate that instruction in these areas produces significant benefits to children’s success in learning to read compared to instruction that does not include these areas. Emphasis on effective practices, such as increased time allocation for literacy instruction, high quality professional development for teachers informed by data, and differentiated instruction supported by technology also show promise for increasing student achievement. Motivational factors in learning to read and integrating reading and writing in all subject areas are also important.

Lessons learned from active practice (e.g., Reading First) and thorough research study, as well as policy review by a team of educators and other stakeholders, including parents and policy makers, have led to the Louisiana Department of Education’s bold view of what can be done in all Louisiana classrooms to provide a successful beginning for all children.

To ensure consistency and continuity across Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan at all levels, the Elementary Literacy Plan highlights and aligns these important findings and other research-based practices with both the Emergent and Adolescent plans within five core components:

- » Leadership and Sustainability
- » Standards-Based Curriculum
- » Assessment System
- » Instruction and Intervention (RTI)
- » Professional Learning and Resources

These core components and recommended specific actions are necessary for schools to provide effective, research-based literacy instruction to all students from the very start of their elementary school experience.

In addition to the State Literacy Team listed inside the front cover, the Louisiana Department of Education acknowledges the following stakeholders for their input on the Elementary Literacy Plan:

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Elementary Literacy Plan Components

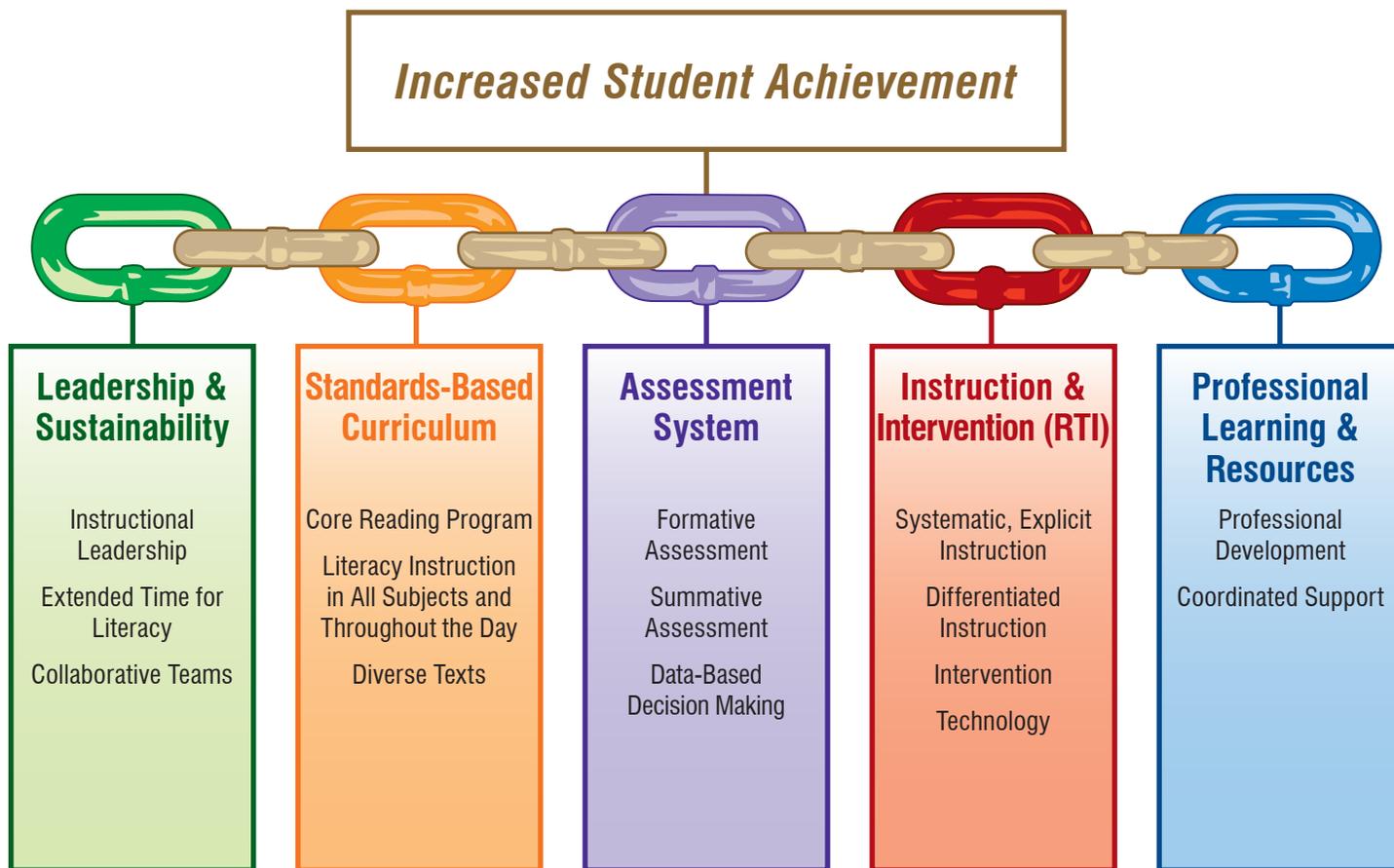
Key Elements		Leadership and Sustainability	Standards-Based Curriculum	Assessment System	Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	Professional Learning and Resources
INSTRUCTION	1 Systematic, Explicit Instruction	•	•		✓	•
	2 Core Reading Program	•	✓	•	•	•
	3 Literacy Instruction in All Subjects and Throughout the Day	•	✓		•	•
	4 Differentiated Instruction	•	•	•	✓	•
	5 Intervention	•	•	•	✓	•
	6 Diverse Texts	•	✓		•	•
	7 Technology	•	•	•	✓	•
	8 Formative Assessment	•		✓	•	•
	9 Data-Based Decision Making	•		✓	•	•
INFRASTRUCTURE	10 Extended Time for Literacy	✓			•	•
	11 Professional Development	•	•	•		✓
	12 Summative Assessment	•		✓	•	•
	13 Collaborative Teams	✓	•	•	•	•
	14 Instructional Leadership	✓	•	•	•	•
	15 Coordinated Support	•	•	•	•	✓

✓ This component in the plan explains the steps necessary to implement the element.

• This component provides additional information to support the element.

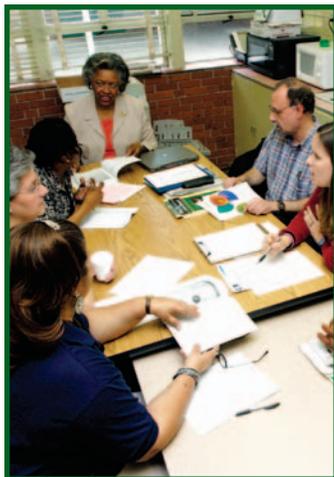
Elementary Literacy Plan Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide consists of a **Narrative** and **Table for each of the five components**. The narrative provides a concise description of each element to ensure a common understanding of concepts. The table includes action steps necessary to improve literacy outcomes for elementary students.





Strong leadership from both administrators and teachers is essential for successful implementation of an effective literacy program. However, real *sustainability* of literacy instructional improvements requires leaders (and ideally all staff members) to maintain core beliefs and values (i.e., literacy culture) for their program. Of all the elements of a successful literacy model, leadership and a strong literacy culture have the greatest potential for sustaining the model over time (Century and Levy, 2002). The principal is crucial to helping the literacy culture survive and thrive.



This said, the principal needs an interest in and even a passion for literacy, alongside a strong knowledge base about literacy and language development. In fact, schools with successful literacy programs have strong principal leadership with focused attention on setting literacy agenda, supporting teachers, accessing resources, and building a capacity for further growth (Booth & Roswell, 2009).

Though the principal is key to the success of literacy efforts, leadership tends to flourish when it is shared; therefore, it is important that the principal involve individuals in leadership positions. Shared leadership builds an environment that supports common planning time and collaboration for instructional improvements, as well as infrastructural changes such as extended time for literacy and increased family involvement. The more evidence there is of teamwork in a school, the more likely improvements are sustained over time.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership is perhaps the single most important role for elementary principals and other school-based leaders, such as literacy coaches and instructional specialists (NAESP, 2008). Teachers are also an essential part of that leadership. The process of creating a School Improvement Plan with a literacy focus is an excellent opportunity for principals to engage teacher leaders. Each school and district forms a Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) that focuses on helping staff improve literacy instruction. The principal, as a highly visible team member, works along with this select group of teachers to engage and support them in their development as leaders committed to improving student literacy.

In *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins discusses the necessity of getting the right people involved in improvement efforts before making definite plans: finding the *who* first and then determining the *what*. Collins says that “the right people are self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best results and to be part of creating

something great.” (p. 32). When selecting staff members to serve on the Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) or in a shared leadership role, the principal considers teachers who:

- » Have knowledge of literacy best practices, including differentiation of instruction and culturally-responsive teaching;
- » Have demonstrated expertise in literacy curriculum and instruction;
- » Embrace the diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds of students;
- » Have knowledge of first and second language acquisition processes;
- » Are highly competent and recognized by peers for their knowledge and skill in the classroom;
- » Are willing to share resources and guide other teachers;
- » Possess good communication skills;
- » Are flexible and respect the opinions of others; and
- » Maintain a positive attitude and can inspire others to do the same.

A parent representative is also an important member of the Literacy Leadership team. When the entire literacy leadership at a school (e.g., principal, parent representative, teacher leaders, instructional coach, speech-language pathologists) is centrally engaged in designing, supporting, and overseeing the school’s fundamental purpose – increasing all students’ literacy skills – the end result is a sustainable culture of commitment to the goal. Literacy leaders live by this defining principle and use it to build and maintain an outcomes-based literacy culture.

Extended Time for Literacy

Literacy leaders ensure adequate instructional time to help all students perform at higher levels of reading and writing. To develop reading and writing fluency, students need extended opportunities for practice in these areas. Most reading and writing instruction currently takes place in reading/language arts blocks and, for some struggling readers, also in intervention settings. It is important that increased time be allocated for learning literacy skills and concepts, reading text, and writing in **all** subject area classes daily. Writing competence can be developed through daily lessons focusing on author’s craft and written mechanics. Students write on both self-selected topics and in response to instruction in all subject areas.

Literacy development can be maximized through teaching, modeling, and using appropriate literacy strategies that enhance understanding of concepts, skills, and content – consult Instruction and Intervention for specific strategies. See <http://www.doe.state.la.us/ide/uploads/14725.pdf> for strategy descriptions and <http://www.doe.state.la.us/ide/uploads/16828.pdf> for videos of literacy strategy use in Louisiana classrooms. When improved academic achievement is the top priority at the state, district, and school levels, reading and writing are placed at the center of instruction and schools:

Allocate extended time in the school’s master schedule to:

- » Maximize instructional time and allow sufficient time for interventions
- » Provide and protect time for teachers to plan collaboratively
- » Create support opportunities for students – literacy intervention, special programs, tutoring, and leisure reading and writing experiences

Advocate for change in the instructional focus to:

- » Develop a shared responsibility of all teachers to support literacy development
- » Ensure that teachers utilize content literacy strategies within the context of their daily instruction
- » Analyze student data in collaborative teams to determine and refine effective instructional practices
- » Focus on student work, as well as student progress and growth

Collaborative Teams

A collaborative culture is established by providing and protecting time for teachers to meet and work together during the regular school day. It is often a challenge to change schedules and routines in order to accomplish this; however, by adjusting the structure of the day principals send the message that making time for collaboration is a priority. Strategies for creating collaborative times have been identified at http://www.allthingsplc.info/pdf/articles/make_time_for_collaboration.pdf.

Teachers collaborate in a variety of teams – grade-level, vertical, or similar-responsibility teams, such as special education teachers meeting with general education teachers with whom they share students. The principal and other school-based instructional leaders work collaboratively with teams to examine evidence of student learning and strategies for improving results. Collaborative teams work interdependently toward a common goal – increasing student achievement – for which each team member is mutually

accountable. All members of the faculty are assigned to at least one team. Teams are charged with answering critical questions such as:

- » What do students need to know and be able to do?
- » How are the concepts and skills to be taught, with what strategies and resources?
- » What do the data show about students’ learning?
- » What steps need to be taken (e.g., adjustment in instruction) when students do not reach proficiency?
- » In what professional development must staff engage to increase student learning?

It is the responsibility of the instructional leaders at each school to ensure that collaborative team meetings occur regularly and are focused on student achievement. Meeting in teams affords staff the opportunity to study state standards, plan instruction, analyze student data and work products, plan instruction, and determine instructional modifications and interventions. Collaborative teams raise the level of professional practice from isolation to sharing by reflecting upon, examining, and refining teaching practices, so that all students are learning. Three specific protocols for looking at student work (Collaborative Assessment Conference, Consultancy, and Tuning Protocol) can be found at <http://www.lasw.org/methods.html>.

Collaborative teams also discuss and implement strategies to support children’s adjustment during critical times of transition. Three strategies can help teachers ease transition in the early weeks of school for students of any age and grade: developing positive relationships with students, employing constructivist management, and creating rich learning environments (Daniels, 2011).

Chatting informally with students in small reading groups before formal lessons, and talking with each student separately – for example, asking about activities and interests outside of school – ensures that all students can count on having positive interactions with teachers. Likewise, management practices such as assigning students specific roles or jobs, involving them in creating rules for the classroom, and giving them choice of activities facilitate smooth transitions. Stimulating classroom environments are also important. For example, in kindergarten, this may include providing playful but serious learning activities such as acting out stories, playing academic games, conducting “scientific” observations outdoors, and so on. Though every year can seem like a transition year for youth trying to maintain top achievement, it is particularly important for children to experience great transitions early, when they begin to establish expectations in their new roles as students.

Leadership and Sustainability:

Creating shared leadership and plans for organizing, implementing, and sustaining a comprehensive approach to literacy

Positive student literacy outcomes start with strong leadership committed to implementing, supporting, and sustaining a quality literacy plan. Effective leadership incorporates extended time for literacy, collaborative teacher teams, and collective instructional leadership focused on improvements in student achievement. In order for the literacy plan to endure, school leaders intentionally foster and prolong the plan by expanding and adapting it over time, reflecting on what is (and is not) working and how the school can do even better (Jerald, 2005). Leadership from committed administrators, teachers, and parents can promote sustainability by anticipating, influencing, and effectively responding to changing conditions that affect progress. Additionally, leadership teams can sustain an effective literacy plan by identifying what is to be sustained, *what resources* are needed, and *how* to access those resources.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Instructional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a shared literacy vision for the school and community • Evaluate the school culture and current practices by using the Literacy Capacity Survey to determine strengths and needs for improvement • Organize a Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) that includes parents and other community members, with the principal or other school-based instructional leader as the head • Schedule and protect time for Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) to meet and plan • Analyze multiple forms of student, school, and teacher data, including Literacy Capacity Survey results, to develop a list of prioritized recommendations and goals for improvement • Participate in state-sponsored Webinars and face-to-face sessions to learn about transition to the new Standards • Study evidence-based instructional practices in reading, spelling, and writing • Identify and prioritize a list of students to be targeted for intervention or support • Engage in leadership professional development with a focus on facilitation/ group process and teaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure all staff understand the school's literacy goals and their roles in meeting the goals • Create a culture and environment that promotes and celebrates literacy • Model and communicate high expectations for staff and students • Support a climate of collaboration and shared decision making (Literacy Leadership Team, collaborative teams) • Guide development and implementation of a literacy-focused school improvement plan that includes activities, resources, timelines, and persons responsible to support and expand literacy learning for all students • Provide support for teachers' transition to the new Standards • Establish a system of communication for sharing information with faculty, staff, and parents (e-mails, newsletters, school Web site) • Involve community members and parents in literacy efforts (e.g., tutoring, mentoring) • Provide time and supports for teachers and staff to participate in professional learning • Stay abreast of evidence-based instructional practices in reading, spelling, and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rewrite/refocus School Improvement Plan goals, objectives, and actions according to student achievement results and mastery of Standards • Provide follow-up professional development and technical assistance to meet individual teacher needs (determined by student achievement data) • Re-assign staff, as needed, based on the literacy vision, matching available human resources to the needs of students • Identify and allocate additional funding sources to hire specialized literacy staff • Share student achievement gains with parents, as well as the local community, through community open houses, newspaper articles, displays of student work, podcasts, news conferences, etc. • Encourage involved community members and parents to persuade their colleagues to join them in literacy efforts • Participate on District Literacy Leadership Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze formative and summative student assessment results and refine literacy goals and plans aligned to the Standards • Remain focused on the goals and objectives of the School Improvement Plan to keep staff motivated, productive, and centered on student achievement • Define priorities and allocate needed resources to sustain them over time • Make hiring decisions collaboratively, based upon literacy goals • Integrate funds to ensure adequate highly-qualified staff, materials, and all resources to reach literacy goals • Incentivize strong leaders on faculty • Join or form a leadership organization to share successes and profit from others' successes • Visit other schools that have successfully improved student achievement to gain valuable insights and innovative ideas • Share student achievement gains with District Literacy Leadership Team and School Board members • Pursue external funding sources to support literacy • Continue to use data to monitor and adjust implementation of evidence-based instructional practices in reading, spelling, and writing

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Instructional Leadership <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a walk-through observation form such as http://www.louisianaschools.net/ldc/uploads/15541.pdf to ensure consistency of effective instructional practices Schedule regular literacy observations to monitor use of literacy strategies, student engagement and learning, as well as to ensure consistent use of effective instructional practices Be strategic about assigning non-academic teacher duties Plan professional development based on student data and teacher needs Provide time and structure in school necessary to apply new learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information from literacy walk-throughs to be used in grade level meetings, teacher conferences, and collaborative teams Serve as models by studying literacy research and best practices, sharing professional resources among faculty, facilitating professional discussions, and training team leaders as facilitators Provide professional development based on student data and teacher needs 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to involve community members and parents in literacy efforts and reach out to those not currently involved
Extended Time for Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study flexible scheduling options to include additional time for reading intervention Consult with support services, such as scheduling experts, to maximize efficiency of existing time and personnel (e.g., http://wwwstructuringourschoolsforsuccess.com/index.htm) Leverage literacy instructional time by studying and planning ways to integrate reading and writing in all subjects Ensure that academic learning time in reading and writing is appropriate in duration and substance to meet learners' individual needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use flexible schedules to include extended time for language arts and reading (e.g., staggered schedules) Schedule students who need additional literacy support into a reading intervention group conducted by a qualified interventionist (who has been trained in the specific program), in addition to the regular language arts classes Monitor adherence to instructional schedule to ensure efficient use of entire instructional time Ensure literacy strategies are appropriately implemented across grade levels daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make staff reassignments based on what benefits student learning (e.g., those who are not providing extra literacy support do student monitoring duties) Identify additional funding sources to hire specialized staff (i.e., instructional coach and interventionist) Identify and provide classrooms/space for additional intervention, if necessary Optimize district and federal funding to sustain literacy supports (i.e., staff, materials, professional learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to base re-staffing and re-scheduling decisions upon literacy-based goals Integrate new priorities (i.e., programs and initiatives) into existing school structures, protecting the literacy focus across grade levels
Collaborative Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify horizontal and vertical teacher teams (within and across grade levels) Include parent(s) or other family member(s) as part of the school Literacy Leadership Team Schedule time for teams to meet for regular collaboration and examination of student data/work Identify team roles, norms, protocols, and expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet in teams according to regularly established times for collaborative planning and examining student data/work Be proactive about getting feedback from the parent representative(s) on the Literacy Leadership Team Prepare agendas and action summaries for all meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit input from instructional coach on effective strategies for differentiating instruction, promoting active engagement, and teaching key areas of reading and writing instruction Collaborate with other team members to conduct peer observation and analyze lessons to improve literacy instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional learning to new and continuing teachers Share professional learning at team and staff meetings Collaborate with other schools (feeder schools and schools in close proximity) to conduct peer observations, share literacy expertise, etc. Maintain anecdotal notes and data portfolios to showcase student and grade level successes

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Collaborative Teams <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the common planning time of teachers • Research the components of the professional learning community model www.allthingsplc.info • Identify specific, measurable student achievement goals aligned with grade level expectations • Develop a cyclical action plan that makes student learning the primary focus – look at student work, reflect on effectiveness of instruction, adjust to meet specific needs of students • Participate in professional learning on effective teaching practices (professional development sessions, study of current literature and research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use protocols to examine student work (e.g., Collaborative Assessment Conference, Consultancy, and Tuning Protocol) http://www.lasw.org/methods.html • Observe model lessons, organize materials, and practice effective instructional strategies • Plan and implement lessons that address the literacy needs of students • Identify and use common formative assessments, rubrics, data analysis on assessments, and strategies for improving student outcomes • Focus on student learning through a continuous cycle of inquiry, planning, application, reflection (particularly looking at student work), and improvement • Practice shared leadership by creating a schedule for rotation of team leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor to ensure that the contributions to the Literacy Leadership Team from the parent representative(s) are understood and considered • Study formative student assessment results and use results to continue to adjust instruction • Assess effectiveness of team actions on student learning • Alter teams as necessary to ensure optimal effectiveness • Use technology (e.g., blogs and Wikis) to establish electronic opportunities for teachers teams to network • Recognize and celebrate student and staff successes and progress toward goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage teachers to share stories of success in the community



Louisiana has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>) which include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including, but not limited to, English language arts. The Standards provide clear signposts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students. At the elementary level, the Standards aim to align instruction with the reading and writing framework of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). The NAEP framework, like the Standards, balances the reading of literature with the reading of informational text. It also cultivates the development of three mutually reinforcing writing capacities: writing to persuade, to explain, and to convey real or imagined experience.

To assist teachers with the transition to CCSS, the Louisiana Department of Education will conduct awareness Webinars and face-to-face sessions; revise the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC), incorporating transition activities to support the content currently being assessed in each grade, and develop and deliver professional development modules for the revised LCC to include evidence-based strategies and resources.

Louisiana is committed to ensuring that all learners – including English language learners (ELLs) and those with exceptionalities – develop proficiency in the Standards. At the same time, it is recognized that not all learners acquire skills and knowledge at the same rate, nor do they enter school with the same language abilities; therefore, Louisiana has created English language proficiency standards resources (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/elda.html>) and strategies, accommodations, and technologies (<http://accessguide.doe.louisiana.gov/default.aspx>) to help move all students into the mainstream English language arts curriculum.

Proficiency in English, as well as a second language, is highly desirable in today's global economy. Research suggests that language immersion and traditional foreign language programs, which are designed to help minority and/or majority speakers become proficient in the target language, can also advance students' literacy skills and mastery of subject content when the programs align with educational standards (Thomas and Collier, 2004). Further, research specific to Louisiana shows that students who learn a second language significantly outperform their non-foreign language counterparts on state assessments that measure proficiency of standards (Taylor-Ward, 2003).

According to Sternberg (2009), the hardest part of having standards is not coming up with them, it is implementing them. As teachers embrace the Standards, they need to know what to emphasize in an overcrowded curriculum. The revision of Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/2108.html>) will reflect the new standards and help teachers translate them into classroom practice. Additionally, a research-based reading program aligned with the Comprehensive Curriculum can help provide the foundation for literacy instruction in the early grades. Today, most core reading programs contain resources that support the special instructional needs of ELLs and students with exceptionalities.



Literacy instruction throughout the day can also provide students with the competencies they need to be successful in all subject areas. The *Reading Runway* (<http://www.louisianapass.org/>) is another state resource that provides young students with tutorials and practice to help them reach literacy expectations.

Core Reading Program

A research-based core program in reading is an instructional tool that teachers use to teach children to read and ensure they reach reading levels that meet or exceed the Standards. Core reading programs, also referred to as basal reading programs, often serve as the “base” for reading instruction. Adoption of a core reading program does not imply that other materials and strategies are not used to provide a rich, comprehensive program of instruction. However, the expectation is that all teachers in the elementary grades use the same core program as the base of reading instruction. Such programs may or may not be commercial textbook series.

Whether using a commercial textbook series or other resources, Allington (2011) asserts high-quality reading lessons must ensure:

- » Substantial amounts of time in which students are *actually reading text*;
- » Promotion of “*high-success reading*” – that is, texts that students can read independently with 98% accuracy or better, with expression, and with at least 90% comprehension; and
- » Student *self-selected reading* that provides opportunities for students to select what they want to read.

Struggling readers need precisely what great readers receive. This said, the school literacy plan should put high-success texts in every student's hands – all day long. Such experiences, along with self-selected text and adequate time spent actually reading, spur reading development for all children and seem to be twice as powerful as teacher-selected texts (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Lindsay, 2010).

Ideally, every teacher involved in reading instruction participates in the review and selection of the core reading program. At a minimum, a grade-level representative can participate in the initial review to reduce the “possible” options to a reasonable number. In selecting a core program, it is imperative to give priority to how children are taught to read. An extensive body of knowledge exists describing the skills children are to learn in order to read well (National Reading Panel, 2000). These skills supply the foundation for sound curriculum decisions in the primary grades and include:

- » Phonemic awareness - the explicit understanding that the sounds of spoken language work together to make words;
- » Phonics - the relationship between the letters of written language and individual sounds of spoken language;
- » Fluency - the ability to read text accurately and quickly;
- » Vocabulary - the words one must know to communicate effectively; and
- » Text comprehension - understanding what one is reading.

A Consumer's Guide to Analyzing a Core Reading Program is available at http://reading.uoregon.edu/cia/curricula/con_guide.php. The Florida Center for Reading Research also suggests that educators consider the following key questions when selecting a core reading program:

- » Are the five key skills listed above prominent?
- » Is instruction explicit and systematic?
- » Are there consistent organizational and instructional routines?
- » Is the teacher's guide coordinated with student materials?
- » Is instruction across the five skills clearly linked?

Literacy Instruction in All Subjects and Throughout the Day

General knowledge and vocabulary required for effective learning in later grades are products of a long process that starts in the primary grades. To support this development, teachers ensure that students have access to and interaction with informational text. Informational text builds students' knowledge levels (e.g., background knowledge) and increases their vocabulary size and depth of understanding.

Reading, writing, and effective communication in all subject areas, also known as *content literacy*, provide a way for students to review what they have learned, organize their thoughts, connect their learning to life experiences, and meaningfully translate their knowledge to real audiences. As the primary grade teacher

shifts from one subject area to another within the school day, students tap into different sets of vocabulary, text structures (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/ocms/generate_1.asp?Preview=1&PageID=2800), and background knowledge. It is advantageous to make as many connections as possible among all subject areas so students see how the content is interrelated and how it relates to their lives. Effective teachers also find ways to capitalize on every literacy instructional opportunity throughout the day (e.g., at recess, lunchtime, after school) to maximize literacy development of students.

Reading in the Subject Areas

There are many features of informational texts that students need to recognize, understand, and use during both reading and subject-area lessons, including the table of contents, glossary, bold or italicized print, and nonfiction language structures. Great teachers help students navigate texts, scaffolding support and gradually releasing as reading skills grow. Great teachers also teach the “academic vocabulary” that is critical to understanding the concepts of the content taught in schools. According to Marzano (2005), the strongest action a teacher can take to ensure that students have the academic background knowledge to understand the content they will encounter is providing them with direct instruction in these terms.

Comprehension strategies also help students construct meaning from text. These strategies are instructional practices that combine reading, writing, and thinking with subject matter understandings. The Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum includes content literacy strategies (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/14725.pdf>) derived from sound, evidence-based principles of literacy and learning that require teacher modeling, interaction, guided practice, and monitoring.

The use of direct, explicit instruction in text structure, academic vocabulary, and comprehension strategies advances both subject-area learning and literacy development. Students can then apply their knowledge of how to read informational texts during guided reading, independent reading, and subject-area learning.

Writing in the Subject Areas

Reading and writing are reciprocal processes – reading is decoding, writing encoding; they are explicitly connected in the day-to-day instruction of students. Research shows that combined instruction in reading and writing leads to improvements in subject matter retention and creation of meaning. Writing has been described as “thinking with a pencil” (Applebee in Neuman, 2000). See Writing in Instruction and Intervention for instructional recommendations.

Composition ranges from scribing or tape recording for the youngest students to more complex, independent tasks, such as creating written or digital stories, learning logs, and reports as students grow in skill level. Whether writing to learn (capturing

and expressing thoughts and ideas about subject matter), writing to demonstrate learning (making knowledge understandable to others), or writing for authentic purposes (communicating in real-world form for specific audiences), “children are using their own words to compose a message to communicate with others” and are developing concepts about writing and its forms and functions (Neuman, 2000). Young children need continued, scaffolded support to accomplish increasingly difficult tasks in learning to read and write while reading and writing to learn.

Print-Rich Environment

Printed language in the classroom is found in many forms – from instructional materials to classroom libraries to posted student work – and emphasizes that print carries meaning and serves many purposes. Posted print is placed where it catches students’ attention and where it serves a purpose.

However, a print-rich classroom environment involves more than the obvious display of the written word. It also involves creation of a *literate environment* – one in which:

- » time and opportunity for multiple literacy activities are provided during the day;
- » adults model reading and writing;
- » books and writing materials are placed in various accessible places throughout the room;
- » student work is displayed around the room;
- » comfortable places are provided to read and write;
- » literacy centers are in place and in use;
- » adults often read to students and listen to students read; and
- » students are exposed to fiction and nonfiction book selections.

Diverse Text

Students in every classroom – every subject and every grade – need access to a wide variety of relevant and motivating materials on a broad range of topics that fit their growing reading capabilities and interests. At least three kinds of texts are provided in elementary classrooms as a rich base for reading comprehension:

- » Books to read aloud – carefully selected, age-appropriate books to read over and over to students to facilitate their internalization of powerful language;
- » Leveled books – books at various levels of difficulty that provide a ladder of support, so that students can take on more difficult texts with teacher help (Fountas & Pinnell, 2001); and
- » Classroom libraries – a balanced book collection including informational titles and a variety of print materials.

New technologies and media make it easier than ever to provide multiple alternatives for accessing a wide range of text. Online tools, some of which are available at no cost (<http://bookbuilder.cast.org/>), enable teachers to create and share digital books that engage and support diverse learners. In addition, software with embedded supports, such as text-to-speech, multi-media glossaries, electronic dictionaries and encyclopedias, and language translation capability, is available, many times at little to no cost.

Research confirms that student motivation is a key factor in successful reading. Interest and background knowledge about a topic can provide the means to motivate students to read material that would otherwise be considered too difficult or above their reading levels. As support for this notion, Ganske and colleagues (2003) point out that interest fosters persistence and a desire to understand, while topic knowledge supports children’s word identification and comprehension, because they draw on what they already know.

While teachers need to customize teaching and learning materials for all students, including those who lack the skills to decode and comprehend the text, they must also be committed to responding to the reading interests and needs of learners whose skills extend beyond grade level. Advanced readers have been found to enjoy:

- » Nuanced language;
- » Multidimensional characters;
- » Visually inventive picture books;
- » Playful thinking;
- » Unusual connections – finding patterns and parallels within and among books;
- » Abstractions and analogies;
- » A blend of fantasy and non-fiction;
- » Extraordinary quantities of information about a favorite topic; and
- » Books about gifted children.

When the text builds on students’ interests and knowledge, the combination of knowing a lot about the topic and being able to talk with others about it supports literacy. A systematic way of determining what topics or genres might capture children’s attention is a reading interest survey. A survey can also give insight into a child’s reading habits. Having this type of information about a student’s interests and habits helps teachers guide students’ selection of reading materials that they will read and enjoy. Many commercial informal reading inventories include interest surveys. Following are two examples of reading interest/attitude surveys: Reading Interest Inventory Checklist (http://www.scholasticred.com/dodea/pdfs/SPED_SR_survey6-12.pdf) and Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (http://www.professorgarfield.org/parents_teachers/printables/pdfs/reading/readingsurvey.pdf).

Standards-Based Curriculum:

Examining Louisiana’s Standards and Comprehensive Curriculum through the lens of literacy

The Comprehensive Curriculum and a research-based reading program form the basis for effective instruction in the elementary grades in order to meet the rigorous Standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language. Equally important is the inclusion of literacy instruction in all subjects throughout the day to ensure students’ access to, and understanding of, subject-matter content. At the same time as they are learning to read, young students begin to gain fundamental knowledge of math, science, and social studies concepts that will prepare them for the more rigorous academic subjects of later elementary grades and beyond. The inclusion of diverse text in the elementary curriculum ensures that students’ interests and abilities are supported as teachers endeavor to engage and motivate them to want to read and to learn.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Core Reading Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study and select a research-based core reading program following criteria in the narrative above • Purchase reading program and accompanying materials • Schedule and provide professional development for all appropriate staff, including administration, on the use of the program • Provide opportunities for instructional reading staff to meet in grade level teams prior to opening of school to plan and prepare core reading activities for use in small groups and centers • Enlist the support of the librarian/media specialist in acquiring additional materials and resources needed to fully implement the core reading program • Prepare school schedules early to ensure core reading instructional time is 90-120 minutes daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the core reading program with fidelity • Ensure protected time that takes advantage of all instructional minutes and minimizes transitions • Ensure that students spend a substantial amount of time actually reading text • Provide all students with choices of texts that they can read independently with at least 98% accuracy, 90% comprehension, and with expression for “high-success reading” • Follow the program’s pacing guide to ensure maximum exposure to necessary skills • Monitor the reading instructional time for adherence to program and pacing • Align and incorporate appropriate small group and center activities with the core reading instruction • Model and practice routines and behaviors for centers and maintain good classroom management to strengthen and maximize core reading time • Administer core reading assessments and use data to adjust student groups throughout the year and to reteach skills, as needed • Differentiate instruction and activities within the reading program to address individual student learning differences and choice, considering the English proficiency levels (and native language level, when applicable) of English language learners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite other classes into the classroom to partner read stories from the core program during free reading times • Expand reading opportunities outside of the core reading time (e.g., treasure hunts for vocabulary words) • Keep parents informed of their children’s reading progress (core reading assessment data and progress toward benchmarks) – brag about them • Record students reading core program stories at the beginning, middle, and end of the year and provide them with the recording to bring home • Examine shared core reading assessment results during teacher team meetings and provide time to share successful instructional strategies • Enlist in the Positive Behavior Support program to provide optimal learning environment for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funding to update or replace core reading materials, as needed • Provide initial core reading program training for all new staff and administrators • Provide continued core reading program training for returning staff and administrators • Assess the effectiveness of the core program and act on the results (e.g., replace, refine, refocus)

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Core Reading Program <i>[continued]</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use the program's resources that support the special instructional needs of students (e.g., ELLs and students with exceptionalities) Model a love for reading and make reading instruction engaging and positive Provide targeted instruction for those not progressing or failing to meet benchmark goals (e.g., Tier II or III interventions) 		
<p>Literacy Instruction in All Subjects and Throughout the Day</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend awareness sessions to learn about transition to the new Standards Study the concepts and skills students need to know and be able to do to meet the expectations in the Standards Study research-based strategies and resources (including the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum) to support student learning of the Standards Study the English language proficiency standards resources, strategies, technologies, and accommodations for English language learners (ELLs) Study the text structures most frequently used in each subject area Identify and plan direct, explicit instructional strategies to teach text structures, vocabulary, and background knowledge students need to learn for each subject area http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/14725.pdf Study a variety of strategies for incorporating writing in all disciplines http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/traits/lessonplans.php Provide professional development on research-based instructional strategies and use of rubrics to improve reading and writing Discuss ways to infuse literacy throughout the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based strategies and appropriate resources (including the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum) to support student learning of the Standards Implement appropriate strategies to help ELLs meet English language proficiency standards Teach academic vocabulary in all subjects using a systematic process such as http://www.u-46.org/roadmap/files/vocabulary/acadvoc-over.pdf Integrate reading and writing strategies and skill development necessary for achievement in all subjects Coach, model, co-teach, observe, and give feedback to fellow teachers on using reading and writing strategies in the classroom Make writing a daily activity in every class Use a school-wide writing rubric that is aligned with state assessments to set clear expectations and goals for performance Teach and have students practice writing as a process (pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish) Infuse literacy throughout the day Provide variety and choice in reading materials and writing topics Develop meaningful opportunities for students to write, speak, and listen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what students know and what skills or knowledge need to be strengthened in future lessons for students to reach standards proficiency Monitor the use of instructional strategies to improve literacy through formal and informal observations (http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/15541.pdf) Discuss exemplary samples with students to model features of quality writing Guide students to focus on their own improvement Provide opportunities for reading varied genres to build fluency, confidence, and understanding Integrate appropriate text comprehension strategies into instruction in all subject areas (i.e., self-questioning, summarizing, predicting, inferencing, graphic organizers) Integrate a common theme across subject areas, immersing students in content vocabulary connected to the topic Share creative ideas to infuse literacy throughout the day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss alternative instructional strategies or modifications that may be better suited to promoting student learning of the Standards (and for ELLs, English language proficiency standards) Stay abreast of effective strategies for reading and writing instruction Expand meaningful opportunities for students to write, speak, and listen (e.g., contests, debates, speeches, and drama) Expand the types of writing across the subject areas (e.g., songs, manuals, captions, word problems, e-mails, ads, instructions, etc.) Differentiate reading and writing assignments by offering student choice (http://daretodifferentiate.wikispaces.com/Choice+Boards) Celebrate and publish good student writing products in a variety of formats (i.e., local newspapers, literacy magazines, classroom and school libraries, etc.) Host family nights that engage parents in activities that demonstrate the importance of reading and writing proficiency

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Diverse Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine range of students' reading levels and the English language proficiency of English language learners Identify fiction and non-fiction texts of various reading levels on topics linked to the curriculum for independent reading Inventory student interests and use results to select reading material Enlist the support of the librarian/media specialist to acquire additional books and resources at various reading levels and English proficiency levels Plan library spaces in inviting, child-accessible areas and display books in an inviting manner Organize classroom libraries, considering difficulty levels, student interests, and subject matter Select read-aloud books that are age- and topic-appropriate and include a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and demographic groups Provide professional development on determining text readability and complexity levels, including Spanish text (e.g., use of http://lexile.com/analyzer) Schedule quality, independent reading time, allowing students to self-select and enjoy reading materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all classes have classroom libraries that provide access to books at a variety of difficulty levels on a wide range of topics, including culturally-responsive materials, for independent reading Include audio recordings and online audio books in libraries and centers that engage students and align with learning objectives Regularly update classroom libraries with new books to maintain student interest Allow students to self-select books and other reading materials to read for pleasure Create leveled lists using teacher judgment, leveling systems (www.lexile.com), and easy-to-use readability formulas (e.g., Dale-Chall, Fry) Ensure access to available technologies (i.e., computers, assistive technology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding to increase the range and variety of reading material Collaborate with community resources (i.e., library, non-profits, private business, etc.) to augment book collections Utilize parents and community members to promote diverse literacy experiences (i.e., guest authors, dramatic readings, book fairs, creative productions, parents reading in English or in the native language of students, etc.) Broaden the types and formats of materials students read independently (e.g., magazines, newspapers, on-line text, picture books, primary sources, blogs, e-mail, audio books, manuals, etc.) Support equitable access to content by using audio- and video-enhanced software and internet resources with built-in teaching and learning supports (e.g., http://www.cast.org/products/index.html) Teach students and parents how to use Find a Book (http://www.lexile.com/fab/) to build individualized reading lists at interest and developmental levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding to update and renew classroom and school library book collections Provide professional development on free literacy resources that provide learning supports Provide families with access to resources that will allow their children to function more independently (i.e., http://accessguide.doe.louisiana.gov/default.aspx)



Great teaching begins with assessment. Because research has repeatedly demonstrated the value of regularly assessing reading progress, a comprehensive assessment system is a critical component of an effective school-level plan for preventing reading difficulties in the elementary grades. In a comprehensive system, assessment has a specific purpose (e.g., diagnosis, placement, etc.), helps teachers discover what children can do, not just what they cannot do; and informs and improves teaching in a timely manner (Reutzel, 2009).

Beyond knowing what should be assessed, the two most important considerations in guiding the selection of specific assessment measures is evidence of their reliability and validity. Reliability refers to **how consistently** a test measures a skill or ability. Validity refers to **the extent** to which it measures the skill or ability in question. Best practice is to choose assessments with sufficient evidence of reliability and validity that can also be administered and interpreted in a reliable and valid way by those who administer and use the data for instructional decisions.

Assessment is often divided into formative and summative categories based on *the intended use* of the assessment. Formative and summative assessments are designed to be used in the learning context as assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning, respectively. These assessments measure key literacy skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, letter naming, print concepts, vocabulary).

A comprehensive assessment plan is not necessarily one that can be quickly implemented; however, thoughtful decision making provides a foundation upon which to develop such a plan. In an “ideal” system, schools identify and use valid, reliable **formative** assessments to screen, progress monitor, and diagnose student needs to target instruction effectively. This ideal system also uses **summative** literacy outcome measures to indicate how well students have learned or how well they have met performance standards.

To implement a comprehensive assessment system that includes both formative and summative assessment, the following tasks are routinely accomplished at the state, district, and school levels each year:

- » Creating a master schedule that specifies the weeks during which each assessment is administered;
- » Ordering or reproducing all testing materials in time to reach test administrators;
- » Training all teachers or assessment team members in test administration;
- » Designating a person to coordinate the master testing schedule; and
- » Scoring of all assessments and entering and summarizing the data.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments check students’ progress toward grade-level standards, beginning early in the school year, to identify students who may be “at risk,” and continuing throughout the

instructional year to help guide instruction and intervention efforts. These simple, time-efficient, and objective measures mirror the type of instruction or intervention the student is receiving (e.g., accuracy, fluency, comprehension, written mechanics, spelling, writer’s craft, etc.) and produce data, including reading levels, to inform judicious real-time instructional decisions.

Screening and progress monitoring assessments are examples of formative measures. Placement tests are a form of screening. Interim assessments are a form of progress monitoring and may include **curriculum-based** (e.g., core reading program unit tests) and **benchmark** (e.g., DIBELS) measures. The assessments evaluate how well the student has learned the material or mastered skills to date and provide decisive information to guide teaching efforts. Professional dialogue about common assessments centers on rapid analysis of student results and discussion of instructional strategies used or needed. The National Center on Response to Intervention (http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=71) provides extensive information about screening and progress monitoring to guide instruction.

A rubric is a formative assessment tool that uses a set of criteria to assess student work. For example, to assess a student’s use of written mechanics, spelling, and author’s craft elements in a written piece, the teacher can use a rubric to determine the child’s instructional strengths and needs. While the scoring criteria remain the same, the teacher includes different target skills to assess, based on grade level standards and previously-taught skills. The assigned scores give the teacher important information about each child’s writing competencies and intervention needs.

Diagnostic measures are another type of formative assessment. If a student is not progressing with current instructional and intervention efforts, specific diagnostic measures provide more in-depth information useful in planning more targeted instruction. For example, a running record (<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/readassess/1.0>) is a means of documenting an individual student’s reading of a continuous text. It can provide a way to assess a student’s problem-solving of word recognition and comprehension, to determine appropriate levels of text for reading, and to inform teaching. Taken at intervals, these records can show growth over time in reading skills.

Screening and progress monitoring measures can be administered by any professional (e.g., teachers, paraprofessionals, retired teachers,

school counselors, media specialists, speech-language pathologists) trained to administer them correctly. Typically, teachers administer the tests to their own students. For large-scale assessments, such as routine benchmarking, a school- or district-level assessment team of four to eight people can administer the tests. There are advantages to both approaches. Using an assessment team disrupts instruction less; however, the big advantage of having teachers administer the tests is that they may acquire information from directly observing the way students respond that goes beyond a test's basic score. Depending on the circumstances, schools could elect to blend the approaches, using teachers to administer the tests to some of their students, while the school- or district-level team assesses the rest of the students. Diagnostic measures are best administered by a school psychologist or by a teacher or instructional coach with training in their administration and interpretation.

Summative Assessment

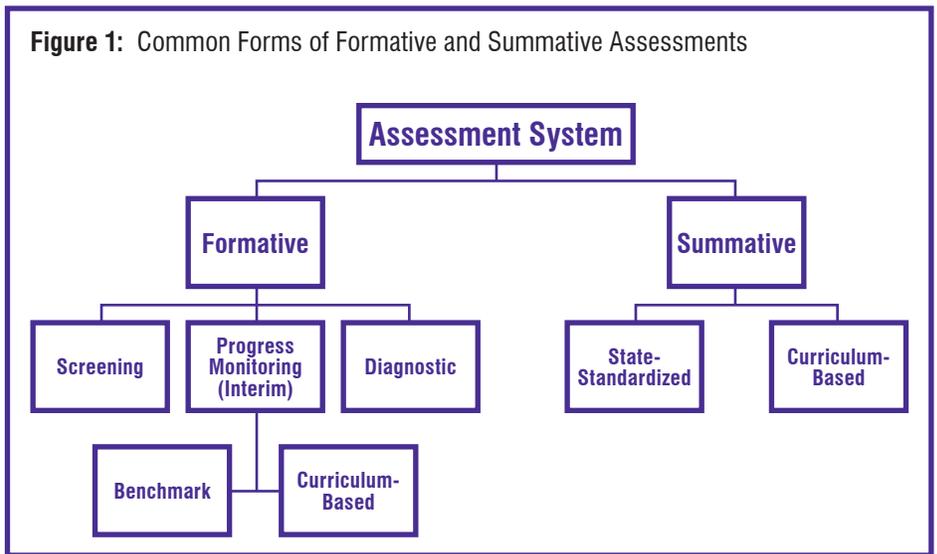
Summative assessments are outcome measures that are frequently group administered. These assessments provide accountability data to guide the evaluation and progress of the school's literacy program. State-standardized assessments are examples. Curriculum-based tests are also examples, depending on their use. The data from such tests allow reporting of student progress by the individual, class, school, district, and sub-group to stakeholders such as education officials, policy makers, local communities, private groups, parents, and students.

Students in Louisiana K-2 classrooms do not currently participate in state-mandated summative assessments, although districts can choose to administer some form of summative assessment. Third grade students participate in state testing in the spring of each school year.

Data-Based Decision Making

Systematically using student achievement data from formative and summative assessments at the class, school, district, and state levels helps educators focus instructional improvement decisions such as:

- » Prioritizing instructional time;
- » Targeting intervention support;
- » Determining instructional effectiveness;
- » Refining instructional methods; and
- » Staffing needs.



The Institute of Education Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education, in their *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* practice guide (http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm_pg_092909.pdf), offer five recommendations regarding data use:

- » Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement;
- » Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals;
- » Establish a clear vision for school-wide data use;
- » Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school; and
- » Develop and sustain a district-wide data system.

In order to use assessment data most effectively, a comprehensive assessment system needs a school-level data management plan. A number of web-based data management resources allow schools to enter data locally and produce data summaries and individual student charting that are helpful in interpreting test data. These services typically charge a small fee (e.g., one dollar per student per year), but they add significantly to the ease with which student data can guide both classroom and school-level decisions. Another approach is to use programs such as Microsoft Excel or free resources such as the data management program ChartDog (http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/chartdog_2_0/manual/chartdogman.html) to manage and summarize student data.

Finding an efficient way to manage and use the data is as important as gathering the data in the first place. Key in this process is “the need for all assessors and users of assessment results to be assessment literate – to know what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate uses of assessment results – thereby reducing the risk of applying data to decisions for which they aren’t suited” (Chappuis, Chappuis & Stiggins, 2009).

Assessment System:

Identifying and using valid and reliable measures to screen, progress monitor, and diagnose literacy needs

Comprehensive assessment practices to support effective instruction include both assessment for learning (formative) and assessment of learning (summative). Formative assessment is ongoing and is used to provide information about student progress or to make effective instructional adjustments, while summative assessment is used to evaluate programs and for accountability purposes. As Stiggins (2007) has suggested, “Changing schools from places that merely sort pupils based on achievement into places that assure that all pupils meet the Standards brings with it the challenge of rethinking the dynamics of assessment.”

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Formative Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and select effective screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic tools to identify struggling readers and writers, determine response to intervention, and gain in-depth knowledge of specific deficits Consider assessment measures that help identify high-achieving/advanced learners who would benefit from enrichment activities Agree on appropriate assessment techniques that will be used to provide evidence of student learning Define a process for selecting appropriate interventions for struggling readers and writers (i.e., use of http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/literacy/literacy_clearinghouse.aspx) Identify and purchase assessment and intervention materials aligned with students' needs Identify and train all staff who administer assessments to ensure standardized procedures and accurate data recording Have all materials and procedures in place prior to start of the school year Assess resource and schedule requirements to identify time blocks for data study, teacher collaboration, and delivery of interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a formative assessment calendar based on local, state, and program guidelines, including specific timeline for administration and persons responsible Administer assessments and input data according to the established timeline Provide timely, descriptive feedback to students, with opportunities to assess their own learning (e.g., graphing their progress) Differentiate instruction in all subject areas to customize literacy support, matching students' needs to instruction and text Use screening, progress monitoring, and curriculum-based assessments to influence instructional decisions regarding flexible 3-tier service options (RTI) Schedule students into appropriate literacy interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a person or persons responsible for ensuring fidelity of formative assessment procedures and timelines Integrate student-led conferences where students articulate their progress toward individual learning goals Recognize and celebrate individual student's incremental improvements toward reaching literacy goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide continued professional development to all staff who administer assessments to ensure standardized procedures and accurate data recording Acknowledge staff's efforts to improve their use of assessment data to inform instruction

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Summative Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study how the standards for a grade are assessed on state and local tests • Identify curriculum-based benchmark assessments (i.e., end-of-unit or chapter tests and end of grading period tests) that are used to measure progress toward standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a summative assessment calendar based on local, state, and program guidelines, including specific timeline for administration • Administer summative assessments at scheduled intervals • Provide timely feedback of results to students and parents • Use assessment results to monitor performance of individual students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer effective professional development on ways to address specific skills identified as class, grade, subject, or school-wide weaknesses • Analyze summative data to identify Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of subgroups • Apply protocols for looking at student assessments and evaluating longitudinal student progress (see Collaborative Teams in Leadership component for more information) • Plan lessons, re-teaching, and intervention activities that target areas of need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and celebrate individual student's significant improvements and reaching designated standards of achievement
Data-Based Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a data collection plan for storing, analyzing, and disseminating assessment results • Evaluate technology infrastructure capacity to support test administration and dissemination of results • Analyze previous year's outcome assessments (state-standardized) to determine broad student needs and serve as a baseline for improvement • Use analysis of previous year's assessment to identify teachers that need to adjust teaching strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop schedule and resource plans for review and study of assessment data • Create procedures and expectations for staff to review and analyze assessment results • Use results to make informed decisions about student placement and adjust instruction • Upgrade technology infrastructure capacity if necessary to support assessment administration and dissemination of results • Focus discussions during collaborative team meetings on changes that can be made to improve the instructional program for all students • Plan time to review assessment results in collaborative teams to identify program and instructional adjustments, as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze student data in teacher teams to develop and adjust instructional plans • Analyze student data to evaluate the effectiveness of specific tiers and interventions • Implement a system for communicating data and data analysis results to the district literacy leadership team in a timely manner • Use technology to share relevant student progress data with stakeholders (e.g., parents, caregivers) in an easily interpreted, user-friendly format • Use student and teacher data to assist in setting learning goals and monitoring progress toward those goals • Disaggregate data by subgroups to determine if instructional plans are addressing the needs of all students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make data-driven budget decisions aligned with literacy priority • Advocate for alignment of district and school policies, procedures, and actions that support improvement and achievement efforts • Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies • Redefine school improvement goals • Adjust curriculum alignment to eliminate gaps • Ensure students are placed appropriately in specific programs



The goal of reading instruction in elementary school is to help students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to read grade-level text fluently and with good comprehension (Torgesen, et al., 2007). Reading instruction that supports student literacy achievement at the whole classroom level and with small groups of students who have different instructional needs includes several critical elements: systematic, explicit instruction, differentiated instruction, intervention, and technology. Taken together, these areas contribute to success in teaching reading to diverse student populations.

Systematic, Explicit Instruction

Instructional approaches that are systematic and explicit increase the likelihood of students learning to read well. **Systematic instruction** focuses on teaching students *how to learn* by giving them the tools and techniques that efficient learners use to understand and learn new material or skills. Systematic instruction entails sequencing of instruction so that each skill builds upon the one previously taught.

Explicit instruction begins with *setting the stage for learning*, followed by a clear *explanation* of what to do (telling), followed by *modeling* of the process (showing), followed by multiple opportunities for *practice* (guiding), until independence is attained. Explicit instruction moves systematically from extensive teacher input and little student responsibility initially – to total student responsibility and minimal teacher involvement at the conclusion of the learning cycle. Systematic, explicit instruction in reading involves the planned and intentional teaching of the strategies that proficient readers use to decode text, gain word meaning, and understand text.

The National Reading Panel's research analysis found significant benefits of systematic, explicit reading instruction in the areas of phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, compared to reading instruction without these components. Further research has shown that language development affects a child's preparation for academic learning and his chance at academic success for the remainder of his school career (Hart and Risley, 1995). To be able to read and write effectively, a child must develop strong oral language skills (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Gambrell, 2004; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

Language Development

To promote language acquisition, children must be in an environment that allows them to communicate socially in that language. Children come to school with a wide range of word exposure and word knowledge levels, so it is important that teachers find ways to provide all students with activities that promote language development and vocabulary growth. (See Vocabulary section on page 22.)

Students' comprehension of written language depends in large part upon their effective use and understanding of oral language. Language experiences that help students learn about the world,



about themselves, and about each other are central parts of good reading instruction. Appropriate language instruction includes:

- » Discussions that focus on a variety of topics;
- » Use of language-stimulation techniques (e.g., language-modeling responses, interaction responses, student-oriented responses, scaffolding strategies);
- » Activities that help students understand the world – in and out of the classroom;
- » Songs, chants, and poems that are fun to sing and say;
- » Concept development and vocabulary-building lessons;
- » Games and other activities that involve talking, listening, and in particular, following directions; and
- » Opportunities to hear good stories and informational books read aloud daily.

Children whose homes have not prepared them for the variety of English necessary for educational success can learn to master the language through well-designed school experiences. Louisiana seeks to incorporate promising practices for ELLs identified by research (Short & Fitzsimmon, 2007) including:

- » Teaching language through content and themes;
- » Building and activating background knowledge;
- » Using native language strategically when explaining difficult concepts;
- » Teaching the components and processes of reading and writing to students who do not read in any language;
- » Ensuring literacy-rich environments where students are immersed in a variety of language experiences;

- » Providing opportunities for classroom discourse and interactions that are well-designed to enable ELLs to develop communicative strengths in language arts; and
- » Delivering instruction that develops foundational skills in English that enable ELLs to participate fully in grade-level coursework.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is defined by the National Institute for Literacy (2003) as the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate the individual sounds in spoken words. Before children learn to read print, they need to understand that words are made up of speech sounds, or phonemes. Phonological awareness is an auditory skill that is best taught explicitly in small groups of students for 10-15 minutes per day of reading instruction.

Phonological awareness instruction typically occurs in kindergarten and first grade. In kindergarten, activities focus on simple oral tasks such as identifying rhyming words and creating rhymes, matching words with beginning sounds, and blending sounds into words. Phonological awareness tasks in first grade focus on blending, segmentation, and the substitution and manipulation of phonemes. Specific examples of phonological awareness skills and teaching tips can be found at http://reading.uoregon.edu/big_ideas/pa/pa_teach.php.

Phonics and Word Study

Early systematic phonics instruction is an important aspect of a balanced, comprehensive reading program. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language (Armbruster, et al., 2003). It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words. The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle - the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships helps early readers recognize familiar words accurately and automatically and “decode” new words.

Systematic and explicit phonics instruction entails the direct teaching of a set of letter-sound relationships in a clearly defined sequence. The set includes the major sound/spelling relationships of both consonants and vowels. Phonics instruction provides substantial practice in applying knowledge of these relationships using decodable books and stories that contain a large number of words with the letter-sound relationships students have learned or are learning. Students are also given opportunities to spell words and to write their own stories with the letter-sound relationships they are learning.

It is vitally important that teachers know and pronounce individual speech sounds properly when modeling the sounds during instruction. The following site contains libraries of the phonetic sounds of English and Spanish with animated articulatory

diagrams, step-by-step descriptions and video-audio of the sound spoken in context <http://www.uiowa.edu/~acadtech/phonetics/#>.

Along with systematic phonics instruction, learners need additional hands-on opportunities to manipulate word features in a way that allows them to generalize to entire groups of words. Word study of high frequency words, sight words, word families, word parts, and spelling teaches students how to look at words so they can construct an understanding of how written words work. Of course, the study of words must coincide with the level of word knowledge of the learner. Developing fast and accurate perception of word features and patterns of the English language helps students’ facilitation of reading fluency and vocabulary development.

Fluency

Fluency is defined as **accurate** reading of connected text at a conversational **rate** with appropriate **prosody** (smooth and effortless reading with proper phrasing, expression, intonation, stress, duration and timing). A fluent reader is one who recognizes and comprehends what he or she is reading quickly and with a minimum of effort (automaticity). This skill is gained through practice and observation.

A fluent reader:

- » Has automatic decoding skills;
- » Has built up a vocabulary of sight words;
- » Sees phrases as wholes;
- » Uses prediction skills within a phrase or clause;
- » Has good comprehension skills;
- » Has good word attack skills;
- » Reads smoothly and with expression; and
- » Self-corrects (recognizes when something does not sound right).

If a student is accurate, but lacks appropriate speed, then one-minute speed drills with a list of carefully chosen words and/or text is often a useful method. However, if a student lacks accuracy, decoding instruction in targeted spelling patterns and word study will provide students with insight into how words are put together. For a student who reads with both accuracy and speed, but lacks prosody, direct instruction using intonation, phrasing and chunking, and scooping strategies may be helpful. The following recommendations improve all components of fluency, while increasing comprehension.

Provide motivation by encouraging students to:

- » Read to people (friends, family, stuffed animals and pets!), modeling exactly what you expect them to do and talking through the process. Supply them with books to use;
- » Read to people using the print that is around them, such as signs and labels;
- » Always carry something to read, so they can take advantage of any opportunity to read to people;

- » Read materials that interest them or that can help answer questions they have. Give them a reason to read;
- » Reread favorite texts often; and
- » Read many books by favorite authors.

Provide reading practice in:

- » Decoding and identifying words that contain the letter-sound relationships students are learning to read (decodable books);
- » Word families and rhyming patterns;
- » Blending together the components of sounded-out words and “chunking” together the parts of longer words;
- » Phonetically “irregular” words using practice activities and stories; and
- » Various reading styles that are used often (e.g., storybooks, textbooks, newspapers, recipes, instructions).

Provide help by:

- » Encouraging readers’ self-correction skills –have them listen to themselves read and self-assess if what they have read sounded like good language;
- » Teaching and encouraging use of graphophonic (individual letters and words), semantic (words in context), and syntactic (how words, phrases and sentences are put together) cues;
- » Working individually with those who need help;
- » Providing teaching aids (i.e., flash cards, sentence building cards, word building cards, easy readers, sentence building grids, syllable wheels, word slides, computer- or CD-assisted reading, computer-based text to speech, learning games, transition materials for ELL students, readers’ theatre);
- » Providing a tiered model of support based on individual student needs and monitoring student progress frequently; and
- » Providing before- or after-school sessions and summer school classes/learning for students who need extra help.

Achieving fluency is only the first step in attaining academic proficiency in English. To develop the vocabulary and skills needed for grade-level academic proficiency, English language learners need:

- » Exposure to appropriate books and to people who use academic language (e.g., the language used in textbooks);
- » Opportunities to learn and use academic language; and
- » Systematic, explicit instruction, including sufficient and supportive feedback.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Researchers often refer to four types of vocabulary: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Four Types of Vocabulary			
Receptive Vocabulary	Listening: the words we need to know to understand what we hear	Speaking: the words we use when we speak	Productive Vocabulary
	Reading: the words we know when we see them in print (sight words and words we can decode)	Writing: the words we use when we write	

Collectively, listening and speaking vocabularies are sometimes referred to as oral vocabulary. Since oral vocabulary precedes reading vocabulary, the pronunciation and meanings of words in their oral lexicons help young children recognize words they see in print. When sounding out an unfamiliar word they use the “trial pronunciation” they have created to search their oral vocabulary. If they find a match and it makes sense in the sentence, they continue reading. If the word is not in their oral vocabulary, it is difficult to recognize the word in print, even if they are able to produce an accurate pronunciation by decoding. They cannot comprehend what they are reading without knowing what most of the words mean. The scientific research on vocabulary instruction reveals that 1) most vocabulary is learned indirectly and 2) some vocabulary should be taught directly.

Children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways:

1. They engage in daily oral language with adults.

The teacher creates purposeful and planned opportunities for students to listen to and use language. The goal of classroom conversation is to encourage more student talk, more peer interaction, and longer utterances. As they engage in these conversations, teachers often repeat words several times, as well as expose students to new and intriguing words throughout the school day. For example, rather than saying that lunch was good today, the teacher might say that lunch was scrumptious (Graves, et al., 2004).

2. They listen to adults read to them.

Reading children’s books aloud has been found to increase the vocabularies of students because of the rich and descriptive language found in print. In addition, reading aloud is particularly helpful in creating background knowledge, conditioning the child’s brain to associate reading with pleasure, and providing a reading role model. The teacher-student talk, or *text talk*, (i.e., <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/text-talk-julius-baby-25.html?tab=4#tabs>) that accompanies the book reading helps

children to learn new words and concepts and to relate them to their prior knowledge and experience.

3. They read extensively on their own.

The more children read on their own, the more words they encounter, and the more word meanings they learn. Reading widely contributes to vocabulary growth by offering students opportunities to make connections among familiar and unfamiliar words that are semantically related – word families (cat, hat, that), derivatives such as compound words (foot + ball = football), words with suffixes or prefixes (play, player, playful), and inflections (shoe/shoes, church/churches). For students to get the most out of wide reading, they read for various purposes and read texts at various levels of difficulty. Teachers can provide lists of books for students to read and provide time to read them.

Children learn vocabulary *directly* when they are explicitly taught specific words and word-learning strategies (e.g., using context clues and word parts such as affixes, base words, and root words). Beck, et al. (2002) describe a practical method of choosing specific words for explicit instruction. This method includes categorizing words into three tiers:

1. **Basic words** known by most students at a particular grade level (e.g., *clock, happy, walk*)
2. **High-utility words** that are generally useful for students to know and are likely to encounter with some frequency in their reading (e.g., *fortunate, impress, curious*)
3. **Content-specific words** particular to a subject area that often lack generalization to other subject areas (e.g., *polygon, latitude, evaporation*)

Basic words rarely require instruction. High-utility words are recommended as the focus of explicit vocabulary instruction in reading and English language arts classes. Teachers select high-utility words for instruction based on each word’s importance to understanding a specific reading selection or concept. For example, “exhausted” might be a good word to target for instruction, since students know what it means to be “tired.” Content-specific words are best learned in the subject area that students are most likely to encounter them.

For English language learners (ELLs), vocabulary development is especially critical for their ability to read and comprehend texts. The selection of vocabulary words to teach ELLs can also be grouped into three tiers <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/vocabulary>.

Comprehension

Effective comprehension instruction includes teaching students to become independent, strategic, and metacognitive thinkers who are able to use appropriate comprehension strategies to ensure that they understand what they read. And it does so in ways that motivate students not just to read, but to *want* to read.

In explicit comprehension instruction, teachers use the following practices:

- » Modeling and think alouds to teach students how, when, and where to use comprehension strategies;
- » Being explicit about what students are to do;
- » Sequencing activities so that students learn and develop skills systematically;
- » Providing multiple opportunities for students to practice; and
- » Providing feedback so students practice new skills correctly.

Comprehension requires an interaction between the text and the reader that results in constructing meaning from the text. The ability to “construct meaning” relies on the reader’s use of a set of highly complex, well-developed, and well-practiced skills, strategies, and abilities.

Comprehension strategies are conscious plans that are under the control of a reader who makes decisions about which strategies to use and when to use them. Skilled readers construct meaning before, during, and after reading by using a set of comprehension strategies to integrate information from text with their background knowledge. Student development and use of effective reading comprehension strategies is one of the most important goals for subject area literacy instruction.

Research strongly supports the following strategies (Allington, 2001; Armbruster, et al., 2001; Farstrup & Samuels, 2002):

- » Activating prior knowledge – making connections between text, the world, and their lives (background knowledge and life experiences);
- » Answering and generating questions – actively asking themselves questions of the text as they read to help integrate and summarize information;
- » Making and verifying predictions – gaining meaning by making informed predictions using clues from text (title, known author, etc.) and evaluating them as reading continues;
- » Using mental imagery and visualization – creating mental images that help enter the text visually in the mind’s eye as a way to understand processes or events in a story;
- » Monitoring comprehension – knowing when they do or do not understand what they read and to use appropriate strategies to improve understanding; and
- » Recognizing story structure – awareness of text organization (physical patterns and literary conventions of a particular text structure or genre).

Comprehension strategy instruction is most effective when introduced to students at opportune times through explicit instruction. For each strategy, teachers model what the strategy is;

tell why it is important; and indicate when, where, and how to apply it to the reading of content area text.

Cognitive processes that are necessary to gain expertise in reading comprehension require frequent opportunities to apply the processes. With teacher support and guidance, students practice using strategies as they read authentic text, such as content area textbooks, trade books, or other content-specific supplemental reading material. As teachers observe students using a strategy, specific feedback, prompting, and elaboration is provided to encourage students' independent use of strategies.

Writing

Writing is an effective tool for improving comprehension in all subjects. With appropriate instruction and support, students learn to use writing as a way to offer and justify opinions, demonstrate understanding of subjects they are studying, and convey real and imagined experiences.

To accomplish these goals, students devote time and effort in producing short pieces of writing constructed in a day and longer pieces written over extended time. Students' skills in writing improve through explicit skill and process instruction and by increasing the frequency of writing. To improve writing, students need time to experiment, practice new skills, share, and revise. Students learn to write by working through the process of idea conception, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. The process, however, is not a linear progression, but a recursive back and forth among the stages.

Three instructional recommendations for effective writing practices are identified in *Writing to Read* (Graham and Hebert, 2010) to help students increase reading skills and comprehension:

Have students write about the texts they read by:

- » Responding to text in writing;
- » Writing summaries of text;
- » Writing notes about text; and
- » Answering questions about text in writing, or creating and answering written questions about text.

Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text by:

- » Teaching the process of writing, text structures for writing, paragraph or sentence construction skills to improve reading comprehension;
- » Teaching spelling and sentence construction skills to improve reading fluency; and
- » Teaching spelling skills to improve word reading skills.

Increase how much students write.

Teachers apply these recommendations in flexible and thoughtful ways to support student learning. Students' writing competencies

increase substantially when teachers model and support students' application of specific targeted skills. The instructional focus is as much on the process as it is on the final product.

Differentiated Instruction

In a differentiated classroom, the teacher understands that all students have diverse needs and that learner diversity is the norm, not the exception. Based on this belief, differentiated instruction applies an approach to teaching and learning that gives students multiple options for taking in information and making sense of ideas. This approach requires teachers to be flexible in their teaching and to adjust the curriculum and presentation of information to learners, rather than expecting students to modify themselves for the curriculum. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to guide the development of curricula that are flexible and supportive of all students. UDL calls for the design of curricula with the needs of all students in mind, minimizing barriers and maximizing access to both information and learning so that methods, materials, and assessment are usable by all. The UDL framework provides rich supports for learning in all three brain networks (Rose & Meyer, 2006):

- » Recognition learning – how students gather and categorize facts
- » Strategic learning – how students organize and express ideas
- » Affective learning – how students get engaged and stay motivated

Differentiated instruction and UDL bear much in common.

Differentiation of instruction provides students with options that enable them to grow into expert learners – ones who know how they learn best, who want to learn because they have experienced success, and who are prepared for a lifetime of learning. Supporting all students as readers, writers, and thinkers requires the use of flexible instructional materials, techniques, and strategies. Differentiated instruction does not change what is taught - the essential skills and content remain steady; teachers are still responsible for helping students reach proficiency standards in the adopted curriculum. Instead, differentiated instruction changes how the curriculum is presented to and accessed by students. Differentiation does not mean that the teacher creates daily lesson plans for each student; it means that alternatives are provided so that barriers are reduced and supports are provided to help meet the challenges of diversity.

The need to differentiate instruction requires teachers to know and use literacy support strategies that develop the skills of struggling, average, and strong readers and writers. While it is critical that all children receive the support necessary to read at least at grade level, students who have achieved this goal are challenged to continue developing advanced proficiencies. Teachers would be remiss if they failed to make appropriate provisions to accommodate the needs of at-risk readers. They are equally remiss if they do not offer appropriate instructional differences that respond to the needs of gifted/advanced learners.

In particular, teachers use three types of differentiation for customizing literacy support: differentiation of content, process, and product (Tomlinson, 2001):

Differentiation of Content

Content involves what the student needs to learn and how the student gains access to that information. Examples of differentiating content in the elementary classroom include:

- » Providing text and other materials on a variety of levels, in addition to grade-level materials;
- » Utilizing flexible materials, including digital media, that contain leveled supports;
- » Offering learning contracts that provide variety and choice;
- » Presenting and making ideas accessible through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic means;
- » Using a variety of representations of content, including pictures, charts, and graphs; and
- » Maintaining flexible small groups based on similar literacy needs.

Differentiation of Process

Process includes how a student engages with the learning environment in order to make sense of or master the content. Examples of differentiation of process include:

- » Providing learning centers with a variety of materials and activities;
- » Making available manipulatives and other hands-on supports;
- » Varying the length of time a student may take to complete an assignment;
- » Using story webs, outlining, and concept mapping tools;
- » Making available choices of tools (sentence starters, spell and grammar checkers, speech-to-text); and
- » Providing differentiated models to emulate and mentors who use different approaches.

Differentiation of Product

A product is an expression of each student's understanding, knowledge, and skills related to the content. In a differentiated classroom, teachers increase opportunities for students to communicate their learning by providing alternative media for expression. Possibilities are endless; however, a good product requires students to think about, apply, and even expand upon their understanding of key concepts and skills. Examples of differentiation include, but are not limited to, production of:

- » Text;
- » Speech;
- » Drawing, illustration, design;
- » Physical manipulatives;

- » Film or video;
- » Multimedia (e.g., web designs, storyboards, comic strips); and
- » Music, visual art, sculpture.

Student engagement refers to a "student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process promoting higher level thinking for enduring understanding" (Bomia, et al., 1997). Flexibility and choice in content, process, and product help support students who are at diverse skill and interest levels and provide opportunities for personal control and connectedness to their own learning.

Managing Differentiating Instruction

Implementing changes in practice to differentiate instruction works best when teachers create predictable environments with clearly identified behavioral expectations, routines, and procedures (Gibson & Hasbrouck, 2009). Differentiating instruction in an efficient and effective learning environment requires (Gibson, 2010):

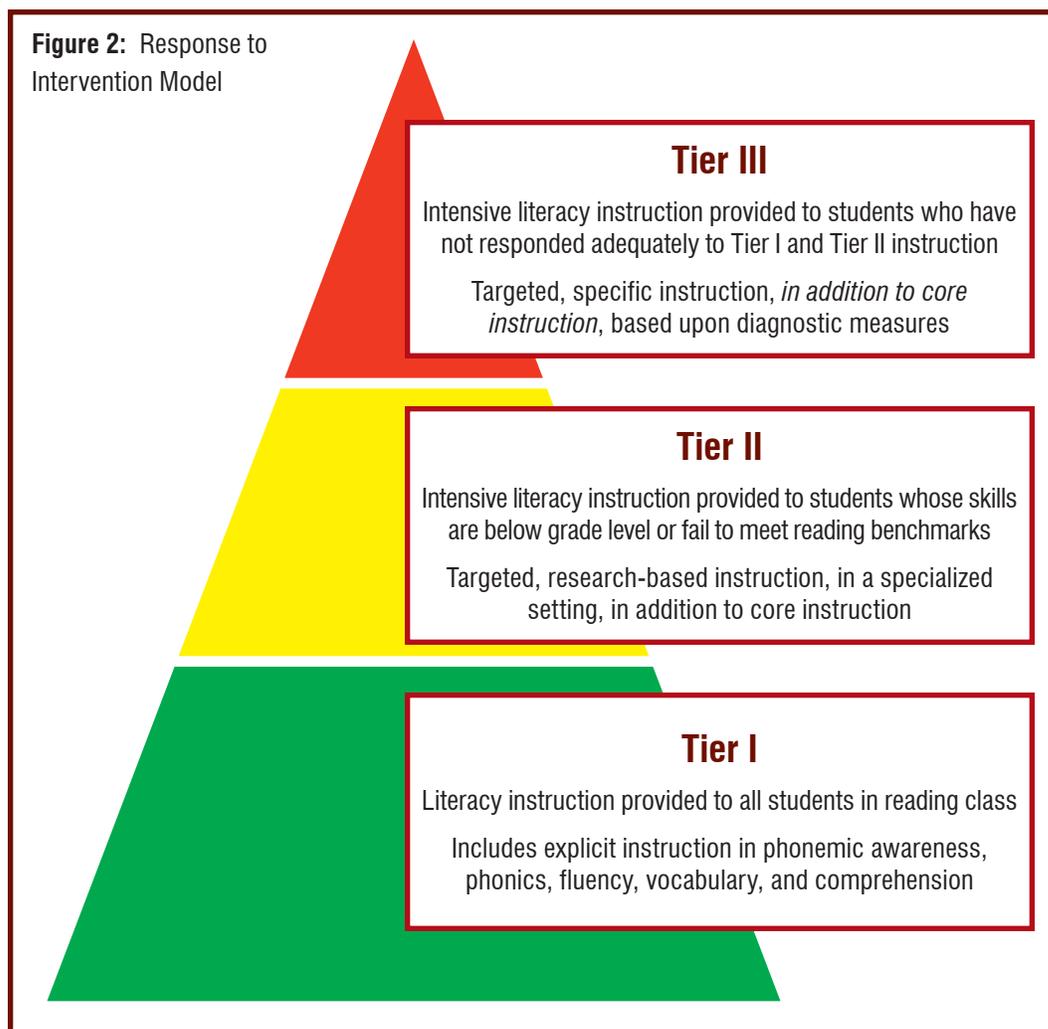
- » Organizing the physical environment with student work areas and an area for small group, teacher-led instruction;
- » Using data to identify needs, set instructional purpose, select curriculum and practice activities, monitor progress, make instructional adjustments;
- » Creating routines, procedures, and schedules that clearly identify when small group and whole class activities occur and a rotation chart that helps students know what to do and how they participate in activities to facilitate management and efficient transitions; and
- » Providing high-quality teaching and practice aligned with student needs.

Intervention

Difficulty in learning to read can be the result of several factors. Some reading problems seem to stem from environmental factors (e.g., limited exposure to print and language-rich settings). Other reading problems are the result of genetic or biological factors. Children whose reading difficulties stem from neurological sources are called dyslexic by scientific researchers and it is a term used by educators for some reading problems based on decoding. Dyslexia is a brain disorder that primarily affects a person's ability to read and write words (Bloom, Beal, & Kupfer, 2003). Persons with dyslexia generally have normal or above-normal intelligence and their higher-order skills are intact. Their problem is not behavioral, psychological, motivational, or social. Regardless of the source of the reading problem, nearly all deficits can be overcome with strategic intervention that is matched with the student's assessed reading deficit and based upon direct, explicit instruction (Nevills & Wolfe, 2009).

The intervention process is organized into levels that represent an increase in the amount of instructional support students receive

based on assessment data. In Louisiana, the approach of assessing all students and using the data to modify their instruction is called Response to Intervention (RTI). Research demonstrates the benefits of implementing RTI in a standardized way, using common assessment and data management tools and a standard process to solve problems and accurately determine student needs (Torgesen, et al., 2001; VanDerHayden, Witt & Gilbertson, 2007). A standard protocol is a step-by-step process for identifying those students who have below grade-level pre-reading or reading skills and for determining appropriate interventions (e.g., <http://isteep.com/>). This method helps professionals perform all the basic RTI tasks consistently and efficiently. A standard protocol process is particularly effective when a classroom has several students performing below grade level. Making these determinations early has been shown to have positive effects on a child's entire academic experience. Another key aspect of RTI is frequent progress monitoring of students' response to instruction to determine movement from one level of support to the next. Schools implementing RTI in Louisiana use a three-tiered approach of instruction and intervention, as shown in Figure 2.



Tier I

Tier I represents the literacy instruction provided to all students with a core reading program grounded in scientifically-based reading research. Elements of an effective reading program include oral language development, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, word study, spelling, fluency, listening comprehension, reading comprehension, and written expression. School-wide reading screening measures are used to identify those students experiencing reading difficulties. Classroom assessments are administered periodically to determine whether students are making progress or need extra support. These assessments provide data for planning scaffolded instruction delivered in flexible grouping (i.e., whole group, small group, partner and individual). Teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students – including providing text on a variety of reading and interest levels, using

collaborative groups, and offering students choice in accessing curriculum and demonstrating learning. Outcome assessments are administered to all students to determine growth over time.

Tier II

One reading program is not likely to meet the needs of all students. Therefore, Tier II instruction refers to targeted supplemental instruction that is provided *in addition to* core instruction. This instruction is designed to provide support to students who are demonstrating specific skill deficits and who are performing below grade level in one or more critical areas of reading – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension – as determined by screening and benchmarking procedures. Appropriate literacy instruction and interventions are necessary to help students catch up to grade level standards and reading levels and to promote their academic success at an early age. Typically, small group (up to 6 students) instruction is scheduled during the regular school day (30 minutes per day) to provide the additional reading instruction required by students in Tier II. In elementary grades, this strategic instruction may take place in the regular classroom setting with the classroom teacher or in a separate classroom, resource classroom, or other specialized setting by a trained professional. Progress

for Tier II students is monitored frequently using an appropriate measure that matches the instruction being provided. When a Tier II student meets the benchmark goal(s), the intervention can be discontinued, but progress is carefully monitored to ensure continuation of adequate growth.

Tier III

This level of intensive intervention is for students who have not responded adequately to the instruction provided in Tier I and Tier II. Tier III intervention is provided in a separate class period scheduled during the school day, and is in addition to core reading instruction. This tier usually includes students who have severe reading difficulties. Intervention group size is kept very small (up to 4 students) and the interventions are implemented with fidelity by a trained professional (60 minutes per day). Diagnostic and weekly progress monitoring measures are utilized with this group of students to identify specific problem areas and check progress toward goals. Parent involvement in the student's progress is helpful in building the student's skills. If progress monitoring data show that a student is not making progress, the student may be referred for further evaluation and additional services.

Note: Louisiana's RTI Implementation Plan can be accessed at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/literacy/RTI.html>.

Technology

Technology-enabled learning experiences are accompanied by face-to-face support in a blended learning model to improve student mastery of standards. This model enhances flexibility in instruction, curriculum, and assessment according to student needs and interests, while increasing student engagement. Technology and materials conforming to principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) support effective literacy development and instruction for *all* students, especially those who are struggling readers, those with limited English proficiency, and students with exceptionalities. UDL principles (see Differentiated Instruction section above) support achievement, as well as access to instructional materials, so that students receive differentiated learning experiences and are enabled to use a range of assistive technologies appropriate to their needs and learning tasks.

Technology-based approaches to support students include:

- » Converting text to speech and speech to text (text readers and voice-recognition software);
- » Organizing ideas using visual prompts and templates (visual thinking software);
- » Providing texts in alternate formats (internet and multimedia); and
- » Providing electronic resources (portable word processors, tape recorders, pen-based devices).

Selecting technologies for a student requires that educators be provided with professional development opportunities to understand the appropriate choice and use of accessible materials, assistive technologies, and the UDL framework to improve student participation and progress in the general curriculum. In addition, parents are provided with materials that inform them of the purpose and potential of technology to help their children (http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/e_guide_at.pdf?date=3-13-06&status=new).

The 21st century is characterized by an abundance of information, rapid change in technology tools, and the need to collaborate and communicate on an unprecedented scale. To be effective citizens, students must learn functional and critical skills related to information, media, and technology, such as:

- » Accessing information efficiently and effectively and evaluating that information critically and competently;
- » Understanding media messages and interpreting how media can influence beliefs and behaviors;
- » Utilizing media creation tools effectively in diverse, multi-cultural environments;
- » Using technology as a tool to research, organize, and communicate information;
- » Using digital technologies (e.g., computers, PDAs, media players, GPS, etc.), communication/networking tools, and social networks to successfully function in a knowledge economy; and
- » Applying fundamental understanding of ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information technologies.

In order for students to gain these skills, teachers must acquaint themselves with the latest technologies and begin to introduce their use to students in the elementary grades in age-appropriate settings. *Reading, Writing, and Technology* is an online resource (http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Parents/pb1074_technology_sflb.ashx) prepared by the International Reading Association to provide parents with information on the use of the Internet and related technologies to help their children prepare for the literacy demands of tomorrow.

Instruction and Intervention (RTI):

Implementing research-based strategies, promoting active engagement, and establishing systems of support

High-quality instruction and early intervention is key to creating literacy skills in beginning readers that enable them to have success in school from the very beginning and to motivate them to continue to want to learn. Explicit instruction which includes modeling and student practice opportunities is an important characteristic of high-quality instruction. Differentiated instruction, early intervention, and technology are necessary to meet the needs of individual learners.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Systematic, Explicit Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine student data to focus on instructional areas of greatest need (e.g., fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) Compile and examine classroom observation data (e.g., using a checklist http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/15541.pdf) to show current practice in reading and writing instruction Examine observational data to determine quality of instruction Plan and provide professional development on explicit instructional strategies that build students' fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based instructional strategies that support diverse needs Carefully select the text to use when explicitly teaching a given strategy, ensuring that the text is appropriate for the reading levels of students while learning the strategy. Students then apply the strategy to complex text during regular classroom instruction Use data to inform instructional decisions and explicit teaching Tell students specifically what strategies they are going to learn; explain why it is important for them to learn the strategies; model how to use the strategies; and provide guided and independent practice with feedback Discuss with students when and where to apply the strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review teacher and student data to improve and enhance explicit instruction Share effective lessons and strategies in collaborative team meetings Create opportunities for peers to observe and demonstrate explicit lessons within the school, as well as with schools in close proximity Show students how to apply the strategies they are learning to different texts and genres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue analyzing data for impact of teaching strategies on student achievement Provide support to new teachers on explicit instructional strategies Invest in professional books to stay abreast of current research and new findings related to explicit instruction Expand opportunities for teachers to observe explicit lessons within the school, as well as in other schools
Differentiated Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile and examine classroom observation data (e.g., using a checklist such as http://www.doe.state.la.us/ide/uploads/15541.pdf) to show current practices in differentiation Examine student data to focus on instructional areas of greatest need to determine where differentiation is most needed Learn about Universal Design for Learning (e.g., read CAST publications, visit the CAST Web site http://www.cast.org/) Plan and provide professional development on differentiated instructional options for reading and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based differentiated instructional strategies that support diverse student needs in reading and writing development Adapt UDL practices slowly, perhaps one subject area at a time Provide frequent feedback and coaching to staff on differentiation techniques related to content, process, and product Educate parents about UDL and differentiated activities going on in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate and obtain additional support from other educators who are exploring and implementing UDL and differentiated instruction (e.g., online communities) Share effective differentiated lessons and differentiation strategies in teacher team meetings Create opportunities for peers to observe and demonstrate differentiated lessons within the school, as well as with schools in close proximity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to new teachers on differentiated instruction for all learners, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities Invest in professional books, journals, and online sources to stay abreast of current research and new findings related to differentiated instruction Expand opportunities for teachers to observe differentiated lessons within the school, as well as in nearby schools

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Differentiated Instruction <i>[continued]</i>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide instructional and assessment accommodations/adaptations for English language learners according to their English proficiency levels and accommodations for students with exceptionalities according to their needs and talents • Provide families access to resources that promote differentiated support for students (i.e., http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/1538.html) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for teachers to learn more about how to make elementary curriculum more accessible to all learners (e.g., participate in professional development provided by district and state, attend conferences, enroll in an institute)
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide staff with professional development on Response to Intervention (universal screening, tiered model, data-driven decision making, progress monitoring, intervention adjustment based on data) • Allocate ample time to research intervention programs (e.g., using http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/lan/2955.aspx) • Purchase one or two research-based reading intervention programs; if only one is chosen, be sure it includes both decoding and comprehension components • Provide substantial initial professional development on chosen intervention program(s) and plan for ongoing, job-embedded learning/coaching • Ensure the school procures all equipment necessary to operate the program(s) • Inquire about recurring costs of intervention materials and technology services • Build the master schedule early to accommodate the number of intervention classes needed • Select intervention teachers who have a proven record of success with struggling students • Design an intervention system that allows easy flow of students into and out of the tiers of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administer universal screening to all students • Consult multiple forms of data to identify struggling and advanced readers • Determine which students struggle with decoding and which ones need extra help with comprehension • Select a few purposeful literacy strategies that address student needs to use in all subject areas • Provide additional literacy intervention (e.g., an additional reading class, one-on-one tutoring, computer-assisted instruction, or before- or after-school program) by well-trained professionals for those students who need more targeted support (Tiers II and III) • Establish and monitor individual student growth targets (i.e., chart aim line and progress monitoring data points) • Keep intervention classes small • Implement intervention programs, as recommended • Provide follow-up professional development on the intervention program, supplemental materials, and literacy support strategies • Use progress monitoring and curriculum-based assessment data to inform instruction in each of the three tiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure fidelity to the overall intervention plan by conducting walk-throughs and observations (e.g., http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/15540.pdf) • Explain to students the importance of the assessment, what the results are used for, and what the results mean • Create and implement a goal-setting process with students, including explanation of data and next steps for improvement • Ensure the intervention program(s) are implemented with fidelity • Monitor student attendance in intervention and time on task • Continue to monitor individual student growth targets (i.e., chart aim line and progress monitoring data points) and use the data to drive instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate funding to replenish intervention materials, to continue professional development, and to recruit and retain highly-qualified intervention staff • Continue to provide substantial professional development and follow-up on the use of intervention program(s)

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey staff on knowledge and use of technology integration and assistive technologies in instruction Develop a professional development plan based on staff technology survey Inventory current hardware, software, and other technologies available at the school Review Bulletin 104 – <i>Louisiana K-12 Educational Technology Standards</i> – with staff (http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/13338.pdf) Develop a long-range technology plan (standards of use, assessments of effectiveness, plans for periodic updates of hardware and software, and a program to protect students from inappropriate material) http://www.louisianaschools.net/divisions/tech/technology_planning.html Plan to incorporate available technology resources into all subject area lessons Investigate technologies that provide learning supports for all students (e.g., text-to-speech, speech recognition technology, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff with professional development on technology skills and use of assistive technologies and multimedia to support instruction Coach teachers in the classroom on how to use technology to enhance instruction Designate a campus technology coordinator to help teachers troubleshoot technology issues and to coordinate with district technology staff to help integrate technology into instruction Utilize available technologies to address the needs of learners in all subject areas (e.g., free text-to-speech software, digital text) Create technology-infused lessons for heightened student engagement Ensure all students have access to available technologies to improve their reading and writing skills in all subject areas Use Teaching, Learning, and Technology Centers (TLTCs) for resources to support student and teacher use of technology http://www.louisianaschools.net/divisions/tech/tltc_contacts.html Use the <i>Louisiana K-12 Educational Technology Standards</i> performance indicators to integrate technology into all content areas Implement the beginning components of the technology plan Create and use computer-based games, such as Jeopardy and Hollywood Squares, to review content http://people.uncw.edu/ertzbergerj/ppt_games.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey teachers and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of the digital tools and resources on student achievement Explore new technologies that engage students (e.g., graphical data visualizations, Blogs, wiki pages, Eports, Googlemaps, Google docs, Podcasts, etc.) Stay abreast of educational research and emerging trends regarding effective use of technology Establish strategic partnerships to expand opportunities for students to access technologies both in school and out of school Investigate distance learning and online courses as vehicles for teacher and student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate existing funds and explore new sources of revenue to maintain existing technologies and to obtain new digital tools Recruit and retain highly competent personnel who use technology creatively and proficiently and use their skills to advance capacity of all staff Maintain a robust infrastructure for technology, including systems to support management, operations, and teaching and learning Utilize Louisiana’s Teaching, Learning and Technology Centers to access professional learning opportunities and links to other technology resources http://www.tlhc.ppsb.org/index.pl/regional_tlhc Write grant proposals to various companies (e.g., Microsoft, Apple, Texas Instruments, etc.) to increase technology capacity



Research has shown a direct connection between teacher preparedness and children’s success in learning to read and write (Dillon, et al., 2010). Supporting the literacy development of students requires teachers and administrators to be learners themselves – constantly developing and refining their own knowledge base about literacy. Because reading proficiency is fundamental to student achievement across all subjects and grades, a focused professional development plan is needed to prepare teachers to teach reading and writing effectively.

Teachers are expected to implement challenging and effective literacy curricula and to assess and document progress in increasingly complex ways (National Research Council, 2001). They need to use a variety of instructional



methods and have the ability to adjust those methods to the specific needs of students. They also need to be skilled in using multiple methods of monitoring children’s literacy development and interpreting assessments in order to make sound instructional decisions. To develop these competencies, effective pre-service and in-service programs are grounded in current research about how children learn to read and write and the best instructional practices to help them learn. Obviously, it is not possible for prospective teachers to gain all the knowledge they need in a pre-service program. Like other professional fields, the knowledge base for learning and teaching is strengthened as new knowledge is gained and meshed with old. Thus teacher education is an ongoing process involving rigorous pre-service training and experiential opportunities with continued in-service professional development.

Teachers learn best when initial and continued teacher development programs provide explicit teaching and modeling of practices; opportunities to discuss and collaborate with others as new information is learned; and long-term focused work on new concepts to enable deep learning to occur (Dillon, et al., 2010). Long-term professional growth requires sufficient resources and a coordinated support system to sustain progress in students’ literacy achievement. Such resources and support commonly focus on securing adequate staff, instructional materials, and funding. Equally important is establishing a positive literacy culture. A strong literacy culture based on student achievement, collaborative processes, and partnerships between the family, community, and the school is one of the most powerful and affordable variables that schools can use to ensure their students become successful readers and writers.

Professional Development

Professional development that improves teaching (for both pre-service and in-service teachers) is based on understanding the principles and practices of effective professional learning, such as those recommended by Learning Forward (<http://www.>

learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm). The design of effective professional development in literacy instruction also takes into account a general framework for the context (the learning environment), the content (the what), and the process (the how) as key considerations.

Context

Develop a Culture of Literacy

Teacher involvement in the planning and design of professional development greatly increases the level of buy-in and commitment to the plan. Teachers and key stakeholders (including university staff) work together to determine needs, decide on a course of action, and implement and support a plan that leads to improved teaching and learning (Guskey and Huberman, 1995). As a school community, teachers act collectively, using a common set of agreed upon practices and guided by a clear and compelling vision to do what it takes to address the needs of all students.

Building a strong literacy culture requires principals to establish high expectations of all staff and to hold them accountable for working toward these expectations. The principal and other school leaders (e.g., instructional coach, Literacy Leadership Team, and grade-level leaders) model commitment to literacy instruction and student achievement by staying actively involved in the professional development opportunities planned for teachers.

Professional Learning Communities

Organizational structures that support ongoing professional learning provide and protect adequate time for teachers to meet and collaborate as part of the regular work day. Research shows that the benefits of participating in collaborative professional learning include building shared knowledge, intellectual purpose, and collective responsibility for student learning (Calkins, et al., 2007). In addition, teachers who collaborate with peers have more opportunities to learn from one another and a greater desire to continuously develop effective practices. Technologies such as blogs, Wikis, video conferencing, Skype, iPods, Google Docs, etc., also allow teachers and teacher candidates to share and collaborate in real time.

Content

High Quality Classroom Instruction

Professional development that improves classroom instruction and, ultimately, student achievement, focuses on two key areas. The first area addresses general principles, theory, and techniques of

effective teaching. This knowledge creates a basic framework that teachers use to guide instructional decisions about what to teach, when, and how (Dole and Osborn, 2003). The majority of teachers' pre-service experience centers in this area. Louisiana has made promising improvements in pre-service programs by reviewing and ensuring alignment of all traditional and alternate teacher education programs with the *Reading and Language Competencies for New Teachers* (Bulletin 113) <http://www.louisianaschools.net/bese/policies.html>, which is based on reading research and is approved by the State Board. Further, Louisiana has taken steps to measure the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs by tracking graduates by incorporating value-added assessment results into the state's teacher preparation accountability system.

The second type of professional development is program specific (Torgesen, 2007), such as learning how to use core reading and intervention programs. Pre-service teachers gain valuable first-hand experience in implementing specific reading programs as they observe and student teach in schools.

School Improvement Priorities and Goals

Professional development is more effective when it is an integral part of the school's larger standards-based reform effort and linked to content, curriculum, texts, and assessment practices (Darling-Hammond, et al., 2009). The Literacy Leadership Team/School Improvement Team uses student assessment results to identify student needs and to guide both the instructional plan for students and the professional development plan for teachers. As a result, data-driven professional learning is an integral part of the total school improvement effort – with the ultimate measure of success being student achievement.

Process

Ongoing Assistance and Support

Teaching young students to read and write is a complex task. Teachers need ongoing assistance and support in order to strengthen practice and implement effective instructional strategies. Support teams (e.g., instructional coaches, lead teachers, library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff) are formed and are accessible to mentor and support pre-service, new, and experienced teachers in improving outcomes for students. The instructional coach is a professional who has skilled knowledge of and extensive classroom experience with literacy instruction, as well as excellent interpersonal/communication skills and knowledge of working effectively with adults. The role of the instructional coach is to build teacher knowledge and skill, so that children's literacy achievement is increased.

High-quality professional learning environments offer a variety of experiences, including collaborative teaming, action research, analysis and reflection, and model lessons. Schools shape professional learning to best fit teacher and student learning needs. A long-term professional

development plan that is part of the fabric of the school culture sends the message that teaching is a dynamic profession that requires keeping abreast of new knowledge and refining pedagogical skills.

Evaluation

In order to improve professional learning and determine its effectiveness in achieving the desired literacy outcomes, an evaluation process is implemented. Guskey (2000) suggests several levels of evaluation to assess the strengths and weaknesses of professional learning, including:

- » Participants' learning;
- » Participants' use of new knowledge and skills; and
- » Student learning outcomes.

Guskey suggests that when professional learning is successful, it is because teachers are supported and held accountable to use the new practices. Moreover, when teachers begin to see that the new practice works, more often than not, they eventually "practice themselves into change."

Coordinated Support

Coordinated supports are the resources, strategies, and practices which schools, families, and communities provide to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. Coordinated support, when integrated with instructional efforts and interventions, addresses barriers to teaching and learning and re-engages students with classroom instruction. Coordinated support and adequate resources are essential to ensure high quality classroom instruction occurs in every classroom, resulting in increased achievement for all students.

School leaders ensure that required resources are planned for and utilized to provide all students with the instruction they need. School leaders demonstrate their support for and commitment to school-wide literacy goals by actively seeking and allocating resources in accordance with established priorities and specific needs of the school.

A coordinated system of support provides a framework to align, assist, and support literacy efforts to increase the effectiveness and efficiency by which they operate and includes important resources such as:

- » Time for professional learning, collaborative data analysis, and planning;
- » Time scheduled and protected for literacy instruction;
- » Time for supplemental instruction and intervention;
- » Professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers in research-based reading instruction and, where appropriate, on first and second language acquisition processes and effective strategies to teach English language learners;



- » Instructional materials and access to the internet and technologies to differentiate instruction;
- » School leaders working in partnership with support personnel, such as instructional coaches, library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, and paraprofessionals to assist teachers and students;
- » A literacy leadership team centrally engaged in designing, supporting, and overseeing implementation of the school's literacy plan;
- » ESL, bilingual, and foreign language teachers and paraprofessionals; and
- » Coordination of funds across programs.

Developing a coordinated system of support also includes increasing efforts to link school resources with those in homes and in the local community (e.g., business and faith communities, neighborhood enrichment, recreation, and social service resources) to provide more broad-based interactions and greater support for students.

Accomplishing this involves redesigning organizational and operational infrastructure and rethinking the roles and functions of school and district level personnel. Some collaborative arrangements might include:

- » enhancing regular classroom strategies by creating opportunities for peer tutors, volunteers, aides, resource teachers and other support staff trained to work with students-in-need;
- » supporting transitions (school and grade changes) through social support programs like peer buddy programs for students, families, staff, volunteers;

- » increasing home connections to the school by addressing specific support and learning needs of the family to enhance literacy, job skills, and English as a second language; and
- » increasing community outreach for involvement and support to recruit a wide range of community resources, such as colleges and universities, local residents, artists and cultural institutions, businesses and professional organizations, service, volunteer, and faith-based organizations.

Additionally, resource coordination and allocation is an important factor in the success of the school-wide literacy improvement process. Creative approaches are necessary to overcome issues related to limited time, space, personnel, materials, and technology. Strategic allocation of resources is a tool for achieving teacher, student, parent, and community support for literacy.

A coordinated system of support enables the reframing of existing support programs and efforts into a unified literacy improvement effort at the local level that melds school, community, and home resources. Collaborations such as these provide opportunities for the school and community as a whole to maximize student engagement in productive learning. See <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15044.pdf> (pages 17-18) for specific examples.

Further, coordinated support results in enhanced school climate, sense of community, and increased student motivation by providing students with a school environment characterized by respect for differences and high expectations. When families feel welcome in schools and participate actively in school and school activities, children's attendance, interest, motivation, general achievement, and literacy achievement improve (Padak & Rasinski, 2003). Therefore, instructional leaders plan for family involvement in their schools. Three components are necessary:

- » Parent involvement on the school's Literacy Leadership Team;
- » Assistance for families as they support their children with schoolwork; and
- » Welcoming families into the school community.

At least one parent maintains membership on the school's Literacy Leadership Team. This member serves as a liaison between the faculty and families, and the parent member ensures that family needs are considered and addressed in each school's School Improvement Plan. Many families need assistance to participate actively in their children's education. This support may range from social services and guidance counseling to providing parents with information on helping their children with homework. Successful schools help their families become active participants by ensuring that the families feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to the school staff, and to what their children are doing in school. A feeling of being welcomed can set the stage for authentic and effective school-home partnerships. Regular, timely,

personalized communication is the key to ensuring parents feel engaged and heard and are more likely to take an active role in their child's education. Padak and Rasinski (2010) offer suggestions, such as the following:

- » Send home monthly calendars and post them online;
- » Provide translators, if possible, for parents whose native language is not English;
- » Set up an area for parents with brochures and other parent resources;
- » Create a "Parent Portal" on the school's Web site;
- » Use different forms of communication (i.e., print, e-mail, blogs, Facebook) to inform parents about upcoming events and policy changes; and
- » Hold open houses and visitation days for families.

Additionally, Epstein's (2002) framework describes six types of involvement from which schools can choose to help meet the needs of students and families:

- » Parenting;
- » Communicating;
- » Volunteering;
- » Learning at Home;
- » Decision Making; and
- » Collaborating with the Community.

Specific sample practices and implementation information of the framework can be found at http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nnps_model/school/sixtypes.htm. Additional resources for fostering family involvement include parent tips for supporting beginning readers http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Parents/pb1071_support.sflb.ashx and 100 ways parents can help their children succeed in school – available in English http://www.pta.org/100Ways_brochure-en.pdf and Spanish http://www.pta.org/100Ways_brochure-sp.pdf.

Professional Learning and Resources:

Developing learning opportunities, resources, and coordinated support services that enhance literacy learning for children and educators

Efforts to advance early literacy can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers and school leaders to improve their practice (Wei, et al., 2009). An effective literacy plan at all levels provides sustained and intensive professional development that is connected to practice, uses varied available resources and formats, and builds strong working relationships among staff to help all students. This requires substantial resources and a comprehensive, coordinated support system that reduces barriers to teaching and learning.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and protect time during the school day for teachers to collaboratively analyze data, share expertise, study the Standards, plan lessons, examine student work, and reflect on practice Use student and teacher data (surveys and interest inventories, teacher observations, and staff professional preparation) to target professional development needs Encourage every teacher to develop a professional growth plan based on a self-assessment of professional development needs (e.g., http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15846.pdf) Hire an instructional coach to provide job-embedded support for staff Provide program-specific training in the core reading and intervention programs at the beginning of the year to prepare teachers and staff for implementation Provide training in administering and interpreting results of reading and writing assessments Include paraprofessionals, support staff, interventionists, substitute teachers, and pre-service teachers working at the school in professional development sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted professional development based on student and teacher needs and aligned with the Standards Meet in collaborative teams (and include pre-service teachers at the school) to ensure teachers are using the core reading program and literacy strategies effectively Schedule time for the instructional coach to meet with teachers individually and/or in collaborative teams to co-plan, model, practice, and provide feedback Provide opportunities for teachers to practice techniques in non-threatening situations Use checklists when conducting classroom observations/walkthroughs to ensure clear expectations and specific feedback to teachers on student learning Use various media to deliver professional learning – for example, face-to-face, web-based, and online sessions Build a professional library that includes research-based books, journals, magazines, videos, etc., that teachers can readily access for professional growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit and revise professional development yearly based on student mastery of Standards and teacher observations Partner experienced teachers with pre-service and beginning teachers Use a model of blended professional learning – combining online learning and face-to-face support – to provide content and resources to teachers and staff Use formal and informal observations to monitor and improve literacy instruction (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15541.pdf) Encourage teacher participation in successful development programs, such as the National Writing Project (http://www.nwp.org) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) to evaluate effectiveness of current professional development on student mastery of Standards in all subgroups Revisit professional development options to utilize on-the-ground experts to develop and support colleagues Expand and strengthen school-university partnerships to build networks of support for literacy programs Videotape important professional development sessions for staff to review and share with colleagues within and out of the school Continue to encourage “professional talk” among staff and provide time for discussions

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Coordinated Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a room within the school as a family resource center and enlist parents to volunteer there, providing training as identified and as needed Build classroom or school lending libraries for families to borrow books and electronic media (in languages that are spoken in students' homes), with suggestions that go along with the materials, and incentives for returning them Plan awareness sessions and dissemination of resource materials for parents on the <i>Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects</i> Provide a parent portal on school's Web site that allows parents to view children's grades, progress reports, attendance, etc. Define what the entire school must do to enable all teachers to teach and all students to learn effectively (http://www.louisianaschools.net/topics/learning_supports.html) Focus on what an integrated learning supports infrastructure should look like at the school level, weaving piecemeal and fragmented efforts into a comprehensive framework Ensure that all appropriate stakeholders are at the table, including parents, during critical planning and decision-making activities Map available fiscal and human resources related to support services, highlighting where gaps occur Evaluate all available funding sources to determine what can be leveraged to support literacy efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize learning supports in the community to provide extended learning opportunities Create a well-designed infrastructure to provide guidance and support for students and families Establish a work group (school counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, attendance and drop out counselors, health educators, special education staff, after school program staff, bilingual and Title I coordinators, safe and drug free school staff, union representatives, classroom teachers, non-certified staff, parents, older students, community representatives) that focuses specifically on how learning supports are used, including all major resources Use instructional coaches and other support personnel, such as speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, and library media specialists, to mentor and support teachers Conduct repeated awareness sessions and disseminate resource materials on the Standards to parents at times that are convenient for them Provide parents with practical guidance to encourage regular reading at home Incorporate technologies to more creatively and effectively support stakeholder engagement (i.e., blogs, Twitter, electronic newsletters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the effectiveness of extended learning opportunities and utilize results to repurpose/refine learning supports Fill program/service gaps and pursue economies of scale through collaborative outreach linkages among families of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern, schools in close proximity) Provide for professional development and resources that support differentiated learning opportunities for all students Implement plans for ensuring that the school projects a 'family-friendly' environment During parent/teacher conferences, identify for parents what their students know and what skills or knowledge they still need to reach Standards proficiency Schedule family events at the school that welcome parent and child participation together (e.g., Literacy Nights) Open school buildings for adult learners from the community in the evenings, encouraging a community of learners Provide English language services that extend beyond the classroom Provide family-focused services and outreach that engage parents and family members in literacy programs and services Incorporate culturally- and linguistically-appropriate communications with parents and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the focus (fiscal and instructional) on literacy development, even when faced with competing initiatives Provide activities and strategies to parents that are specific to their children's needs, based on data, in order to help them reach Standards proficiency Monitor family involvement, and adjust plans, as needed Advocate for new capacity in the community to help students and families Continue to focus proactively on broad issues that may prevent students from learning Pursue additional funding sources for specialized literacy staff and materials Ask local businesses to help heighten awareness about reading and literacy topics (e.g., a supermarket chain may agree to print a literacy message on its shopping bags; utility suppliers might feature tips in their monthly statements) Ask local bookstores to donate books to the school Foster relationships among schools, postsecondary education institutions, the workforce, families, and communities

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Coordinated Support <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a survey of needs from parents, students, teachers, and counselors that can be used to match available resources to actual need • Schedule and conduct hearing and vision screenings for all students, according to established norms • Plan for extended learning opportunities for students (e.g., tutoring, afterschool and summer learning programs) 			

Resources for English Language Learners and Students with Exceptionalities

English Language Learners

- › Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20074011.pdf>

This practice guide provides five evidence-based recommendations, integrated into a coherent and comprehensive approach for improving the reading achievement and English language development of English learners in the elementary grades. A major theme is the importance of intensive, interactive English language development instruction for all English learners, focused on developing academic language (i.e., the decontextualized language of the schools, the language of academic discourse, of texts, and of formal argument).

- › Rivera, M. O., Moughamian, A. C., Lesaux, N. K., & Francis, D. J. (2008). Language and reading interventions for English language learners and English language learners with disabilities. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. <http://centeroninstruction.org/files/Lang%20and%20Rdng%20Interventions%20for%20ELLs%20and%20ELLs%20with%20Disabilities.pdf>

This document provides guidance and support for meeting the needs of English learners with limited language proficiency and/or learning disabilities. It focuses on identification and assessment of ELLs and their needs, as well as recommendations for instruction and intervention in the context of the Response to Intervention (RTI) model. The authors suggest models of professional development that are essential for teachers of ELLs.

Students with Exceptionalities

- › Banotai, Alyssa. Bright Students with Dyslexia: Can learn to access class content through self-accommodation (2009). <http://speech-language-pathology-audiology.advanceweb.com/ebook/magazine.aspx?EBK=SP061509#/6/>

This article describes an effective aural reading approach for students with dyslexia who are inadequate visual decoders or readers. The approach uses audio texts to help students gain access to content and to expose them to the rich language of print.

- › Bulletin 118: Statewide Assessment Standards and Practices. <http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/bese/1041.html>

This publication, beginning on page 95, provides the regulatory policy for assessment of students with special needs, adopted by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- › The International Dyslexia Association (2008). Dyslexia basics. http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf

This fact sheet provides basic information about dyslexia, including its definition, diagnosis, causes and effects, signs, and treatment.

- › The International Dyslexia Association (2009). Multisensory structured language teaching. http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Multisensory_Structured_Language_Teaching_Fact_Sheet_11-03-08.pdf

This fact sheet explains the rationale, evidence of effectiveness, and key principles of multisensory, structured language teaching.

- › Kingore, Bertie. (2002). Reading Instruction for the Primary Gifted Learner. <http://www.bertiekingore.com/readinginstruction.htm>

This resource expands teacher knowledge about the characteristics and needs of advanced and gifted readers. In addition, it explains how to differentiate reading instruction for these children and provides the classroom teacher with helpful strategies and ideas.

- › Louisiana Department of Education. Access Guide: A Resource for Louisiana Educators and Families. <http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov/accessguide/>

This resource facilitates student access to the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum. It includes differentiated instructional support strategies, accommodations, technology tools, and online links. It also provides suggestions to maximize academic success for all students, including students with disabilities and advanced learners.

- › Louisiana Department of Education. Access Guide: Students with Significant Disabilities, Literacy View. <http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov/Site%20Pages/LiteracyView.aspx>

This site provides educators and family members of students with significant disabilities with links to presentations and webinars, as well as useful tools, tips, and ideas for providing literacy access to students with significant disabilities.

- › Stanberry, Kristin, & Raskind, Marshall H. (2009). Assistive Technology Tools: Reading. <http://www.adlit.org/article/33077>

This article presents a wide range of assistive technology (AT) tools that help students who struggle with reading. The tools help facilitate decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension by presenting text as speech. Categories include audio books and publications, optical character recognition, paper-based computer pen, speech synthesizers and screen readers, and variable-speed tape recorders.

- › Stanberry, Kristin, & Raskind, Marshall H. (2009). Assistive Technology Tools: Writing. <http://www.adlit.org/article/33078>

This resource provides information on a wide range of assistive technology tools available to help students who struggle with writing. Categories include abbreviation expanders, alternative keyboards, graphic organizers and outlining programs, a paper-based computer pen, portable word processors, proofreading and speech recognition software programs, speech synthesizers and screen readers, talking spell-checkers and electronic dictionaries, and word prediction software programs.

State Actions for Improving Elementary Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a State Literacy Team made up of literacy experts and key stakeholders to support the implementation of Louisiana’s Elementary Literacy Plan • Communicate state literacy goals to stakeholders in clear, compelling terms • Provide Webinars and face-to-face sessions for leaders to learn about the new Standards and how to support teachers; transition to the new Standards • Involve educators at every level, including faculty representing teacher preparation programs, in the discussions on literacy development and instruction • Build public awareness and advocacy for literacy by communicating gains in student achievement through implementation of research-based reading programs • Develop and disseminate both print and electronic messages documenting the importance of the elementary literacy plan • Set expectations, guidelines, and oversight to ensure strong implementation of the elementary literacy plan at the local level • Disseminate the elementary literacy plan at professional meetings; post the literacy plan on the Louisiana Department of Education’s Web site • Promote integration of literacy improvement targets, aligned to state targets, with other school improvement efforts at the district and school level • Create funding streams to support literacy efforts • Develop a technical assistance plan to support districts and schools with literacy improvement efforts • Establish guidelines for literacy coaches, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, library media specialists, and district appraisal staff to support local literacy efforts • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities, a priority • Increase awareness and capacity of leadership within systems to understand and address the needs of English language learners • Engage school and district leadership to prioritize the needs of English language learners, emphasize accountability for serving these students, and promote transparency regarding student outcomes • Work with administrators of teacher preparation programs to ensure teacher candidates have the knowledge and skills to deliver strong, research-based literacy instruction • Evaluate the impact of literacy efforts and refine them based on multiple indicators of literacy performance
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for districts and schools to implement the <i>Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts</i>: Conduct awareness Webinars and face-to-face sessions; revise the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC), incorporating transition activities to support the content currently being assessed in each grade, and develop and deliver professional development modules for the revised LCC to include evidence-based strategies and resources • Provide guidance on selection and adoption of research-based core reading programs • Assist districts and schools in using appropriate resources (e.g., strategies, accommodations, and technologies) to help all English language learners meet English language proficiency standards • Convene teams of teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, library media specialists, etc., to discuss the Standards and implications for reading and writing instruction in all subjects • Align the Comprehensive Curriculum with the Standards • Develop and disseminate curriculum resources and identify best practices for literacy instruction and reading achievement • Assist teacher preparation programs in revising coursework to reflect the Standards, literacy content expectations, and elementary literacy

<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a statewide longitudinal data system to ensure assessment data collected from districts are captured in a central location • Strategically use data systems to track student performance, identify areas of need, design policies, and evaluate the impact of the literacy initiative on student performance and progress toward mastery of Standards • Provide information and technical support on the use of valid and reliable formative and summative assessments • Establish internal and external partnerships to facilitate the collection and use of data to inform instruction • Communicate student literacy achievement from state-wide assessment to all stakeholders
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on intervention (RTI) to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Provide support to districts to implement differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning principles for all students, including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and advanced learners • Examine how strategies that work with other students can be applied and adapted for English language learners and vice versa • Provide mechanisms for districts and schools to identify and intervene with students who are not demonstrating grade-level literacy skills • Develop a system of tracking the response to intervention shown by students receiving supportive or intervention services • Provide technical support on the use of current funding and securing additional funding and other resources for intervention services that support literacy
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and disseminate materials, resources, and tools that prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to deliver high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Support local literacy programs and additional literacy supports to address the specific learning needs of struggling readers and writers, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Provide technical support to literacy providers on implementing the elementary literacy plan to improve achievement and mastery of Standards • Target intensive support for schools with the greatest need (as defined by poverty or low student literacy achievement) • Design a literacy Web page with resources to support districts and schools with their literacy efforts • Identify demonstration sites with strong literacy programs (and higher education partnerships) to serve as models that schools could visit • Develop, deliver, and monitor professional learning opportunities for teachers and district and school leaders • Provide professional development for library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, paraprofessionals, and higher education staff to support literacy efforts • Continually update and add resources to enhance the elementary literacy plan • Provide reports that include disaggregated data by subgroups on reading and writing achievement • Promote connections between schools and public libraries to enhance literacy efforts • Support professional development for in-service teachers that focuses on success for English language learners • Advocate for the inclusion of English language learners-related training for all precertification teachers • Collaborate with higher education faculty regarding pre-service and in-service support for teachers on effective, research-based literacy • Provide professional development and technical support for district and school leaders, instructional/literacy coaches, teachers, caregivers, and other stakeholders, including media specialists, speech-language pathologists, librarians, and museum staff, etc., in the implementation of the elementary literacy plan, including the Standards

District Actions for Improving Elementary Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a district literacy leadership team composed of multiple stakeholders, including principals and higher education, and create a plan to support literacy • Articulate clearly the district’s goals for literacy improvement through multiple channels of communication • Communicate expectations for principals as literacy leaders, keeping the focus on instructional improvement and student learning outcomes • Find ways to create hybrid leadership roles in which teachers can be in the classroom part of the time, but also engaged in instructional coaching or shared leadership the rest of the day or week • Provide leadership training as needed to build capacity of site and district administrators and teacher leaders to manage and monitor best practices in literacy instruction • Assist principals in the implementation and evaluation of the literacy plan • Offer support programs for principals, such as study groups, professional learning communities, and mentoring partnerships that focus on improving instruction in literacy • Integrate planning for implementation and sustainability of literacy efforts into other planning done at the district and school levels (e.g., school improvement planning, budget plans, staffing plans, etc.) • Continuously review current funding sources and explore new funding sources to support literacy goals • Ensure that schools have the flexibility and support to design organizational structures and schedules to differentiate literacy instruction and provide intervention based on students’ needs • Assist schools in developing schedules that provide time for collaborative teams to study state standards, plan instruction, analyze student data and work products, and determine instructional modifications and interventions • Document and report literacy progress to the superintendent or district level contact person at least monthly • Monitor implementation of literacy programs and intervene in schools where students are not being well served • Examine literacy improvement strategies being implemented across the district to determine their value and whether to expand or modify based on data • At least monthly, provide updates and information on literacy improvement efforts and progress to the school board, as well as parents and the community • Provide opportunities for school-based staff to share stories of success and lessons learned from literacy efforts • Engage higher education literacy leaders and professional literacy associations in the district’s literacy plan • Attend collaborative team meetings, when possible, to model support for literacy improvement efforts • Encourage collaboration and provide opportunities among library media specialists and other literacy leaders to network • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities, a priority • Define the roles and responsibilities of instructional/literacy coaches, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, library media specialists, and appraisal staff to support school-based literacy efforts • Revise the evaluation system so that it addresses specific teaching effectiveness metrics, includes consequences to address ineffective performance, and rewards exemplary teachers
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for schools to implement the <i>Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects</i> • Ensure English language learners and those with exceptionalities receive services from qualified staff and have access to print-rich resources to meet proficiency standards • Adopt a research-based core reading program to ensure students meet the Standards and provide training and support in its use

<p>Standards-Based Curriculum <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the literacy skills and proficiency levels needed to ensure students meet or exceed the Standards • Align core curriculum to standards and assessments to support instruction grounded in research on effective practice • Ensure that schools have the range of instructional materials, multimedia materials, diverse texts, classroom libraries (in all subjects) and resources needed to improve students’ literacy skills • Support teachers and literacy leaders in refining their skills to meet the needs of readers and writers in all subjects • Ensure that all students have access to highly qualified teachers, resources, and organizational supports to advance reading and writing in all subjects and throughout the day • Help schools select and use a common framework and rubric to teach and access writing
<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools in the selection and administration of formative and summative assessments • Develop an assessment/data management system that maximizes utility of formative and summative data and minimizes the loss of instructional time • Ensure entire assessment system (measures and data analyses) focuses on student mastery of Standards • Develop a district-wide plan for collecting, interpreting, and using data to monitor and evaluate progress and make program improvements • Conduct data reviews at administrator/principal meetings to guide improvement efforts • Ensure assessment data are presented in user-friendly formats and available in a timely fashion to make program adjustments, where needed • Expect administrators to frequently communicate data to district leaders and other stakeholders – provide a format and structure for accomplishing this • Develop the skills of literacy leaders and teachers to interpret and use data to inform instruction • Provide structures/protocols for teacher teams to analyze and use data to improve the success of students • Use summative assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of literacy efforts
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on intervention (RTI) to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Examine how strategies that work with other students can be applied and adapted for English language learners and vice versa • Ensure teachers understand and use systematic, explicit instruction to develop students’ phonological awareness, phonics skills, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension • Ensure teachers read aloud good stories and informational books daily • Provide support to schools to implement differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning principles for all students, including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and advanced learners • Assist schools in implementing Response to Intervention practices and policies, ensuring that struggling readers are provided with intervention daily to address their individual needs • Model a systemic process of intervention and monitoring student progress • Reallocate resources to support high-quality literacy instruction and intervention aligned with the Standards • Monitor instruction regularly and compile data from classroom observations to inform district- and school-level professional development • Support the use of technology as a tool and a topic to improve literacy outcomes • Assist schools in redesigning instruction to promote greater student engagement and motivation • Ensure schools increase the amount and quality of writing instruction
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that professional development is based on student data, supported by rigorous research and aligned to the Standards • Provide professional development that is ongoing, job-embedded, and differentiated to meet the needs of individual schools and teachers • Require schools to schedule time for formal, structured collaboration and reflection on literacy practices (e.g., collaborative teams) • Incorporate principles of adult learning, including structured collaboration and reflection, into professional development activities

**Professional
Learning
and
Resources**
[continued]

- Offer professional development sessions in a variety of formats (e.g., online, workshops, summer academies) and customize the sessions for each subject area
- Develop administrators' skills to evaluate teachers' use of effective literacy strategies
- Develop partnerships with community-based organizations, including public libraries, to promote and support local literacy efforts
- Support professional development for in-service teachers that focuses on success for English language learners
- Partner with higher education faculty to provide supports to build the knowledge and skills of teachers to provide research-based literacy instruction
- Support collaboration between instructional/literacy coaches and LDOE field instructional coordinators
- Extend professional learning opportunities to all literacy leaders to build capacity across the district and schools
- Monitor the outcomes of professional development investments
- Collect data to evaluate the impact of professional development on changes in teacher knowledge and instructional practice and student learning outcomes
- Use data to inform future decisions about professional development
- Establish a system for evaluating the quality of professional development literacy providers and work only with those providers that help the schools produce positive results
- Expand learning time for all students, including English language learners, through after-school, weekend, and summer programs to provide continuous and varied opportunities
- Promote thoughtful use of technology, home visits, and parent-teacher conferences that include translation services and other engagement strategies
- Support family literacy programs
- Make sure effective teachers are placed in the classrooms and schools with the greatest needs
- Provide incentives to effective principals and teachers to teach in schools with large numbers of struggling readers
- Coordinate funds across programs to support the literacy efforts at a sufficient level to assure their success

Elementary School Literacy Capacity Survey

When planning to improve literacy instruction and outcomes for young students, principals and staff can complete this simple survey to help determine the school’s current literacy capacity. Analysis of the results can help determine the school’s current strengths and provide a starting point for the improvement process that will lead to improved literacy practices and increased student achievement. It is important to rate each statement based on the degree to which the practices are currently being implemented within your school.

The components of this Web-based survey mirror those of Louisiana’s Elementary Literacy Plan and provide a systemic and holistic approach to establishing an effective literacy framework. **Survey responses are completely anonymous – respondents are not asked to identify themselves.** The survey can be administered annually to explore faculty perceptions and to monitor changes.

Directions:

Step 1: Have all school administrators and staff complete the survey at <https://leads13.doe.louisiana.gov/srv/?P1=N&P2=N&P3=11&P4=an1WE9jXOBKB> within a two-week period.

Step 2: Upon completion of the survey by all school staff, the principal or designee should contact one of the LDOE staff members listed on the online survey, by e-mail, to request a customized report.

In order to receive a customized school report, **the survey must be completed online.**

Step 3: Consult the Louisiana Elementary Literacy Plan for detailed action steps for improving elementary literacy, beginning with the component(s) the survey results identify as starting points.

Step 4: For additional information or assistance regarding *Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan*, please contact the LDOE Literacy Office at 225.342.3647.

Current Practice Rating: 1 = An infrequent or rare occurrence at this school 5 = Frequent or common occurrence at this school 		Item Averages
Leadership and Sustainability		
1. A Literacy Leadership Team/School Improvement Team is actively involved in literacy improvement efforts.		
2. Literacy is a primary focus in our school improvement strategies and activities.		
3. Our school and district maintain active partnerships with parents and community members to realize the shared literacy vision.		
4. Adequate fiscal resources are provided to support literacy improvement efforts.		
5. Leaders ensure extended time for literacy instruction during the school day (e.g., minimum recommended 90 minutes of core reading time in primary grades, use of literacy strategies across subject areas).		
6. Time is protected during the school day for teachers to collaborate in teams (e.g., grade-level, vertical, and similar-responsibility teams).		
7. Collaborative teams use a specific protocol for examining student work.		
Leadership and Sustainability Average		
Standards-Based Curriculum		
1. The school uses State Standards and the Comprehensive Curriculum as the foundation for literacy instruction.		
2. The school implements with fidelity a research-based core reading program to ensure students meet the Standards.		
3. Reading and writing are integrated in all subjects and throughout the day.		
4. Students are provided with exemplary writing samples, as well as given exposure to real-world writing tasks.		
5. The school uses a common framework and rubric to teach and assess writing to ensure a consistent approach across subject areas and grade levels.		
6. Classroom libraries with a wide range of topics at various reading levels are maintained, incorporated into purposeful lessons, and made available to students for free reading.		
7. Students are provided with access to the curriculum in appropriate and challenging formats (e.g., diverse text, technology integration).		
Standards-Based Curriculum Average		

Assessment System	
1. Valid and reliable reading and writing measures are used to screen and place students and to monitor their progress toward benchmarks.	
2. Diagnostic measures are used to provide more in-depth information for individual students, when necessary.	
3. Curriculum-based assessments (e.g., core reading program unit tests) are used to measure student progress toward performance standards.	
4. Those who administer assessments are adequately trained in administration and data recording, and follow a procedure to share data with stakeholders.	
5. Data from assessments are effectively managed and disseminated to parents and other stakeholders in a timely and easily-interpreted manner.	
6. Timely feedback is provided to students regarding their reading progress.	
7. Summative assessment results are used to evaluate effectiveness of instruction and programs.	
Assessment System Average	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	
1. Teachers model and explain literacy strategies/skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) and when to use them.	
2. Teachers provide students with opportunities to apply literacy strategies/skills and offer support and corrective feedback, when needed.	
3. Teachers use word study, repeated readings, and partner reading to improve reading fluency (accuracy, rate, prosody).	
4. Teachers provide explicit instruction in word meanings and specific word-learning strategies.	
5. Teachers read aloud good stories and informational books daily (modeling fluent reading, using think-alouds, and encouraging discussion about the text).	
6. Teachers promote student motivation and engagement by offering choice in assignments, opportunities to work with peers, and real-world applications.	
7. Teachers teach students writing skills and processes to improve comprehension in all subjects.	
8. Students are provided with reading intervention during the school day to address individual needs.	
9. The school has an intervention system for struggling readers that allows the flow of students in and out of various levels of support, as needed.	
10. Teachers monitor individual student growth and use the data to drive instruction.	
11. Teachers use Universal Design for Learning principles and materials to differentiate content, process, and product.	
12. Teachers use technology as a tool (e.g., software, digital devices) to support student learning and as topic in which students learn to use technology tools to access, organize, and communicate information.	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI) Average	
Professional Learning and Resources	
1. School-wide professional development is based on student literacy needs.	
2. Individual, targeted professional development is provided based on teachers' Professional Growth Plans and observational data.	
3. Teachers are involved in the planning and design of professional development.	
4. Paraprofessionals and pre-service teachers (if interning in the school) are included in professional learning opportunities (i.e., collaborative teams, program-specific professional development).	
5. Professional learning is ongoing and provided through a variety of media (face-to-face, Web-based, text-supported), as well as a variety of methods (collaborative teams, mentoring, coaching).	
6. The school utilizes a higher education partnership that supports literacy development of students (e.g., serves on Literacy Leadership Team, helps to plan and provide local professional development, participates in state-provided and other professional development with school staff).	
7. The school utilizes a coordinated system of support that links school resources with those in homes and in the local community to provide greater support for students.	
Professional Learning and Resources Average	

Sample Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Template

Name: _____ Position: _____

This sample Professional Growth Plan (PGP) is designed to guide your thinking toward professional growth goals and objectives. It will also guide your planning and consultations. Ideally, your PGP should address **literacy improvement** and the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching <http://www.doe.state.la.us/Lde/uploads/5564.pdf>. An electronic version of this PGP can be accessed at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15846.pdf>.

Part 1: Possible Goals

When thinking about possible goals for your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *How do my knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances measure up against the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching?*
- » *Where do I need to grow professionally in order to optimize my teaching effectiveness?*
- » *What areas for professional growth will have the greatest potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning in my department, school, or district?*

My Possible Goals (3-5)

Part 2: District/School/Department Linkages

When aligning your professional goals with the known needs of your department, school, or district, consider the following:

- » *Which of my professional goals are most directly related to implementing the elements of Louisiana's Elementary Literacy Plan and increasing student achievement?*
- » *For which of these goals can I identify reasonable outcomes, measures, or products that will serve as evidence of my professional growth?*
- » *How will these goals be supplementary or complementary to the professional growth plans of colleagues in my school and/or district?*

My goals relate to district/school/departmental improvement needs in the following ways:

Part 3: Specific Goal(s) and Intended Outcomes

The specific goal(s) for my PGP and intended outcomes are:

Part 4: My Plan

When developing your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *What am I going to do to achieve my goals?*
- » *What are the initial steps in my plan?*
- » *What activities will help me achieve my goals and objectives?*
- » *How will I make the time to do what I plan?*
- » *What district and school resources will I need?*
- » *What evidence will I collect to demonstrate achievement of my professional development goals and how will I organize my evidence?*

A. I will engage in the following activities:

B. I will document my progress in achieving my professional development goal(s) with the following artifacts (e.g., logs, lesson plans, audio and videotapes) and/or outcomes (e.g., evidence of student learning):

C. I may require the following resources for the full implementation of my PGP:

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Louisiana's
ADOLESCENT LITERACY
PLAN

Louisiana's **ADOLESCENT LITERACY** *PLAN*

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Now more than ever, educators across the state are articulating the need for intensive literacy support for adolescents. State funding has helped a handful of middle and high schools to “pilot” the adolescent component in *Louisiana’s K-12 Literacy Plan: Ensuring Literacy for All*, a design that was developed in 2006 to build on and expand the successful practices of Reading First. Results have been promising for these schools – lessons learned from the pilot have led to a comprehensive vision of what is needed in all Louisiana schools to adequately prepare our adolescents for the demands of college- and career-readiness, as well as *effective citizenship in the new global economy*.

The transformation of the day-to-day practice in the upper grades begins with the fundamentals of school effectiveness and good instruction, then goes a step beyond – to continuously monitor progress, modify practice, and infuse the growing knowledge base about teaching adolescent students to read and write well. Nothing less than a new paradigm is required – one based on joint problem solving, collaborative practice, and collective accountability – that engages students in purposeful reading and writing across all subject area learning. **Louisiana’s Adolescent Literacy Plan** replaces the old system with a new vision of teaching and learning that produces higher *academic achievement for all students*. This plan **provides a shared interdisciplinary approach to ensure Louisiana’s students meet the end-of-year expectations set forth in the Common Core State Standards that will enable them to be college- and career- ready.**

The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) literacy staff sought guidance in mapping a plan to fully address adolescent literacy – *one that would eliminate achievement gaps* many young adults face. The LDOE, with a team of educators, began by reviewing the most recent research on adolescent literacy,

including *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* (2006). Additional stakeholders, including parents and policy makers, discussed this report and offered input.

This report, and subsequent reports reiterating the findings (Torgesen, et al., 2007; Kamil, et al., 2008), defines 15 key instructional and infrastructural elements that research has shown to have positive effects on adolescent literacy achievement. The team further matched the 15 elements from *Reading Next* to five core components that provide the foundation for Louisiana’s Adolescent Literacy Plan:

- » Leadership and Sustainability
- » Standards-Based Curriculum
- » Assessment System
- » Instruction and Intervention (RTI)
- » Professional Learning and Resources

This plan explains the core components, as well as actions and scaffolding necessary to improve adolescent literacy at the school level, and encourages a systemic and synchronized approach that also involves the state, districts, and communities.

In addition to the State Literacy Team listed inside the front cover, the Louisiana Department of Education acknowledges the following stakeholders for their input on the Adolescent Literacy Plan:

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Adolescent Literacy Plan Components

Key Elements		Leadership and Sustainability	Standards-Based Curriculum	Assessment System	Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	Professional Learning and Resources
INSTRUCTION	1 Direct, Explicit Instruction	•			✓	•
	2 Reading and Writing in All Content Areas	•	✓		•	•
	3 Motivation	•	•		✓	•
	4 Text-Based Collaborative Learning	•	•		✓	•
	5 Strategic Intervention	•	•	•	✓	•
	6 Diverse Texts	•	✓		•	•
	7 Intensive Writing	•	•		✓	•
	8 Technology	•	•	•	✓	•
	9 Formative Assessment	•		✓	•	•
INFRASTRUCTURE	10 Extended Time for Literacy	✓			•	•
	11 Professional Development	•	•	•	•	✓
	12 Summative Assessment	•		✓		•
	13 Teacher Teams	✓	•	•	•	•
	14 Instructional Leadership	✓	•	•	•	•
	15 Coordinated Support	•	•	•	•	✓

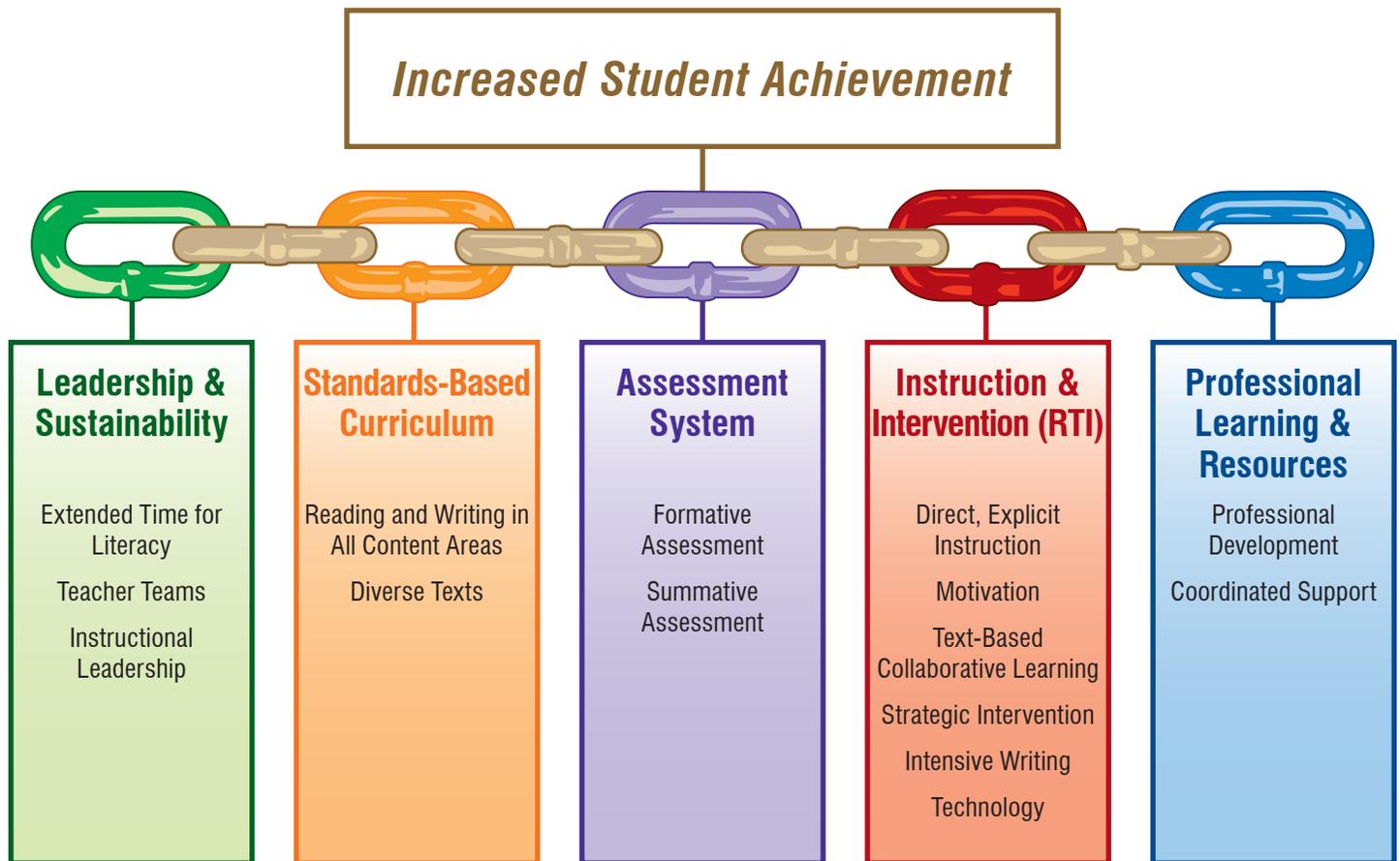
✓ This component in the plan explains the steps necessary to implement the element.

• This component provides additional information to support the element.

Biancarosa, G., & Snow, C. E. (2006). *Reading next – A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report from Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

Adolescent Literacy Plan Implementation Guide

The Implementation Guide consists of a **Narrative** and **Table for each of the five components**. The narrative provides a concise description of each element to ensure a common understanding of concepts. The table includes action steps necessary to improve literacy outcomes for adolescents.





Effective leadership is essential for successful implementation of a comprehensive literacy program at the local level. Leadership goes beyond the principal and is dependent upon the collective body of the organization, including school- and district-level staff, such as instructional coaches and a literacy leadership team. When established and cultivated, this form of collaborative leadership brings about a set of common values and beliefs – a complete systems view – that will guide instructional improvements over time. Along with instructional changes must come infrastructural modifications, such as those that extend time for literacy instruction and establish teacher teams to discuss teaching and learning. Schools with substantial literacy growth show evidence of continuous monitoring, adjustment, and adaptation, while keeping the focus on increased student achievement.

Extended Time for Literacy

Literacy leaders ensure adequate instructional time to help all students perform at higher levels of reading and writing. To develop reading and writing fluency, students need extended opportunities for practice in these areas. Most reading and writing instruction currently takes place in reading/language arts classes and for some struggling readers, in intervention settings. It is important that increased time be allocated for reading text, discussing content and concepts derived from reading, and writing in response to text in *all* content area classes daily (e.g., science, social studies, mathematics). Writing competence can be developed through daily lessons focusing on author’s craft and written mechanics. Students write on both self-selected topics and in response to instruction in all content areas.

Comprehension in these areas can be maximized through teaching, modeling, and using appropriate literacy strategies that enhance understanding of concepts, skills, and content – consult *Instruction and Intervention* for specific strategies. See <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/14725.pdf> for strategy descriptions and <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/uploads/16828.pdf> for videos of literacy strategy use in Louisiana classrooms. When improved academic achievement is the top priority at the state, district, and school levels, reading and writing are placed at the center of instruction and schools:

Allocate time differently to provide extended time in the school’s master schedule

- » Maximize instructional time and allow sufficient time for interventions
- » Provide and protect time for teacher teams to plan collaboratively
- » Create support opportunities for students – literacy intervention, special programs, tutoring, credit recovery, and leisure reading and writing experiences

Advocate for change in the instructional focus

- » Develop a shared responsibility of all teachers to support literacy development



- » Ensure teachers utilize content literacy strategies within the context of their daily instruction
- » Analyze student data in teacher teams to determine and refine effective instructional practices
- » Focus on student work, as well as student progress and growth

Teacher Teams

A collaborative culture is established by providing and protecting time for teachers to learn, discuss, and plan the use of strategies for improving literacy learning within the regular school day. It is often a challenge to change schedules and routines in order to accomplish this; however, by adjusting the structure of the day, principals send the message that making time for collaboration is a priority. Strategies for creating collaborative times have been identified at (http://www.allthingsplc.info/pdf/articles/make_time_for_collaboration.pdf).

Teachers collaborate in a variety of teams – grade-level, vertical, departmental, or similar-responsibility teams, such as special education teachers meeting with general education teachers with whom they share students. The principal and other school-based instructional leaders work collaboratively with teams to examine evidence of

student learning and strategies for improving results. Teacher teams work interdependently toward a common goal – increasing student achievement – for which each team member is mutually accountable. All members of the faculty are assigned to at least one team. Teams are charged with answering the critical questions:

- » What do students need to know and be able to do?
- » How are the concepts and skills to be taught, with what strategies and resources?
- » What do the data show about students' learning?
- » What steps need to be taken (e.g., adjustment in instruction) when students do not reach proficiency?
- » What professional development must staff engage in to increase student learning?

It is the responsibility of the instructional leaders at each school to ensure that teacher team meetings occur regularly and are focused on student achievement. Meeting in teams affords staff the opportunity to study state standards, analyze student data and work products, plan instruction, and determine instructional modifications and interventions. Teacher teams raise the level of professional practice from isolation to sharing by reflecting upon, examining, and refining teaching practices, so that all students are learning. Three specific protocols for looking at student work (Collaborative Assessment Conference, Consultancy, and Tuning Protocol) can be found at <http://www.lasw.org/methods.html>.

“Looking at student work is a way to move out of complacency. Looking at student work brings you face to face with your values.”

*Daniel Baron
Director, Outreach Services
Harmony School Education Center*

Teacher teams also discuss and implement strategies to support transitions of students from one stage of schooling to another (i.e., transition to middle and middle school to high school). Wormeli (2011) offers the following strategies for great transitions to middle school:

- » Invite incoming students to begin school a half day or full day earlier than returning students to learn some of the “ropes.”
- » Send a letter of congratulations to all rising middle schoolers on their last day of elementary school.
- » Have the leadership team visit with students in their elementary schools the year before they enter middle school.
- » Invite elementary and middle school teachers to switch jobs for a day.

- » Repeatedly connect with parents, sending the middle school newsletter home to parents of rising middle schoolers, inviting new parents to serve on school committees, and meeting with new parents the year before their children enter middle school and periodically throughout the year.

Wormeli also offers “20 Double-Duty Strategies” (pg. 50) to help English language learners transition to middle school. These strategies as well as those listed above can be adapted to also aid middle schoolers in their transition to high school.

Instructional Leadership

This element applies to the principal, as well as teachers. Principals seek input from teachers in the design and implementation of school reform decisions and policies. The process of creating a School Improvement Plan with a literacy focus is an excellent opportunity for principals to develop teacher leaders. The principal forms a Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) that focuses on helping all staff improve content literacy instruction. The principal, as a highly visible team member, works along with this select group of teachers and supports them in their development as teacher leaders committed to improving student literacy.

In *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins discusses the necessity of getting the right people involved in improvement efforts before making definite plans: finding the who first and then determining the what. Collins says that “the right people will be self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best results and to be part of creating something great.” (p. 32).

When selecting staff members to serve on the Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team), the principal considers teachers who:

- » Have knowledge of literacy best practices and expertise in improving literacy across the curriculum;
- » Are highly competent and recognized by peers for their knowledge and skill in the classroom;
- » Are willing to share resources and guide other teachers;
- » Possess good communication skills;
- » Are flexible and respect the opinions of others; and
- » Maintain a positive attitude and can inspire others to do the same.

When the entire literacy leadership at a school (principal, teacher leaders, instructional coach, ideally all teachers) is centrally engaged in designing, supporting, and overseeing the school's fundamental purpose – increasing all students' literacy skills – the end result is a sustainable culture of commitment to the goal. Literacy leaders live by that defining principle and use it to build and maintain an outcomes-based literacy culture.

Leadership and Sustainability:

Creating shared leadership and plans for organizing, implementing, and sustaining a comprehensive approach to literacy

Positive student literacy outcomes start with strong leadership committed to implementing, supporting, and sustaining a quality literacy plan. Effective leadership incorporates extended time for literacy, collaborative teacher teams, and collective instructional leadership focused on improvements in student achievement. In order for the literacy plan to endure, school leaders intentionally foster and prolong the plan by expanding and adapting it over time, reflecting on what is (and is not) working and how the school can do even better (Jerald, 2005). Leadership from committed administrators, teachers, and parents can promote sustainability by anticipating, influencing, and effectively responding to changing conditions that affect progress. Additionally, leadership teams can sustain an effective literacy plan by identifying *what* is to be sustained, *what resources* are needed, and *how to access* those resources.

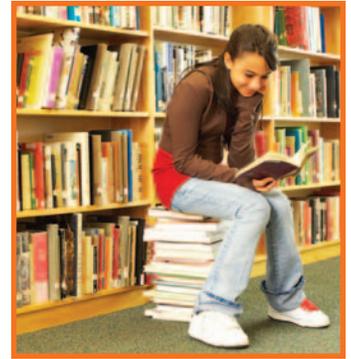
ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Extended Time for Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study flexible scheduling options to include additional time for reading intervention (double dosing) Consider consulting with support services such as scheduling experts to maximize efficiency of existing time and personnel http://www.structuringourschoolforsuccess.com/index.htm Leverage literacy instructional time by studying and planning ways to incorporate reading and writing in all content areas Take stock of talents and training of all existing staff in the area of literacy instruction Establish ways to utilize entire teaching staff to address the diverse literacy needs of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use flexible schedules to include extended time for language arts and reading (e.g., block schedules) Schedule students who need additional literacy support into an elective reading class (conducted by a qualified interventionist who has been trained in the specific program), in addition to the regular language arts classes Monitor adherence to instructional schedule to ensure efficient use of entire instructional time Ensure literacy strategies are appropriately implemented across all content areas daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make staff reassignments based on what benefits student learning (e.g., those who are not providing extra literacy support do student monitoring duties) Identify additional funding sources to hire specialized staff (i.e., instructional coach and interventionist) Identify and provide classrooms/space for additional intervention, if necessary Optimize district and federal funding to sustain literacy supports (i.e., staff, materials, professional learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to base re-staffing and re-scheduling decisions upon literacy-based goals Integrate new priorities (i.e., programs and initiatives) into existing school structures, protecting the literacy focus in all content areas
Teacher Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify inter- and intra-disciplinary teacher teams (within and across grade levels) Include parent(s) or other family member(s) as part of the school Literacy Leadership Team Schedule time for teams to meet for regular collaboration and examination of student data/work Identify team roles, protocols, and expectations Research the components of the professional learning community model www.allthingsplc.info Identify specific, measurable student achievement goals aligned with grade level expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet in teams according to regularly established times for collaborative planning and examining student data/work Prepare agendas and action summaries for all meetings Use protocols to examine student work (e.g., Collaborative Assessment Conference, Consultancy, Tuning Protocol) http://www.lasw.org/methods.html Observe model lessons, organize materials, and practice effective instructional strategies Plan and implement lessons that address the literacy needs of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solicit input from instructional coach on effective strategies for differentiating instruction, promoting active engagement, and teaching key areas of literacy and writing instruction Collaborate with other team members to conduct peer observations and analyze lessons to improve content area literacy instruction Study formative student assessment results and use the results to continue to adjust instruction Assess effectiveness of team actions on student learning Alter teams as necessary to ensure optimal effectiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide professional learning to new and continuing teachers Share professional learning at team and staff meetings Collaborate with other schools (feeder schools and schools in close proximity) to conduct peer observations, share literacy expertise, etc. Maintain anecdotal notes and data portfolios to showcase student and content area successes Encourage teachers to share stories of success in the community

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Teacher Teams <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a cyclical action plan that makes student learning the primary focus – look at student work, reflect on effectiveness of instruction, adjust to meet specific needs of students Participate in professional learning on effective teaching practices (professional development sessions, study of current literature and research) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and use common formative assessments, rubrics, data analysis on assessments, and strategies for improving student outcomes Focus on student learning through a continuous cycle of inquiry, planning, application, reflection (particularly looking at student work), and improvement Practice shared leadership by creating a schedule for rotation of team leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use technology (e.g., blogs, Wikis) to establish electronic opportunities for teacher teams to network Recognize and celebrate student and staff successes and progress toward goals 	
Instructional Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a shared literacy vision for the school and community Evaluate the school culture and current practices by using the Literacy Capacity Survey to determine strengths and needs for improvement Organize a Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) that includes parents and other community members, with the principal or other school-based instructional leader as the head Schedule time for Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) to meet and plan Analyze multiple forms of student, school, and teacher data, including Literacy Capacity Survey results, to develop a list of prioritized recommendations and goals for improvement Participate in state-sponsored Webinars and face-to-face sessions to learn about transition to the new Standards Plan for targeted, sustained professional learning of the staff on literacy strategies and deep content knowledge Identify and prioritize a list of students to be targeted for intervention or support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure all staff understands the school's literacy goals and their roles in meeting the goals Create a culture and environment that promotes and celebrates literacy Model and communicate high expectations for staff and students Support a climate of collaboration and shared decision making [Literacy Leadership Team (School Improvement Team), Teacher Teams] Guide development and implementation of a literacy-focused school improvement plan that includes activities, resources, timelines, and persons responsible to support and expand literacy learning for all students Provide support for teachers' transition to the new Standards Establish a system of communication for sharing information with the faculty and staff (e-mails, newsletters, school Web site) Provide time and supports for teachers and staff to participate in professional learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rewrite/refocus School Improvement Plan goals, objectives, and actions according to the student achievement results and mastery of Standards Provide follow-up professional development and technical assistance to meet individual teacher needs (determined by student achievement and teacher observational data) Reassign staff as needed based on the literacy vision, and reassign available human resources to the needs of students Identify and allocate additional funding sources to hire specialized literacy staff Share student achievement gains with parents, as well as the local community, through newspaper articles, displays of student work, podcasts, news conferences, community open houses, etc. Encourage involved community members and parents to persuade their colleagues to join them in literacy efforts Participate on District Literacy Leadership Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze formative and summative student assessment results and refine literacy goals and plans aligned to the Standards Remain focused on the goals and objectives of the School Improvement Plan to keep staff motivated, productive, and centered on student achievement Make hiring decisions collaboratively, based upon literacy goals Integrate funds to ensure adequate highly-qualified staff, materials, and all resources to reach literacy goals Incentivize strong leaders on faculty Join or form a leadership organization to share successes and profit from others' successes Visit other schools that have successfully improved student achievement to gain valuable insights and innovative ideas Share student achievement gains with District Literacy Leadership Team and School Board members Pursue external funding sources to support literacy

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Instructional Leadership <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and prioritize Leadership Team (School Improvement Team) with the principal as the leader Engage in leadership professional learning with a focus on facilitation/group process and teaming Study current research on adolescent literacy content learning Select a walk-through observation form such as http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/uploads/15539.pdf to ensure consistency of effective instructional practices Schedule regular literacy observations to monitor use of literacy strategies across content areas and student engagement and learning, as well as to ensure consistent use of effective instructional practices Be strategic about assigning non-academic teacher duties Plan professional development based on student data and teacher needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information from literacy walk-throughs to be used in teacher conferences, grade level/content level meetings, and teacher teams Serve as models of leadership by studying literacy research and best practices, sharing professional resources among faculty, facilitating professional discussions, and training team leaders as facilitators Implement a coherent professional learning plan for each teacher in order to improve instructional practices 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to use data to monitor and adjust implementation of evidence-based instructional practices in reading, spelling, and writing Continue to involve community members and parents in literacy efforts and reach out to those not currently involved



Louisiana has adopted the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (<http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards>) and its Comprehensive Curriculum (http://www.doe.state.la.us/topics/comprehensive_curriculum.html) will reflect the CCSS for English Language Arts (ELA) & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects and will serve as the foundation for academic literacy instruction. The Standards provide clear sign posts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students and aim to align instruction with the National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP) reading and writing framework. Fulfilling the Standards for 6-12 ELA requires greater attention to a specific category of informational text – literary nonfiction – than has been traditional. ELA classrooms must focus on literature (stories, drama, and poetry), as well as literary nonfiction, and informational reading must also take place in other classes in grades 6-12.



To assist teachers with the transition to CCSS, the Louisiana Department of Education will conduct awareness Webinars and face-to-face sessions; revise the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC), incorporating transition activities to support the content currently being assessed in each grade, and develop and deliver professional development modules for the revised LCC, to include evidence-based strategies and resources.

Louisiana is committed to ensuring that all learners – including English language learners (ELLs) and those with exceptionalities – develop proficiency in the Standards. At the same time, Louisiana recognizes that not all learners acquire skills and knowledge at the same rate, nor do they enter school with the same language abilities; therefore, Louisiana has created English language proficiency standards resources (<http://www.doe.state.la.us/topics/elda.html>) and strategies, accommodations, and technologies (<http://accessguide.doe.louisiana.gov/default.aspx>) to help move all students into the mainstream English language arts curriculum.

Proficiency in English, as well as a second language, is highly desirable in today's global economy. Research suggests that language immersion and traditional foreign language programs, which are designed to help minority and/or majority speakers become proficient in the target language, can also advance students' literacy skills and mastery of subject content, when the programs align with educational standards (Thomas and Collier, 2004). Further, research specific to Louisiana shows that students who learn a second language significantly outperform their non-foreign language counterparts on state assessments that measure proficiency of standards (Taylor-Ward, 2003).

According to Sternberg (2009), the hardest part of having standards is not coming up with them, it is implementing them. As teachers embrace the Standards, they need to know what to emphasize in an overcrowded curriculum. The revision of Louisiana's Comprehensive Curriculum (<http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/saa/2108.html>) will reflect the new standards and help teachers translate them into classroom

practice. Literacy instruction throughout the day can help provide students with the competencies they need to be successful in all content areas.

In an effective literacy plan at the local level, teachers translate the standards and curriculum goals into lessons that integrate literacy tasks into content area learning. Equally important, teachers plan direct, explicit instruction on how to read and learn from diverse text, both print and multimedia, that meet students' interests and skills. Each discipline requires specialized reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills. Content teachers are well suited to provide this instruction – they know the reading and writing formats specific to the subject area, as well as the learning goals of the course.

Reading and Writing in All Content Areas

Reading, writing, and effective communication in all content areas, also known as content literacy, provide a way for students to review what they have learned, organize their thinking, evaluate their understanding, connect their learning to life experiences, and demonstrate their knowledge through meaningful communications with real audiences. Moving from one subject area to the next, students must tap into entirely different sets of vocabulary, text structures (<http://www.adlit.org/strategies/23336>), and background knowledge. They must learn to write in many styles, applying a myriad of discipline-specific conventions and rules to match the purpose of the task.

Direct, explicit instruction – with special attention to vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and sharing ideas with others – is necessary to develop advanced skills to meet the demands of content mastery. Incorporating reading and writing in all content areas is not an add-on, but reflects a commitment to helping students achieve content mastery and become independent, lifelong thinkers and learners. Use of writing rubrics by teachers sets standard proficiency goals, while students' use helps them take responsibility for evaluating and improving their own writing.

Comprehension strategies help students construct meaning from text. These strategies are instructional practices that combine reading, writing, and thinking with content. In addition, strategy use by students enables independent, strategic reading and writing processes. The Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum includes content literacy strategies (<http://www.doe.state.la.us/ide/uploads/14725.pdf>) derived from sound, evidence-based principles of literacy and learning that require teacher modeling, interaction, and monitoring. The IES Practice Guide, *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (2008), substantiates the use of direct, explicit instruction in comprehension strategies to advance content-area achievement and literacy development. These strategies include:

- » Summarizing;
- » Asking and answering questions;
- » Paraphrasing;
- » Word learning; and
- » Finding the main idea.

Reading and writing are reciprocal processes – reading is decoding, writing encoding; they are explicitly connected in the day-to-day instruction of students. Writing activities are essential learning experiences and should be part of every teacher’s routine instructional practice. Research shows that combined instruction in reading and writing leads to improvements in content retention and creation of meaning. The Southern Regional Education Board (2004) recommends three types of writing activities – *writing to learn*, *writing to demonstrate learning*, and *authentic writing* – to help students develop as writers. These types of writing are not necessarily discrete and disconnected from one another. For example, a student studying the executive branch of government during a presidential election may organize his thoughts about each candidate’s platform (writing to learn), write a position paper on his preference (writing to demonstrate learning), and then present a speech promoting his favorite to the entire student body (authentic writing).

Writing to Learn

The purpose of writing to learn is for students to capture and express thoughts, ideas, and questions about the content taught. When students are writing to learn, their attention focuses more on ideas than on “correctness.” Writing to learn emphasizes what is said (new ideas and concepts), rather than how it is said (correct spelling, grammar, and usage). Often less structured and more informal, writing to learn can take forms such as journals, summaries, responses to oral or written questions, observation logs, learning logs, free writing, and notes.

Writing to Demonstrate Learning

When writing to demonstrate learning, students convey what they have learned, how they have synthesized information, and what

new understandings they have constructed. The purpose is for students to show what they know about the content and to make their knowledge understandable to an audience for a specific purpose. Some common examples of ways in which students can write to demonstrate learning include paragraphs, reports, constructed response and short-answer items, essays, and research assignments.

Authentic Writing

Authentic writing asks students to synthesize, analyze, or evaluate what they have learned in order to communicate with a wider audience, usually outside the classroom. It is written with a specific, authentic purpose with awareness of authentic readers, in real-world forms, such as short stories, letters, speeches, poems, editorials, articles, memoirs, brochures, reviews and digital storytelling. Students follow the steps of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing.

Diverse Texts

The amount of reading that students do impacts their vocabulary, general knowledge, and spelling ability, as well as comprehension performance in all subject areas. Students in every classroom need access to a wide variety of relevant and motivating reading material on a broad range of topics that fits their diverse reading capabilities and interests. Students are motivated to learn when they encounter interesting, meaningful texts. In addition to textbooks, adolescents should have a choice of other content-related materials that have educational, cultural, social, and economic relevance for their lives. An extensive classroom library includes a variety of trade books, magazines, newspapers, technical materials, and various other types of print found in real-world contexts. Visual sources, including charts, graphs, the Internet, and other multimedia, are also engaging formats from which to learn. Key considerations for providing students with diverse reading materials are:

- » Reading levels;
- » Student interest and choice; and
- » Accessibility.

Reading Levels

A classroom library includes reading material at the appropriate difficulty level for successful independent reading. High-interest, low-readability texts are necessary to engage students who are struggling with reading and to provide the daily practice required to improve reading outcomes (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). For many years, a variety of American publishing companies have offered books that are written on a primary grade level, but treat themes and topics that are of interest to students of middle or high school age. An internet search with the terms high-interest,

low-readability texts will lead to these resources, along with tips for motivating reluctant readers. Audio recordings and audio books are also made available to students, regardless of their reading levels.

Student Interest and Choice

Research confirms that student motivation is a key factor in successful reading. Interest and background knowledge about a topic can provide the means to motivate students to read material that would otherwise be considered too difficult or above their reading levels. As support for this notion, Ganske and colleagues (2003) point out that interest fosters persistence and a desire to understand, while topic knowledge supports word identification and comprehension, drawing on what is already known. One of the reasons many struggling readers don't read is because they have little or no interest in the materials available for them to read (Guthrie, Wigfield, & Perencevich, 2004).

A wide range of engaging topics and leveled materials for self-selected reading should be available. Using a reading interest survey, such as (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/tipsenc/reading_interest_survey.pdf), helps teachers determine the interests of students and the types of reading materials they prefer. Based on these data, teachers can make recommendations of books that are appealing and appropriate to students' independent reading levels. When the text builds on students' interests and knowledge, the combination of knowing a lot about the topic and being able to talk with others about it supports literacy.

Teachers must also be committed to responding to the reading interests and needs of learners whose skills extend beyond grade level. Advanced readers have been found to enjoy:

- » Nuanced language;
- » Multidimensional characters;
- » Playful thinking;
- » Unusual connections – finding patterns and parallels within and among books;
- » Abstractions and analogies;
- » A blend of fantasy and non-fiction; and
- » Extraordinary quantities of information about a favorite topic.

Accessibility

It is insufficient to provide excellent sources of information if a student lacks the skills to decode and comprehend the text. Teachers need to customize teaching and learning materials for all students, including those who lack the skills to decode and comprehend the text. New technologies and media make it easier than ever to provide multiple alternatives for accessing a wide range of text and customizing teaching and learning. Drawing upon new knowledge of how the brain works, teachers can use flexible materials and media to maximize learning for every student.

Online tools, some of which are available at no cost (<http://bookbuilder.cast.org/>), enable teachers to create and share digital books that engage and support diverse learners. In addition, software with embedded supports, such as text-to-speech, multi-media glossaries, electronic dictionaries and encyclopedias, and language translation capability is available, many times at little to no cost.

Standards-Based Curriculum:

Examining Louisiana’s Standards and Comprehensive Curriculum through the lens of literacy

Louisiana’s Standards and Comprehensive Curriculum serve as the foundation for instruction and as a whole encompass the basic skills that students should “know and be able to do” to become lifelong learners and productive citizens in the global marketplace. Every content area – and every non-academic kind of text, as well – has its own vocabulary, textual formats, stylistic conventions and ways of understanding, analyzing, interpreting and responding to words on the page (Heller and Greenleaf, 2007). Teachers of adolescents need the knowledge to integrate reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills in all content areas to address these nuances. Additionally, research supports the need for teachers to make available diverse texts to engage students and support their learning of state and district curriculum (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Reading and Writing in All Content Areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend awareness sessions to learn about transition to the new Standards Study the concepts and skills students need to know and be able to do to meet the expectations in the Standards Study research-based strategies and resources to support student learning of the Standards Study the English language proficiency standards resources, strategies, technologies, and accommodations for English language learners (ELLs) Study the text structures most frequently used in each content area Identify and plan direct, explicit instructional strategies to teach text structures, vocabulary, and background knowledge students need to learn for each content area (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/14725.pdf) Study a variety of strategies for incorporating writing in all disciplines (http://apps.educationnorthwest.org/traits/lessonplans.php) Provide professional development on research-based instructional strategies and use of rubrics to improve reading and writing Ensure curriculum is aligned with the Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based strategies and appropriate resources to support student learning of the Standards Implement appropriate strategies to help ELLs meet English language proficiency standards Employ varied effective vocabulary development strategies to teach academic vocabulary in all disciplines Integrate reading and writing strategies and skill development necessary for achievement in all disciplines Coach, model, co-teach, observe, and give feedback to fellow teachers on using literacy strategies in all content areas Use a school-wide writing rubric that is aligned with state assessments to set clear expectations and goals for performance Make writing a daily activity in every class Teach and have students practice writing as a process (pre-write, draft, revise, edit, and publish) Provide variety and choice in reading materials for independent reading and text-dependent writing topics Develop meaningful opportunities for students to write, speak, and listen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what students know and what skills or knowledge need to be strengthened in future lessons for students to reach Standards proficiency Monitor the use of instructional strategies to improve literacy through formal and informal observations (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15539.pdf) Discuss exemplary samples with students to model features of quality writing Guide students to focus on their own improvement Increase the variety and choice in independent reading materials Teach word origins, roots, affixes, and derivatives when presenting new content vocabulary Provide opportunities for reading varied genres to build fluency, confidence, and understanding Integrate appropriate text comprehension strategies into instruction in all discipline areas (i.e., self-questioning, summarizing, predicting, inferencing, graphic organizers) Integrate a common theme across several disciplines, immersing students in the vocabulary connected to the topic Address workplace literacy skills across all content areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that leadership teams, instructional coaches, curriculum specialists, teachers, and support personnel receive ongoing professional development in reading and writing instruction Expand meaningful opportunities for students to write, speak, and listen (e.g., elocution contests, debates, speeches, and drama) Expand the types of writing across the disciplines (e.g., songs, manuals, captions, word problems, e-mails, ads, instructions, etc.) Differentiate writing assignments by offering student choice (http://daretodifferentiate.wikispaces.com/Choice+Boards) Celebrate and publish good student writing products in a variety of formats (i.e., local newspapers, literacy magazines, classroom and school libraries, etc.) Host family nights that engage parents in activities that demonstrate the importance of job-related reading and writing proficiency

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Diverse Texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine range of students' reading levels and the English language proficiency of English language learners Identify fiction and non-fiction texts of various reading levels on topics linked to the curriculum Use the library's online resources to find easier content-area materials Inventory student interests and use results to select independent reading material (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/tipsenc/reading_interest_survey.pdf) Enlist the support of the librarian/media specialist to acquire additional books and resources at various reading levels and English proficiency levels for independent reading/classroom libraries Analyze instructional materials for alignment with standards, grade-level expectations, assessments, and learner needs Organize classroom libraries considering difficulty levels, student interests, and content Provide professional development on determining text readability and complexity levels, including Spanish text (e.g., use of http://lexile.com/analyzer/) Schedule quality, independent reading time, allowing students to self-select and enjoy reading materials Develop lessons that provide students with daily sustained experiences with texts in a variety of genres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create leveled lists using teacher judgment, leveling systems (www.lexile.com) and easy-to-use readability formulas (e.g., Dale-Chall, Fry) Select and incorporate into the curriculum high-interest texts that are age- and topic-appropriate and include a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and demographic groups Include audio recordings and online audio books in libraries that engage students and align with learning objectives Ensure all content area classes have classroom libraries that provide access to text at a variety of difficulty levels on a wide range of topics, including culturally-responsive materials Regularly update classroom libraries with new books to maintain student interest Create opportunities that allow students choice of a variety of texts and multimedia to complete authentic tasks Ensure access to available technologies (i.e., computers, assistive technology) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding to increase the range and variety of reading material Collaborate with community resources to augment book collections (i.e., library, non-profits, private business, etc.) Utilize parents and community members to promote diverse literacy experiences (i.e., guest authors, dramatic readings, book fairs, creative productions, etc.) Broaden the types and formats of texts students read and write about (e.g., magazines, newspapers, on-line text, picture books, primary sources, blogs, e-mail, audio books, manuals, etc.) Support equitable access to content by using audio- and video-enhanced software and internet resources with built-in teaching and learning supports e.g., http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov/AccessGuide/Home.aspx and http://www.cast.org/products/index.html Teach students and parents how to use Find a Book (http://www.lexile.com/fab/) to build individualized reading lists at interest and developmental levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding to update and renew classroom and school library book collections Provide professional development on free literacy resources that provide learning supports Seek local, state or federal grants for technology that will support literacy enhancement tools Provide families access to resources that will allow their students to function more independently (i.e., http://accessguide.doe.louisiana.gov/default.aspx)



A comprehensive assessment system is a critical element of an effective plan for improving literacy instruction in late elementary, middle, and high school. Key to meeting this goal is accurate, timely assessment that allows the teacher to differentiate instruction according to individual students' needs. For example, struggling readers are unlikely to profit from instruction that assumes skill mastery that has not been attained. Similarly, strong students will not achieve higher levels of literacy skills without appropriate challenges. Creating an effective plan necessitates reviewing and updating current assessment practices to ensure multiple forms of data collection. Measurement choices should be made after determination of what information is needed and why you need to know it. To that end, informed decisions need to be made about what measures to use and in what combinations (Brookhart, 2009).

Two additional considerations in guiding the selection of specific assessment measures should be reliability and validity. Reliability refers to **how consistently** a test measures a skill or ability. Validity refers to **the extent** to which it measures the skill or ability in question. The process of selecting a measure for use within a comprehensive assessment system should always include consulting the test manual, as well as independent reviewers, for information about the reliability and validity of the measure.

Assessment is often divided into formative and summative categories based on the *intended use* of the assessment. Formative and summative assessments are designed to be used in the learning context as assessment *for* learning and assessment *of* learning, respectively.

A balanced, comprehensive assessment plan is not necessarily one that can be quickly implemented; however, a blueprint for taking progressive steps toward thoughtful, data-driven decision making provides a foundation upon which to develop such a plan. In an "ideal" system, schools identify and use valid, reliable **formative** assessments to *screen*, *progress monitor*, and *diagnose* student needs to target instruction effectively. This ideal system also uses **summative** reading *outcome* measures to indicate how well students have learned or how well they have met performance standards.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessments check students' progress toward grade-level standards, beginning early in the school year to identify students who may be "at risk," and continuing throughout the instructional year to help guide instruction and intervention efforts. These simple, time-efficient, and objective measures mirror the type of instruction or intervention the student is receiving (e.g., accuracy, fluency, comprehension, written mechanics, writer's craft, etc.) and produce data, including reading levels, to inform judicious real-time instructional decisions.

Screening and **progress monitoring** assessments are examples of formative measures. Placement tests are a form of screening. Interim assessments are a form of progress monitoring and may include **curriculum-based** and **benchmark** measures (www.LouisianaEAGLE.org). The assessments evaluate how

well the student has learned the material to date and provide decisive information to guide teaching efforts. Professional dialogue about common assessments centers on rapid analysis of student results and discussion of instructional strategies used or needed.

The National Center on Response to Intervention (http://www.rti4success.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=71) provides extensive information about screening and progress monitoring to guide instruction.

A rubric is a formative assessment tool that uses a set of criteria to assess student work. For example, to assess a student's use of written mechanics, spelling, and author's craft elements in a written piece, the teacher can use a rubric to determine the child's instructional strengths and needs. While the scoring criteria remain the same, the teacher includes different target skills to assess, based on grade level standards and previously-taught skills. The assigned scores give the teacher important information about each child's writing competencies and intervention needs.

Diagnostic measures are another type of formative assessment. If a student is not progressing with current instructional and intervention efforts, specific diagnostic measures provide more in-depth information useful in planning more targeted instruction.

Screening and progress monitoring measures can be administered by any professional (e.g., teachers, paraprofessionals, retired teachers, school counselors, media specialists, speech-language pathologists) trained to administer them correctly. Typically, teachers administer the tests to their own students, or the school creates a school-level assessment team of four to eight people (depending on school size) to administer the tests. There are advantages to both approaches. Using an assessment team disrupts instruction less; however, the big advantage of having teachers administer the tests is that they may acquire information from directly observing the way students respond that goes beyond a test's basic score. Depending on the circumstances, schools could elect to blend the approaches, using teachers to administer the tests to some of their students, while the school-level team assesses the rest of the students. Diagnostic measures are best administered by a school psychologist or by a teacher or instructional coach with extensive training in their administration and interpretation.

Summative Assessment

Summative assessments are outcome measures that are frequently group administered. These assessments provide accountability data to guide the evaluation and progress of the school's literacy program. State-standardized assessments and End-of-Course tests are examples. Curriculum-based tests are also examples, depending on their use. The data from such tests allow reporting of student progress by the individual, class, school, district, and sub-group to stakeholders such as education officials, policy makers, local communities, private groups, parents, and students.

Organizing Resources

To implement a comprehensive assessment system that includes both formative and summative assessment, the following tasks are routinely accomplished at the state, district, and school levels each year:

- » Creating a master schedule that specifies the weeks during which each assessment is administered;
- » Ordering or reproducing all testing materials in time to reach test administrators;
- » Training all teachers or assessment team members in test administration;
- » Designating a person to coordinate the master testing schedule; and
- » Scoring of all assessments and entering and summarizing the data.

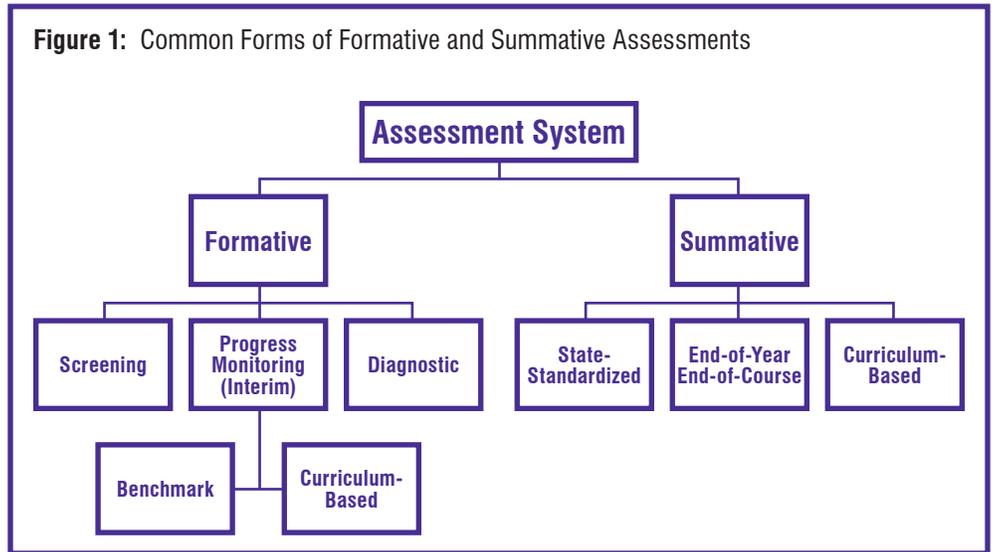
Data Management and Use

Systematically using student achievement data from formative and summative assessments at the class, school, district, and state levels helps educators focus instructional improvement decisions such as:

- » Prioritizing instructional time;
- » Targeting intervention support;
- » Determining instructional effectiveness;
- » Refining instructional methods; and
- » Staffing needs.

The Institute of Education Sciences and the U.S. Department of Education, in their *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/>

Figure 1: Common Forms of Formative and Summative Assessments



practiceguides/ddd/p_g_092909.pdf) practice guide, offer five recommendations regarding data use:

- » Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement;
- » Teach students to examine their own data and set learning goals;
- » Establish a clear vision for school-wide data use;
- » Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school; and
- » Develop and sustain a district-wide data system.

In order to use testing data most effectively, a comprehensive assessment system needs a school-level data management plan. A number of web-based data management resources allow schools to enter data locally and produce data summaries and individual student charting that are helpful in interpreting test data. These services typically charge a small fee (e.g., one dollar per student per year), but they add significantly to the ease with which student data can guide both classroom and school-level decisions. Another approach is to use programs such as Microsoft Excel or free resources such as the data management program ChartDog (http://www.jimwrightonline.com/php/chartdog_2_0/manual/chartdogman.html) to manage and summarize student data.

Finding an efficient way to manage and use the data is as important as gathering the data in the first place. Key in this process is “the need for all assessors and users of assessment results to be assessment literate – to know what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate uses of assessment results – thereby reducing the risk of applying data to decisions for which they aren’t suited” (Chappuis, Chappuis & Stiggins, 2009).

Assessment System:

Identifying and using valid and reliable measures to screen, progress monitor, and diagnose literacy

Comprehensive assessment practices to support effective instruction include both assessment *for* learning (formative) and assessment *of* learning (summative). Solid comprehensive assessments are a cornerstone of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. RTI is an organizational framework for instructional and curricular decisions and practices based on students' responses. This process integrates assessment and intervention within a multi-leveled prevention system to maximize student achievement and to reduce behavioral issues. Formative assessment is ongoing and is used to provide information about student progress and to make effective instructional adjustments, while summative assessment is used to evaluate programs and for accountability purposes. As Stiggins (2007) has suggested, "Changing schools from places that merely sort pupils based on achievement into places that assure that all pupils will meet standards brings with it the challenge of rethinking the dynamics of assessment."

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Formative Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and select effective screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic tools to identify struggling readers and writers, determine response to intervention, and gain in-depth knowledge of specific deficits Identify common curriculum-based assessments (formal, informal, performance based) that include a variety of formats (multiple choice, short answer, constructed response, essay) Consider assessment measures that can help identify high-achieving/advanced learners who would benefit from enrichment activities Define a process for selecting appropriate interventions for struggling readers and writers (i.e., use of http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/literacy/literacy_clearinghouse.aspx) Identify and purchase assessment and intervention materials aligned with students' needs Identify and train all staff who administer assessments to ensure standardized procedures and accurate data recording Have all materials and procedures in place prior to start of the school year Make a data collection plan for storing, analyzing, and disseminating assessment results Evaluate technology infrastructure capacity to support test administration and dissemination of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a formative assessment calendar based on local, state, and program guidelines, including specific timeline for administration and persons responsible Administer assessments and input data according to the established timeline Provide timely, descriptive feedback to students with opportunities to assess their own learning (e.g., graphing their progress) Create procedures and expectations for staff to review and analyze assessment results Use results to make informed decisions about student placement and adjust instruction Differentiate instruction in all content areas to customize literacy support, matching students' needs to instruction and text Use screening, progress monitoring, and curriculum-based assessments to influence instructional decisions regarding flexible 3-tier service options (RTI) Schedule students into appropriate literacy interventions Upgrade technology infrastructure capacity, if necessary, to support assessment administration and dissemination of results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a person or persons responsible for ensuring fidelity of all formative assessment procedures and timelines Analyze student data in teacher teams to develop and adjust instructional plans Use technology capacity to share relevant student progress data with parents and caregivers in an easily interpreted user-friendly format Implement a system for communicating data to the district literacy leadership team in a timely manner Use student assessment data to assist students and teachers in setting learning goals and monitoring progress toward those goals Disaggregate data by subgroups to determine if instructional plans are addressing the needs of all students Integrate student-led conferences where students articulate their progress toward individual learning goals Recognize and celebrate individual student's incremental improvements toward reaching literacy goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide continued professional development to staff who administer assessments to ensure standardized procedures and accurate data recording Acknowledge staff's efforts to improve their use of assessment data to inform instruction Make data-driven budget decisions aligned with literacy priority

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Summative Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study how the standards for content areas are assessed on state and local tests • Analyze previous year's outcome assessments (state-standardized, End-of-Course) to determine broad student needs and serve as a baseline for improvement • Use analysis of previous year's assessment to identify teachers that need to adjust teaching strategies • Identify curriculum-based benchmark assessments (i.e., end-of-unit or chapter tests and end-of-grading-period tests) that are used to measure progress toward standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a summative assessment calendar based on local, state, and program guidelines, including specific timeline for administration • Administer summative assessments at scheduled intervals • Provide timely feedback of results to students and parents • Use assessment results to monitor performance of individual students • Focus discussions during teacher team meetings on changes that can be made to improve the instructional program for all students • Plan time to review assessment results in teacher teams to identify program and instructional adjustments, as needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer effective professional development on ways to address specific skills identified as class, grade, subject, or school-wide weaknesses • Analyze summative data to identify Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of subgroups • Apply protocols for looking at student assessments and evaluating student progress (see Teacher Teams in Leadership component for more information) • Plan lessons, re-teaching, and intervention activities that target areas of need 	<p><i>Based on analysis of summative assessment data:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the effectiveness of programs and policies • Redefine school improvement goals • Adjust curriculum alignment to eliminate gaps • Ensure students are placed appropriately in specific programs • Recognize and celebrate individual student's significant improvements and reaching designated standards of achievement



When instruction is high in quality, the information being presented makes sense to students, is interesting to them, and is easy to remember and apply (Slavin, 1995). Effective instruction incorporates several factors necessary to support the literacy development of adolescents: explicit instruction, motivation, text-based collaborative learning, strategic intervention, intensive writing, and technology. Together, each of these contributes to the success of a high-quality literacy plan at the local level.

Direct, Explicit Instruction

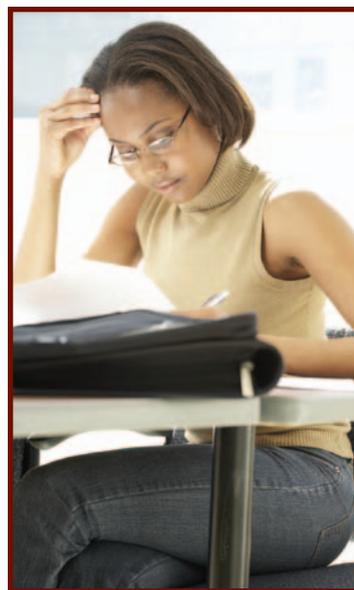
In direct, explicit instruction (i.e., intentional instruction), the teacher models and explains the strategy and when to use it, provides support and corrective feedback as students practice the strategy, and offers opportunities for students to apply the strategy initially with a partner or in small groups and then, independently. Direct, explicit instruction engages students as active participants in using the appropriate literacy strategy to meet the demands of each content area, while simultaneously building their fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.

Fluency

Fluency is made up of at least three key elements: **accurate** reading of connected text at a conversational **rate** with appropriate **prosody**. The terms automaticity and fluency are often used interchangeably, but they are not the same – that is, automaticity (accuracy and pace) are necessary to be a fluent reader, but not sufficient. When reading connected text, prosody is also essential. Prosody refers to the reader’s ability to make the passage sound like natural speech with appropriate rhythm, intonation, and expression at the phrase, sentence, and text levels.

Automatic word recognition significantly affects students’ ability to comprehend what they are reading (Torgeson, et al., 2001). If a student is accurate, but lacks appropriate speed, then one-minute speed drills with a list of carefully chosen words and/or text is often a useful method. However, if a student lacks accuracy, decoding instruction in targeted spelling patterns and word study will provide students with insight into how words are put together. For a student who reads with both accuracy and speed, but lacks prosody, direct instruction using intonation, phrasing and chunking, and scooping strategies may be helpful.

Read alouds and repeated readings are two instructional strategies proven to improve reading fluency. Read alouds provide students with good models of fluent reading. After the teacher models how to read the passage, the students then reread it aloud, silently, or with a partner. Repeated reading of the same passage allows students to increase the number of words they can read automatically. In fact, research states that in order to establish and improve fluency, students, especially struggling adolescent readers, may need to read the passage 3 to 4 times (Samuels, 2002). Effective repeated reading practice includes cuing students before reading to focus on



either reading for speed or reading for comprehension, or both, and providing corrective feedback during or after the repeated reading.

Teachers select text to read aloud and for repeated reading from the textbook, narrative chapter books, informational texts, newspapers, magazines, poetry, and other appropriate ancillary text. When selecting text to read aloud, choose readings that relate directly to the content,

activate student interest, enhance student understanding, and foster further discussion. Additional approaches that teachers can use to help students develop fluency are described in detail at <http://www.adlit.org/article/27878>.

Achieving fluency is only the first step in attaining academic proficiency in English. Acquiring conversational fluency can take one to three years. Academic literacy – moving from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” – can take five to seven years. As a result, many English language learners (ELLs) speak, read, and write English, yet they lack the advanced vocabulary and language skills required for success across content areas, especially in the upper grades. To develop the vocabulary and skills needed for grade-level academic proficiency, ELLs need:

- » Exposure to appropriate books and to people who use academic language (e.g., language used in textbooks);
- » Opportunities to learn and use academic language; and
- » Systematic, explicit instruction, including sufficient and supportive feedback.

Vocabulary

Students who lack adequate background knowledge and vocabulary necessary to “make sense” of the text they read will benefit from explicit vocabulary instruction (Kamil, et al., 2008). Explicit vocabulary instruction is a name for a family of strategies

that include two complementary approaches: direct instruction in word meaning and instruction in strategies to promote independent vocabulary learning skills.

Direct instruction in word meaning helps students develop in-depth knowledge of strategically selected terms needed to fully comprehend the unit or concept of study. Direct instruction utilizes intentional teaching methods that promote active engagement in learning. Marzano's (2005) six-step process is a framework that provides direct instruction in academic vocabulary. In the six-step process, teachers:

1. Provide a description, explanation, or example of the new term;
2. Ask students to restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words;
3. Ask students to construct a picture, symbol, or graphic representation of the term;
4. Engage students periodically in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms in their notebooks;
5. Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another; and
6. Involve students periodically in games that allow them to play with terms.

For a brief description of each of the steps, see <http://esu4vocabularystrategies.wikispaces.com/file/view/Marzano+Vocabulary.pdf>.

Direct, explicit instruction in vocabulary involves selecting the “right” words to teach. Selection of appropriate terms to be targeted in explicit vocabulary instruction will have a significant impact on the outcomes of instruction. Beck, et al., (2002) describe a practical method of selecting terms for explicit instruction. This method includes categorizing words into three tiers:

1. **Basic words** known by most students at a particular grade level (e.g., softly, beautiful, speaker)
2. **High-utility words** that students encounter frequently in many contexts and content areas (e.g., regardless, examine, compromise)
3. **Content-specific words** particular to a subject area that often lack generalization to other subject areas (e.g., biogenetics, polynomial, foreshadowing)

Basic words rarely require instruction. High-utility words are recommended as the focus of explicit vocabulary instruction in reading and English language arts classes. Teachers select high-utility words for instruction based on each word's importance to understanding the text and students' conceptual understanding of the word. For example, “benevolent” might be a good word to target for instruction, since students know what it means to be “nice.” Content-specific words are best learned in the subject

area in which students are most likely to encounter them. For content classes, vocabulary should be selected on the basis of how important the words are for understanding the concepts that students are expected to learn. For example, the word “mitochondria” might be selected for pre-reading instruction in a chapter on cell biology.

For English language learners (ELLs), vocabulary development is especially critical for their ability to read and comprehend texts. The selection of vocabulary words to teach ELLs can also be grouped into three tiers <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/vocabulary>.

Strategies to promote independent vocabulary learning skills include analyzing semantic and syntactic context clues to derive the meaning of unknown words. Semantic clues provide information about a word's meaning (often using background knowledge) and syntactic clues provide information about a word's grammatical purpose (i.e., its part of speech).

Students should be encouraged to use dictionaries and other word reference materials, including electronic versions. This can be particularly important when writing – searching for appropriate synonyms, as well as clarifying and enriching the meaning of a known word (e.g., learning the differences between crying, sobbing, weeping, wailing) broadens vocabularies. Rich dialogue about words and topics creates deeper and more in-depth understanding of the meaning of words, so time should be allowed for discussions centered around text. Morphology, the study of the structure and form of words in language or a language, including inflection, derivation, and the formation of compounds, increases word knowledge by highlighting the similarities of meaning of parts of words (e.g., photograph, photosynthesis, photocopy).

Teaching vocabulary is complicated by the varying word knowledge levels of individual students. Rather than apply a “one size fits all” approach to vocabulary instruction, it is wise to assess students before the reading or other tasks involving text (Fisher and Frey, 2008). One method for accomplishing this is through vocabulary self-awareness (see Vocabulary Self-Awareness Chart at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/14725.pdf>). This awareness is valuable because it highlights for students their understanding of what they know and for teachers the words they can target for instruction. Teachers make vocabulary instruction a priority by allocating time during the lesson to focus on word acquisition. Research findings suggest that there is not a single best way to teach vocabulary; rather, using a variety of techniques that includes repeated exposures to unknown word meanings produces the best results (Boardman, et al., 2008).

Comprehension

Direct, explicit instruction in comprehension provides students with strategies to use before, during, and after reading to build and activate their background knowledge, monitor their understanding, and review

and reflect on what they have read. Comprehension strategies are taught explicitly by explaining and modeling the strategy, using the strategy in guided reading practice with feedback, and applying the strategy in independent practice. Comprehension strategies include:

- » Summarizing;
- » Asking and answering questions;
- » Paraphrasing;
- » Word learning; and
- » Finding the main idea (Kamil, et al., 2008).

Students must actively participate in the comprehension process and learn how to apply the strategies to improve their reading comprehension skills. When selecting strategies, teachers should ensure that the strategy is appropriate for the text and the learner's needs. The following Web sites provide suggestions for teaching comprehension strategies for use before, during, and after reading: http://www.adlit.org/strategy_library and <http://jc-schools.net/read6-12/ReadingCompStrategies.pdf>.

Motivation

Motivation, engagement, and achievement are closely linked. Motivation leads to engagement; sustained engagement, bolstered by quality instruction, leads to improved student achievement.

To foster improvement in adolescent literacy, teachers should use strategies to enhance students' motivation to read and engage in the learning process. Kamil, et al., (2008), make four recommendations to enhance students' motivation to read and engage in the learning process:

- » Set clear goals and expectations for reading and writing assignments;
- » Provide variety and choice in topics, assignments, and reading material, maintaining text complexity levels;
- » Link content to students' personal experiences and real-world applications; and
- » Provide opportunities for students to interact through reading by allowing students to work in small groups and pairs.

Increasing long-term motivation does not result from a quick fix. Reading motivation strong enough to last across weeks, months, and years is not made in a day. However, when the classroom context contains the practices stated above, reading motivation grows and becomes self-generating (Guthrie, et al., 2000).

Text-Based Collaborative Learning

During text-based collaborative learning, students work in small groups to discuss a topic and to interact with each other about what they are learning. The text may be self-selected or assigned reading around a common topic or theme. The discussions and interactions, which may include collaborative brainstorming,

group summarizing, peer editing, and responding to others' writing through blogging, help students gain a deeper understanding of the thinking processes involved in comprehension.

Say Something (Harste, Short, & Burke, 1988) is a specific instructional practice that promotes collaborative learning and keeps adolescent readers thinking as they read. Students are placed in small groups, take turns reading something, and occasionally stop and "say something" about what they read.

The IES Practice Guide *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (Kamil, et. al, 2008) makes four recommendations to engage students in high-quality discussions of text meaning and interpretation:

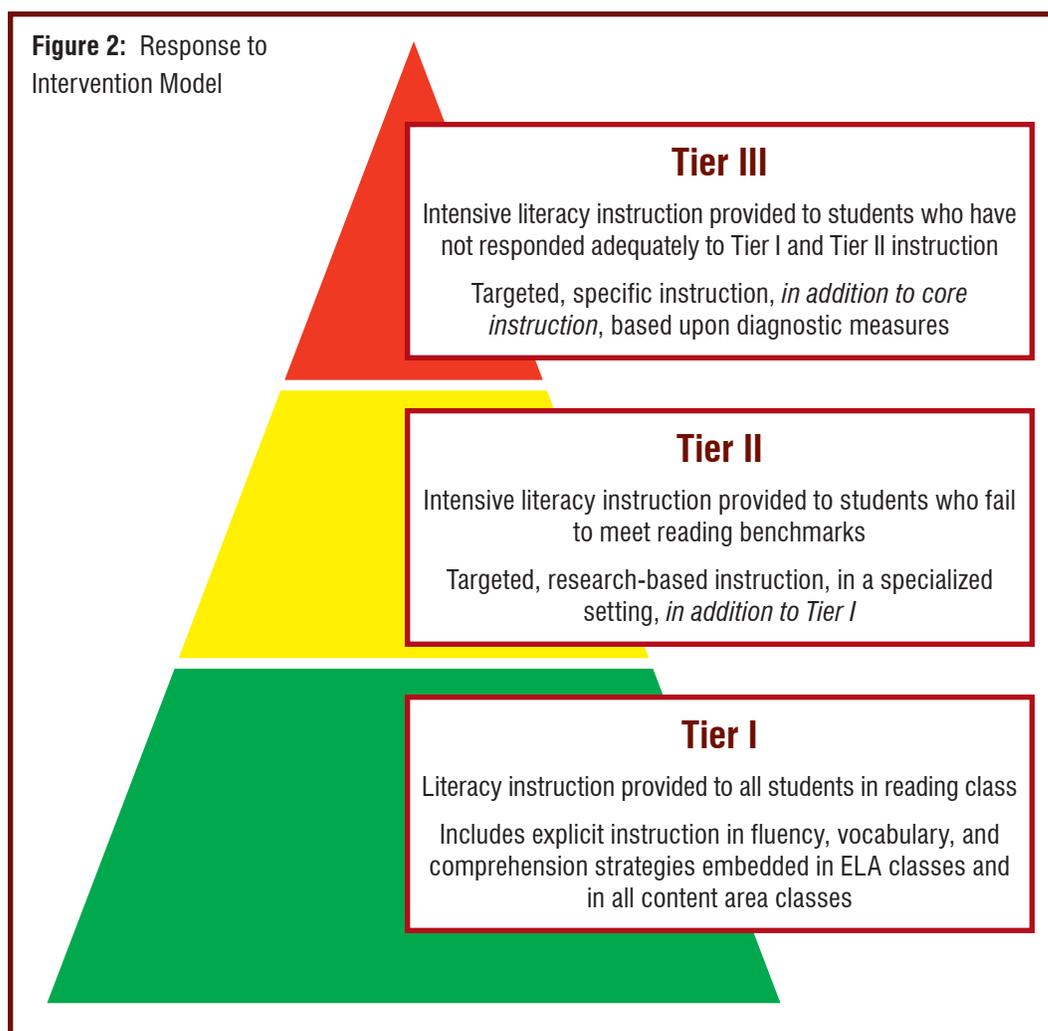
- » *Carefully prepare for the discussion by selecting appropriate texts.* Use engaging texts that can stimulate and have multiple interpretations;
- » *Ask follow-up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion.* Follow responses with other questions that lead to varying points of view;
- » *Provide a task or a discussion format that students follow when they discuss texts together.* Use the comprehension strategies that students have been taught and monitor the small groups to redirect and give feedback; and
- » *Develop and practice the use of a specific discussion protocol (see link below).* Identify steps that students follow to guide the discussion and to cause students to think deeply about the meaning of what they are reading.

Effective discussions focus on building a deeper understanding of the author's meaning and critically analyzing the author's conclusions. In effective discussions, students present and defend individual interpretations and points of view, use text content, background knowledge, and reasoning to support interpretations, and listen to the points of view of others. Resources helpful in applying these recommendations are available at <http://educon21.wikispaces.com/page/pdf/Session+Protocols>.

Strategic Intervention

Some adolescents struggle with decoding and fluency. Reading problems can result from genetic or biological factors. Students whose reading difficulties stem from neurological sources are called dyslexic by scientific researchers and it is a term used by educators for some reading problems based on decoding. Dyslexia is a brain disorder that primarily affects a person's ability to read and write words (Bloom, Beal, & Kupfer, 2003). Persons with dyslexia generally have normal or above-normal intelligence and their higher-order skills are intact. Their problem is not behavioral, psychological, motivational, or social. Regardless of the source of the reading problem, nearly all deficits can be overcome with strategic intervention that is matched with the student's assessed reading deficit and based upon direct, explicit instruction (Nevills & Wolfe, 2009).

Students reading below grade level need strategic intervention to accelerate their literacy development. Strategic intervention is often organized into levels that represent an increase in the amount of support students receive based on assessment data. The approach of assessing all students and using the data to modify their instruction is called Response to Intervention (RTI). Research demonstrates the benefits of implementing RTI in a standardized way, using common assessment and data management tools and a standard process to solve problems and accurately determine student needs (Torgesen, et al., 2001; VanDerHayden, Witt & Gilbertson, 2007). A standard protocol is a step-by-step process for identifying student strengths and weaknesses and determining appropriate intervention (e.g., <http://isteep.com/>). It helps professionals efficiently perform all the basic RTI tasks correctly. Another key aspect of RTI is frequent progress monitoring of students' response to instruction to determine the intensity of support needed. Schools implementing RTI in Louisiana use a three-tiered approach of instruction and intervention, as shown in Figure 2.



Tier I

Tier I represents the literacy instruction provided to all students in both ELA and all content area classes. At this level of instruction, teachers provide high-quality, standards-based instruction to all students through a combination of informational and narrative texts, including primary source documents. Content area instruction supports specific Louisiana Comprehensive Curricula by emphasizing content area vocabulary and research-validated literacy practices, including using before, during, and after reading comprehension strategies, word learning, and other literacy strategies that facilitate learning course content.

Initially, faculty should select a few effective and readily-teachable strategies that target the most obvious needs. Research states that students benefit most when three to four strategies are taught consistently across all content areas (Torgesen, et al., 2007). These strategies allow students maximum access to rigorous curriculum regardless of literacy levels.

School-wide reading screening measures are used to identify those students experiencing reading difficulties. Classroom content area assessments are administered periodically to determine whether students are making progress or need extra support. These assessments provide data for planning scaffolded instruction delivered in flexible grouping (i.e., whole group, small group, partner and individual). Outcome assessments are administered to all students to determine growth/gain over time.

Teachers differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students – including providing a variety of texts, using collaborative groups, and offering students choices in accessing curriculum and demonstrating learning.

Differentiated instruction does not change what is taught - the essential skills and content remain steady; teachers are still responsible for helping students reach proficiency standards in the adopted curriculum. Instead, differentiated instruction changes how the curriculum is presented to and accessed by students. Differentiation does not mean that the teacher creates daily lesson plans for each student; it means that alternatives and supports are provided, so that barriers are reduced to meet the challenges of diverse learners. Strategies for differentiation are found at <http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html>.

Tier II

Tier II refers to targeted research-based supplemental instruction that is provided *in addition to* core ELA instruction. This instruction is aimed at improving academic achievement of students who are reading below grade level in one or more critical areas of reading, as determined by a review of statewide assessments and school-wide screening procedures. This double dosing of literacy instruction is necessary to help struggling students catch up to grade-level standards and reading levels, and is often the last chance for adolescents to gain the skills necessary for graduation, advanced learning opportunities, and career readiness.

Typically, a class period is scheduled during the regular school day to provide the additional reading instruction required by students in Tier II. These classes follow intervention program recommendations for class size and are implemented with fidelity by a qualified professional.

Progress monitoring for Tier II students should be conducted frequently using an appropriate measure (see Assessment section) that is external to the intervention program being used. When a Tier II student meets the benchmark goal(s), the intervention can be discontinued, but progress should be carefully monitored to ensure continuation of adequate growth.

Tier III

This level of intensive intervention is for a small percentage of students who have not responded adequately (based upon individual, pre-determined goals) to the instruction provided in Tier I and Tier II. Tier III intervention is scheduled during the school day, and is in addition to core instruction. This tier usually includes students who have severe reading difficulties. Groups are kept small and the intervention is implemented with fidelity by a trained professional. Diagnostic and weekly progress monitoring measures are utilized with this group of students to identify specific strengths and weaknesses and to check progress toward goals. If progress monitoring data show that a student is not making progress, the student may be referred for further evaluation and additional services.

Note: Louisiana's RTI Implementation Plan can be accessed at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/literacy/RTI.html>.

Intensive Writing

Adolescents need instruction in *writing as a process* (e.g., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing), but they especially need that instruction to be connected to the kinds of writing tasks they will have to perform in high school and beyond. Therefore, attention should be given not only to increasing the amount of writing instruction students receive and the amount of

writing they do in all classes, but also to increasing the quality of writing instruction and assignments.

Writing is an effective tool for improving comprehension in all content areas. With appropriate instruction and support, students learn to use writing as a way to offer and justify opinions, to demonstrate understanding of content, ideas, and themes, and to convey real and imagined experiences. Three instructional recommendations for effective writing practices are identified in *Writing to Read* (Graham and Hebert, 2010) to help students increase literacy skills and comprehension:

1. Have students write about the texts they read by:
 - › Responding to text in writing;
 - › Writing summaries of text;
 - › Writing notes about text; and
 - › Answering questions about text in writing, or creating and answering written questions about text.
2. Teach students the writing skills and processes that go into creating text by:
 - › Teaching the process of writing, text structures for writing, paragraph or sentence construction skills to improve reading comprehension;
 - › Teaching spelling and sentence construction skills to improve reading fluency; and
 - › Teaching spelling skills to improve word reading skills.
3. Increase how much students write.

The 6 + 1 trait writing model of instruction and assessment (<http://educationnorthwest.org/resource/503>) gives students clearly defined expectations for improving writing skills. These traits – ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, and presentation – define criteria for good writing and provide teachers with a consistent vocabulary and approach for teaching intensive writing across all content areas and grade levels.

Technology

Effective adolescent literacy programs use technology as both an instructional tool and instructional topic. As a tool, literacy software can provide instructional reinforcement and opportunities for guided practice to help students improve fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a framework developed by the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to guide the development of curricula and materials that are flexible and supportive of all students. Technology and materials conforming to principles of UDL support effective literacy development and

instruction for *all* students, especially those who are struggling readers, those with limited English proficiency, and students with exceptionalities. UDL principles support achievement, as well as access to instructional materials, so that students receive differentiated learning experiences and are enabled to use a range of assistive technologies appropriate to their needs and learning tasks.

Technology-based approaches to support students include:

- » Converting text to speech and speech to text (text readers and voice-recognition software);
- » Organizing ideas using visual prompts and templates (visual thinking software);
- » Providing texts in alternate formats (internet and multimedia); and
- » Providing electronic resources (portable word processors, tape recorders, pen-based devices).

Selecting technologies for a student requires that educators be provided with professional development opportunities to understand the appropriate choice and use of accessible materials, assistive technologies, and the UDL framework to improve student

participation and progress in the general curriculum. In addition, parents are provided with materials that inform them of the purpose and potential of technology to help their children (http://www.greatschools.org/pdfs/e_guide_at.pdf?date=3-13-06&status=new).

As a topic, technology requires new reading and writing skills once unimaginable. The Internet and other forms of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are redefining the nature of reading, writing, and communication. Some of the most common ICTs impacting students' lives today include search engines, Web pages, e-mail, instant messaging, blogs, podcasts, and e-books. Integrating these new technologies into the curriculum helps students to develop the skills they need to be successful in a global community – thinking critically, problem solving, and communicating and collaborating effectively in this fast-paced, networked world. *Reading, Writing, and Technology* is an online resource (http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Parents/pb1074_technology.sflb.ashx) prepared by the International Reading Association to provide parents with information on the use of the Internet and related technologies to help their children prepare for the literacy demands of tomorrow.

Instruction and Intervention (RTI):

Implementing research-based strategies, promoting active engagement, and establishing systems of support

High-quality instruction and intervention that addresses the Standards, also called Response to Intervention, is key to improving literacy achievement for all adolescents (Kamil, et al., 2008). Explicit instruction (i.e., intentional instruction), which includes modeling and student opportunities to practice in authentic contexts, is an important characteristic of high-quality instruction. Excellent instruction also enhances students' motivation to read, and offers opportunities to engage students in text-based discussions, meaningful writing assignments, and technology use. Strategic intervention, matched to the needs of students, is also important for literacy development.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Direct, Explicit Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine student data to focus on instructional areas of greatest need (e.g., fluency, vocabulary, comprehension) Compile classroom observation data (e.g., using a checklist http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15539.pdf) to show current practice in reading and writing instruction Examine observational data to determine quality of instruction focused on features in checklist above Agree upon literacy instruction students are to receive in each content area Plan and provide professional development on direct, explicit instructional strategies that build students' fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills Learn about Universal Design for Learning (e.g., read CAST publications, visit the CAST Web site http://www.cast.org/) Plan and provide professional development on differentiated instructional options for reading and writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use research-based differentiated instructional strategies that support diverse needs Adapt UDL practices slowly, perhaps one content area at a time Provide frequent feedback and coaching to staff on differentiation techniques related to content, process, and product Educate parents about UDL and differentiated activities going on in the classroom Carefully select the text to use when explicitly teaching a given strategy, ensuring that the text is appropriate for the reading levels of the students while learning the strategy. Students then apply the strategy to complex text during regular classroom instruction. Use data to inform instructional decisions and explicit teaching Tell students specifically what strategies they are going to learn; explain why it is important for them to learn the strategies; model how to use the strategies; and provide guided and independent practice with feedback Discuss with students when and where to apply the strategies Ensure that students understand that the goal of the strategy is comprehension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review teacher and student data to improve and enhance explicit instruction Collaborate with and obtain additional support from other educators who are exploring and implementing UDL and differentiated instruction (e.g., online communities) Share effective differentiated lessons and differentiation strategies in teacher team meetings Create opportunities for peers to observe and demonstrate differentiated lessons within the school, as well as with schools in close proximity Provide instructional and assessment accommodations/adaptations for English language learners according to their English proficiency levels, and accommodations for students with exceptionalities according to their needs and talents Provide families access to resources that promote differentiated support for students (i.e., http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/eia/1538.html) Share effective lessons and strategies in teacher team meetings Show students how to apply the strategies they are learning to different texts and genres Address both academic and workplace literacy skills across all content areas and provide students with knowledge of a variety of career pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue analyzing data for impact of teaching strategies on student achievement Provide support to new teachers on differentiated instruction for all learners, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities Invest in professional books, journals, and online sources to stay abreast of current research and new findings related to differentiated instruction Expand opportunities for teachers to observe differentiated lessons within the school, as well as in nearby schools Provide opportunities for teachers to learn more about how to make adolescent curriculum more accessible to all learners (e.g., participate in professional development provided by district and state, attend conferences, enroll in an institute)

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey students to determine what motivates them to read or write for a school assignment (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/tipsenc/reading_interest_survey.pdf) Study strategies to enhance students' motivation to read and engage in the learning process Redesign instruction so that it is more relevant to students' interests, everyday lives, and current events Plan to include opportunities for students' choice of materials, research topics, assignments, curriculum access, and demonstration of knowledge Conduct an internet search with the terms <i>effective high interest texts for adolescents</i> to access resources and tips for motivating reluctant readers Research and purchase curricular materials that are relevant for adolescent learners Examine assignments for authentic purpose, audience, and critical thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make available and allow students choices of supplemental reading materials (including high-interest topics) and text-dependent writing activities Use a variety of strategies to increase background knowledge and encourage wide reading, such as The Why Files (http://whyfiles.org/) Integrate curriculum with real-world applications that are important to adolescents (e.g., use current events to build students' reading and writing skills) Connect with every student to optimize participation and achievement (i.e., mentoring by caring adult) Acknowledge student effort and the learning process by allowing redoing, retaking, and revising Provide a supportive learning environment that views mistakes as growth opportunities Provide a positive learning environment that promotes student autonomy, empowering students to make decisions about topics and forms of communication Emphasize active student engagement with significant content by using hands-on activities Form literacy-related clubs, such as book, writing, debate/speech, and media clubs based on student interests and popular trends Focus and build upon small student successes Provide students with reasons for assignments Define expected outcomes and standards of achievement and help students set goals to achieve them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand connections between content areas, such as science and language arts Expand the depth and breadth of collaborative learning opportunities Provide opportunities for students to share work products in authentic situations and with audiences beyond the classroom Capitalize on students' interest in technology and media by using digital tools and Web quests to conduct research, presentation software to demonstrate learning, word processing to edit, code, and mark text, and e-mail to encourage communication Bring active community members into the school to share their success stories so students can see the benefits of achievement Examine grading practices to increase elements that students find motivating, such as structured choice or an authentic purpose for reading or writing Analyze summative and formative data for student achievement and allow students to see and use the data Give students specific feedback about their progress that conveys realistic expectations Help students create attainable goals that are measurable and observable to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor student progress and motivation Recognize and celebrate students' efforts and persistence to continually improve academic achievement Encourage all students to participate in debates, opinion boards, blogs, writing letters to the editor, etc. Provide opportunities for students to tutor others and read aloud to younger students Use tools that enable students to reach out globally and engage in projects with students worldwide (http://www.ed.gov/teachers/how/tech/international/index.html) Keep abreast of research and strategies to enhance students' motivation in the learning process Continue to provide feedback to students that encourages them to reflect on how they learn, what they do well, and what they need to improve

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Text-Based Collaborative Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examine and develop classroom management, organization, and routines to support meaningful student collaboration Plan and provide staff with professional development on structures and strategies that encourage collaborative learning (e.g., questioning techniques) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create learning opportunities using structures and strategies for collaborative learning based on text and clear curricular goals in all content areas Develop rubrics that students can use to monitor their current group functioning and work products Utilize instructional coach to provide support by modeling, observing, and providing feedback Provide diverse texts to ensure all students in the group can gain meaning of the content Assign roles within each group to ensure collaboration and effective use of time Provide questions that encourage students to think reflectively about texts Provide formats and specific steps for students to follow to guide the discussion Require group response to text in writing (or other representation) that communicates and applies new knowledge gained through collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and/or use a fidelity checklist to monitor implementation of collaborative learning across the curriculum Differentiate and provide follow-up professional development based upon classroom observations Determine effectiveness of the collaborative process on student achievement Identify the most important concepts in each content area for in-depth study and extended classroom discussion Design specific opportunities for groups to share with other groups, classrooms, and grade levels the concepts and facts acquired through collaborative discussions Continue to build teacher skills by creating opportunities for staff to experience collaborative discussions around the meaning and interpretation of text 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand communication and collaboration by using digital media to network with peers both in and outside the school Introduce students to global networking through organizations such as Global Schoolhouse (http://www.globalschoolnet.org/) to develop cultural understanding and global awareness Budget funding for provision and expansion of engaging and diverse reading texts Jointly plan inter-disciplinary collaborative learning opportunities to reinforce vocabulary and conceptual development across multiple texts Elevate student group discussions to include debates on current issues in content areas
Strategic Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff with professional development on Response to Intervention (universal screening, tiered model, data-driven decision making, progress monitoring, intervention adjustment based on data) Allocate ample time to research intervention programs (e.g., using http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/lan/2955.aspx) Purchase one or two research-based reading intervention programs; if only one is chosen, be sure it includes both decoding and comprehension components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administer universal screening to all students (or to a subset of students, such as those who failed the state assessment) Consult multiple forms of data to identify struggling and advanced learners Determine which students struggle with decoding and which ones need extra help with comprehension Select a few purposeful literacy strategies that address student needs for use by teachers in all content areas Provide literacy-rich instruction for all students in all subject areas (Tier I) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure fidelity to the overall intervention plan by conducting walk-throughs and observations (e.g., http://www.doe.state.la.us/ide/uploads/15540.pdf) Explain to students the importance of assessments, what the results are used for, and what the results mean Create and implement a goal-setting process with students, including explanation of data and next steps for improvement Ensure the intervention program(s) are implemented with fidelity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocate funding to replenish intervention materials, to continue professional development, and to recruit and retain highly-qualified intervention staff Continue to provide substantial professional development and follow-up on the use of intervention program(s)

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
<p>Strategic Intervention <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide substantial initial professional development on the chosen intervention program(s) and plan for ongoing, job-embedded learning/coaching • Ensure the school procures all equipment necessary to operate the program(s) • Inquire about recurring costs of materials and technology services • Build the master schedule early to accommodate the number of intervention classes needed • Select intervention teachers who have a proven record of success with struggling students • Design an intervention system that allows easy flow of students into and out of the tiers of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide additional literacy intervention (e.g., an additional reading class, one-on-one tutoring, computer-assisted instruction, or before- or after-school program) by well-trained professionals for those students who need more targeted support (Tiers II and III) • Establish and monitor individual student growth targets (i.e., chart aim line and progress monitoring data points) • Keep intervention classes small • Implement intervention programs as recommended • Provide follow-up professional development on the intervention program, supplemental materials, and literacy support strategies • Use progress monitoring and curriculum-based assessment data to inform instruction in each of the three tiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor student attendance in intervention and time on task • Continue to monitor individual student growth targets (i.e., chart aim line and progress monitoring data points) and use the data to drive instruction 	
<p>Intensive Writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review formative and summative data from previous year to assess student writing strengths and weaknesses • Study writing rubrics used by the state to score students' writing • Develop a school-wide rubric, aligned with state assessment rubrics, that can be applied across content areas • Practice applying the rubric to writing samples to establish reliability in scoring • Develop a collaborative goal to improve student writing and plans to meet it • Plan and provide professional development on instructional strategies related to the three kinds of writing - <i>writing to learn</i>, <i>writing to demonstrate learning</i>, and <i>authentic writing</i> (described in Standards-based narrative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign specific writing assignments for content learning (i.e., journal/log entries, verbal descriptions of math problems, note-taking, reflection, summaries, instructions for science experiments, captions for historical event pictures, etc.) • Establish a schedule to implement varied writing assignments in all content areas, so students have experience in all three kinds of writing • Plan and use school-wide benchmark writing assessments • Teach the components of the school-wide rubric to students, so they can judge the quality of their own writing • Provide students with good models of writing to examine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboratively evaluate student writing assignments during team meetings and reassess strategies used for creating proficient writers • Develop tutoring sessions with highly qualified teachers for students needing remediation in writing • Celebrate writing by displaying student products, holding poetry slams, essay writing contests, and publishing student writing in school newspapers and literary magazines • Monitor fidelity to the overall plan and writing schedules • Acknowledge staff efforts to implement the writing plan and to enhance student writing proficiency • Maintain student portfolios with samples of writing that move with them from grade to grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share teacher testimony and anecdotes on practices that improved student achievement • Review formative and summative data for student growth • Provide ongoing differentiated professional development activities to existing staff and foundational training to new staff • Make efforts to communicate writing successes to the external community (publish in local newspapers, post in local library) • Arrange to have authors visit schools and discuss their books and writing methods with students • Invite local community and business leaders to visit classrooms and describe the types of writing used in their work

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Intensive Writing <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey content area teachers to determine how much time teachers currently have students write in their classes Plan writing instruction across grade levels and content areas to assure consistency and seamlessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach students revision and editing strategies that include quality writing traits, such as organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan periodic student review of their writing portfolios, with reflection on growth in specific writing skills Allow students to compose with word processing software to encourage revising and editing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use web resources for articles, lesson plans, and unique ideas for encouraging writing (http://www.nwp.org/cs/public/print/doc/resources/encourage_writing.csp)
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey staff on knowledge and use of technology integration and assistive technologies in instruction Develop a professional development plan based on staff technology survey Inventory current hardware, software, and other technologies available at the school Plan to incorporate available technology resources into all content area lessons Review with staff Bulletin 104 – Louisiana K-12 Educational Technology Standards (http://www.louisianaschools.net/de/uploads/13338.pdf) Develop a long-range technology plan (standards of use, assessments of effectiveness, plans for periodic updates of hardware and software, and a program to protect students from inappropriate material) http://www.louisianaschools.net/divisions/tech/technology_planning.html Investigate technologies that provide learning supports for all students (e.g., text-to-speech, speech recognition technology, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff with professional development on technology skills and use of assistive technologies and multimedia to support instruction Coach teachers in the classroom on how to use technology to enhance instruction Designate a campus technology coordinator to help teachers troubleshoot technology issues and to coordinate with district technology staff to help integrate technology into instruction Utilize all available technologies to address the needs of learners in all subject areas (e.g., free text-to-speech software, digital text) Create technology-infused lessons for heightened student engagement Ensure all students have access to available technologies to improve their reading and writing skills in all content areas Develop and use communication tools on the internet to connect with students and parents outside the classroom (e.g., e-mail, Blackboard, instant messaging, class webpage, lectures, and videoconferencing) Use Teaching, Learning, and Technology Centers (TLTCs) for resources to support student and teacher use of technology http://www.louisianaschools.net/divisions/tech/tltc_contacts.html Use the Louisiana K-12 Educational Technology Standards performance indicators to integrate technology into all content areas Implement the beginning components of the technology plan Create and use computer-based games, such as Jeopardy and Hollywood Squares, to review content http://people.uncw.edu/ertzbergerj/ppt_games.html 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey teachers and analyze data to determine the effectiveness of the digital tools and resources on student achievement Explore new technologies that engage students (e.g., graphical data visualizations, Blogs, wiki pages, Eports, Googlemaps, Googledocs, Podcasts, etc.) Stay abreast of educational research and emerging trends regarding effective use of technology Establish strategic partnerships to expand opportunities for students to access technologies both in school and out of school Investigate distance learning and online courses as vehicles for teacher and student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate existing funds and explore new sources of revenue to maintain existing technologies and to obtain new digital tools Recruit and retain highly competent personnel who use technology creatively and proficiently and use their skills to advance capacity of all staff Maintain a robust infrastructure for technology, including systems to support management, operations, and teaching and learning Utilize Louisiana’s Teaching, Learning and Technology Centers to access professional learning opportunities and links to other technology resources http://www.tlcc.ppsb.org/index.pl/regional_tlccs Write grant proposals to various companies (e.g., Microsoft, Apple, Texas Instruments, etc.) to increase technology capacity



Key to improving adolescent literacy at the local level is adequate teacher preparation, professional growth, and support. For substantial change to occur, effective professional development is essential. Effective professional development is described as learning opportunities that result in improvement in teachers' and school leaders' knowledge and practices, and, most importantly, in improved student learning outcomes.

Research highlights the importance of both formal professional development and other opportunities for professional learning – such as common planning time, shared opportunities to examine student work, and tools for self-reflection – that may occur outside the bounds of formal professional development (Wei, et al., 2009). Easton (2008) asserts that the most powerful learning opportunities are active learning opportunities embedded in teachers' work, which begin with teachers' assessments of what their students need and, subsequently, what teachers identify as areas for their own learning. Professional learning, therefore, is a broad term that includes formal professional development and job-embedded activities.

Resources and coordinated support are also imperative to sustain literacy improvement efforts. Such support might take conventional forms, in terms of funds or personnel, or a more innovative form, such as a policy climate for change to encourage school, family, and community partnerships that work together to connect, coordinate, and leverage resources to improve literacy learning and teaching.

Professional Development

Professional development that improves teaching (for both pre-service and in-service teachers) is based on understanding the principles and practices of effective professional learning, such as those recommended by Learning Forward (<http://www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm>).



The design of effective professional development in literacy instruction also takes into account a general framework for the context (the learning environment), the content (the what), and the process (the how) as key considerations.

CONTEXT

Commitment of All Stakeholders to Improve Teaching and Learning

Teacher involvement in the planning and design of professional development greatly increases the level of buy-in and commitment to the plan. Teachers and key stakeholders (including university staff) work together to determine needs, decide on a course of action, and implement and support a plan that leads to improved teaching and learning (Guskey and Huberman, 1995).

Adult learners have preferences that make them different from other learners. This is especially true for teachers seeking professional development. Every session should include time to allow participants to make real-world connections to their everyday work. High-quality professional learning environments make learning relevant for teachers and school leaders through a variety of media– Web-based, face-to-face, online, and text-supported – as well as through a variety of methods – book studies, action research, data analysis, collaborative planning, reflective questioning, model lessons, peer dialogues, journaling, and conferencing (Fogarty and Pete, 2010).

Professional Learning Communities

Regularly scheduled team meetings are necessary for staff to share knowledge, plan literacy-rich lessons in their content area, reflect on their work, analyze data, and explore new literacy practices. When staff sense that professional learning is a major priority, they are more likely to get on board early and to expend genuine effort. Research shows that staff who engage in collaborative professional learning feel confident and well prepared to meet the demands of teaching (Holloway, 2003). Moreover, teachers who collaborate with peers become interested in and learn from each other's practices. Technologies, such as blogs, Wikis, video conferencing, Skype, iPods, Google Docs, etc., also allow school staff to share and collaborate in real time.

CONTENT

School Improvement Priorities and Goals (With Student Learning as the Focus)

In effective schools, principals, teachers, and support staff use a data-driven approach to improve students' literacy skills. Data on student learning are gathered and analyzed from a variety of formal and informal sources (e.g., state assessments, progress monitoring measures, student work samples) to guide the selection and prioritization of school improvement goals and the professional learning that is necessary to achieve these goals. As a result, data-driven professional learning is an integral part of the total school improvement effort – and the ultimate measure of success is student achievement.

Content Knowledge

Professional learning opportunities that give teachers the knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality differentiated literacy

instruction in their content areas are more likely to be fully incorporated into teachers' pedagogical repertoires. This design takes into account the knowledge and experience the teachers bring to professional learning and helps them more fully implement their curricular standards (Dutro, et al., 2002).

One of the keys to improving adolescent literacy is adequate teacher preparation and support. Determining what teachers need to know, ensuring they have opportunities to learn, and supporting them in implementing that knowledge in classrooms is basic to achieving the goal of literacy for all. In *A Time to Act* (2010), five basic areas of a core knowledge are identified. Teachers of adolescents should possess a working knowledge of:

1. How the demands of literacy change with age and grade
2. How students vary in literacy strengths and needs
3. How texts in a given content raise specific literacy challenges
4. How to recognize and address literacy difficulties
5. How to adapt and develop teaching skills over time

Knowledge of effective adolescent literacy instruction cannot be gained through a single course or series of in-service workshops; rather, a systemic approach to building teacher knowledge and expertise is necessary. Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) have summarized new research on methods of teacher preparation that offers support for a developmental view of teacher learning in which clinical practice, supervised internships, mentoring relationships, and other forms of ongoing scaffolded support for pre-service and novice teachers all play essential roles in building expertise. Louisiana has made promising improvements in pre-service programs by reviewing and ensuring the alignment of all traditional and alternate teacher education programs with the *Reading and Language Competencies for New Teachers* (Bulletin 113) <http://www.louisianaschools.net/bese/policies.html>, which is based on reading research and approved by the State Board. Further, Louisiana has taken steps to measure the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs by tracking graduates by incorporating value-added assessment results into the state's teacher preparation accountability system.

PROCESS

Intensive and On-Going Support

Changes in teacher practice and, subsequently, gains in student learning, require rigorous professional learning that is applied daily to teachers' planning and instruction. Instructional coaches, lead teachers, library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, and district appraisal staff, for example, form support teams that are available and accessible to mentor and support pre-service, new, and experienced teachers in improving student outcomes. The instructional coach is a professional who has skilled knowledge of and extensive classroom experience with literacy instruction, as well as excellent interpersonal communication skills and knowledge of working effectively with adults. In upper grades, the instructional

coach's primary responsibility is to enhance the literacy-related knowledge and skills of teachers in *all* content areas.

Professional learning is ongoing when teachers regularly collaborate with one another, reflect on practice, learn from data, and study the effects of their instruction on student learning during regularly-scheduled team meetings. A long-term implementation plan that occurs consistently and continually over time sends the message that teaching is a dynamic profession that requires keeping abreast of new knowledge and refining pedagogical skills.

Evaluation

In order to improve professional learning and determine its effectiveness in achieving the desired literacy outcomes, an evaluation process is implemented. Guskey (2000) suggests several levels of evaluation to assess the strengths and weaknesses of professional learning, including:

- » Participants' learning;
- » Participants' use of new knowledge and skills; and
- » Student learning outcomes.

Guskey suggests that when professional learning is successful, it is because teachers are supported and held accountable to use the new practices. Moreover, when teachers begin to see that the new practice works, more often than not, they eventually "practice themselves into change."

Coordinated Support

A coordinated system of support is essential to ensure higher academic achievement, narrow the achievement gap, and prepare students to be college- and career-ready. School leaders ensure that required resources are planned for and utilized to provide all students with the instruction they need. School leaders who are dedicated to the goal of improving literacy advocate for resources from the district, the state, and the local business community and ensure that regularly recurring district, state, and federal funds are optimized to support adolescent literacy efforts. According to Irvin, et al., (2007), important literacy support resources include:

- » Time for professional learning, collaborative data analysis, and planning;
- » Time scheduled and protected for literacy instruction in all content areas;
- » Time for supplemental instruction and intervention;
- » Professional development for pre-service and in-service teachers in content-related literacy instruction and, where appropriate, on first and second language acquisition processes and effective strategies to teach English language learners;
- » Instructional materials and technologies to support differentiated instruction;

- » School leaders working in partnership with support personnel, such as instructional coaches, library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, and paraprofessionals to assist teachers and students;
- » A literacy leadership team centrally engaged in designing, supporting, and overseeing implementation of the school's literacy plan;
- » ESL, bilingual, and foreign language teachers and paraprofessionals; and
- » Coordination of funds across programs.

Effective, coordinated support also initiates or augments collaborations with students' homes and the local community (e.g., business and faith communities, neighborhood enrichment, recreation, and social service resources) to provide more broad-based interactions and greater support for students. Together, schools, families, and communities facilitate learning by alleviating barriers, both external and internal, that interfere with learning and teaching. See <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15044.pdf> (pages 17-18) for specific examples. These collaborations further secure student motivation by providing students with a sense of being cared for in and out of school.

Additionally, resource coordination and allocation is an important factor in the success of the school-wide literacy improvement process. Creative approaches are necessary to overcome issues related to limited time, space, personnel, materials, and technology. Strategic allocation of resources is a tool for achieving teacher, student, parent, and community support for literacy.

A coordinated system of support enables the reframing of existing support programs and efforts into a unified literacy improvement effort at the local level that melds school, community, and home resources. Collaborations such as these provide opportunities for the school and community as a whole to maximize student engagement in productive learning. Further, coordinated support results in enhanced school climate, sense of community, and increased student motivation by providing students with a school environment characterized by respect for differences and high expectations.

When families feel welcome in schools and participate actively in school and school activities, students' attendance, interest, motivation, general achievement, and literacy achievement improve (Padak & Rasinski, 2003). Therefore, instructional leaders plan for family involvement in their schools. Three components are necessary:

- » Parent involvement on the school's Literacy Leadership Team;
- » Assistance for families as they support their children with schoolwork; and
- » Welcoming families into the school community.

At least one parent maintains membership on the school's Literacy Leadership Team. This member serves as a liaison between the faculty and families, and the parent member ensures that family needs are considered and addressed in each school's School Improvement Plan. Successful schools help their families become active participants by ensuring that the families feel welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to the school staff, and to what their children are doing in school. A feeling of being welcomed can set the stage for authentic and effective school-home partnerships. Regular, timely, personalized communication is the key to ensuring parents feel engaged, heard, and more likely to take an active role in their child's education. Padak and Rasinski (2010) offer the suggestions, such as the following:

- » Send home monthly calendars and post them online;
- » Provide translators, if possible, for parents whose native language is not English;
- » Set up an area for parents with brochures and other parent resources;
- » Create a "Parent Portal" on the school's Web site;
- » Use different forms of communication (i.e., print, e-mail, blogs, Facebook) to inform parents about upcoming events and policy changes; and
- » Hold open houses and visitation days for families.

Additionally, Epstein's (2002) framework describes six types of involvement from which schools can choose to help meet the needs of students and families:

- » Parenting;
- » Communicating;
- » Volunteering;
- » Learning at Home;
- » Decision Making; and
- » Collaborating with the Community.

Specific sample practices and implementation information of the framework can be found at http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nmps_model/school/sixtypes.htm.



Professional Learning and Resources:

Developing learning opportunities, resources, and coordinated support services that enhance literacy learning for children and educators

Efforts to improve student literacy achievement can succeed only by building the capacity of teachers and school leaders to improve their practice and the capacity of school systems to advance professional learning (Wei, et al., 2009). An effective adolescent literacy plan at the local level provides sustained and intensive professional development that is connected to practice; focuses on teaching and learning of specific content; aligns with other school improvement priorities; and builds strong working relationships among staff to solve complex issues. This requires substantial resources and a comprehensive, coordinated support system.

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schedule and protect time during the school day for teachers to collaboratively analyze data, share expertise, study the Standards, plan lessons, examine student work, and reflect on practice Use student and teacher data (surveys and interest inventories, teacher observations, and staff professional preparation) to target professional development needs Encourage every teacher to develop a professional growth plan based on a self-assessment of professional learning needs (e.g., http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15846.pdf) Hire an instructional coach to provide job-embedded support for staff Provide program-specific training in the core reading and intervention programs at the beginning of the year to prepare teachers and staff for implementation Provide training in administering and interpreting results of reading and writing assessments Include paraprofessionals, support staff, interventionists, substitute teachers and pre-service teachers working at the school in professional development sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide targeted professional development based on student and teacher needs, and aligned with the Standards Meet in collaborative teams (and include pre-service teachers at the school) to ensure teachers are using literacy strategies effectively Schedule time for the instructional coach to meet with teachers individually and/or in teacher teams to co-plan, model, practice, and provide feedback Provide opportunities for teachers to practice techniques in non-threatening situations Use checklists when conducting classroom observations/walkthroughs to ensure clear expectations and specific feedback to teachers on student learning Use various media to deliver professional learning – for example, face-to-face, web-based, and online sessions Build a professional library that includes research-based books, journals, magazines, videos, etc. that teachers can readily access for professional growth Develop a strong relationship with feeder schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit and revise professional development yearly based on student mastery of Standards and teacher observations Partner experienced teachers with pre-service and beginning teachers Use a model of blended professional learning – combining online learning and face-to-face support – to provide content and resources to teachers and staff Use formal and informal observations to monitor and improve literacy instruction (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15539.pdf) Use classroom observations to identify and support individual teachers with follow-up coaching, conferencing, and mentoring Continue program-specific professional development each year for new and experienced teachers Encourage teacher participation in successful professional development programs, such as the National Writing Project (http://www.nwp.org/) Encourage all teachers to share information learned at professional learning sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) to evaluate effectiveness of current professional development on student mastery of Standards in all subgroups Revisit professional development options to utilize on-the-ground experts to develop and support colleagues Videotape important professional development sessions for staff to review and share with colleagues within and out of the school Expand and strengthen school-university partnerships to build networks of support for literacy programs Continue to encourage “professional talk” among staff and provide time for discussions

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Coordinated Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a room within the school as a family resource center and enlist parents to volunteer there, providing training as identified and as needed Build classroom or school lending libraries for families to borrow books and electronic media (in languages that are spoken in students' homes), with suggestions that go along with the materials, and incentives for returning them Plan awareness sessions and dissemination of resource materials for parents on the Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Provide a parent portal on school's Web site that allows parents to view children's grades, progress reports, attendance, etc. Define what the entire school must do to enable all teachers to teach and all students to learn effectively (http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15044.pdf) Focus on what an integrated learning supports infrastructure should look like at the school level, weaving piecemeal and fragmented efforts into a comprehensive framework Ensure that all appropriate stakeholders are at the table, including parents, during critical planning and decision-making activities Map available fiscal and human resources related to support services, highlighting where gaps occur Evaluate all available funding sources to determine what can be leveraged to support literacy efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize learning supports in the community to provide extended learning opportunities Create a well-designed infrastructure to provide guidance and support for students and families Conduct repeated awareness sessions and disseminate resource materials on the Standards to parents at times that are convenient for them Establish a work group (school counselors, psychologists, nurses, social workers, attendance and drop out counselors, health educators, special education staff, after-school program staff, bilingual and Title I coordinators, safe and drug-free school staff, union representatives, classroom teachers, non-certified staff, parents, older students, community representatives) that focuses specifically on how learning supports are used, including all major resources Use instructional coaches and other support personnel, such as speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, and library media specialists, to mentor and support teachers Provide parents with practical guidance to encourage regular reading at home Incorporate technologies to more creatively and effectively support stakeholder engagement (i.e., blogs, Twitter, electronic newsletters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the effectiveness of extended learning opportunities and utilize results to repurpose/refine learning supports Fill program/service gaps and pursue economies of scale through collaborative outreach linkages among families of schools (e.g., a feeder pattern, schools in close proximity) Provide for professional development and resources that support differentiated learning opportunities for all students Implement plans for ensuring that the school projects a 'family-friendly' environment During parent/teacher conferences, identify for parents what their student knows and what skills or knowledge he/she still needs to reach Standards proficiency Schedule family events at the school that welcome parent and student participation together (e.g., Literacy Nights) Open school buildings for adult learners from the community in the evenings, encouraging a community of learners Provide English language services that extend beyond the classroom Provide family-focused services and outreach that engage parents and family members in literacy programs and services Incorporate culturally- and linguistically-appropriate communications with parents and stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep the focus (fiscal and instructional) on literacy development, even when faced with competing initiatives Provide activities and strategies to parents that are specific to their children's needs, based on data, in order to help them reach Standards proficiency Monitor family involvement, and adjust plans, as needed Advocate for new capacity in the community to help students and families Continue to focus proactively on broad issues that may prevent students from learning Pursue additional funding sources for specialized literacy staff and materials Ask local businesses to help heighten awareness about reading and literacy topics (e.g., a supermarket chain may agree to print a literacy message on its shopping bags; utility suppliers might feature tips in their monthly statements) Ask local bookstores to donate books to the school Foster relationships among schools, postsecondary education institutions, the workforce, families, and communities

ELEMENT	ACTION			
	BEGINNING TO PLAN	BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT	EXPANDING EMPHASIS	SUSTAINING THE PLAN
Coordinated Support <i>[continued]</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a survey of needs from parents, students, teachers, and counselors that can be used to match available resources to actual need Plan for extended learning opportunities for students (e.g., tutoring, afterschool and summer learning programs) 			

Resources for English Language Learners and Students with Exceptionalities

English Language Learners

- › Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide. <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20074011.pdf>

This practice guide provides five evidence-based recommendations, integrated into a coherent and comprehensive approach for improving the reading achievement and English language development of English learners in the elementary grades. A major theme is the importance of intensive, interactive English language development instruction for all English learners focused on developing academic language (i.e., the decontextualized language of the schools, the language of academic discourse, of texts, and of formal argument).

- › Short, D. J., & Fitzsimmons, S. (2007). Double the work: Challenges and solutions to acquiring language and academic literacy for adolescent English language learners: A report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, D.C.: Alliance for Excellent Education. <http://www.all4ed.org/files/DoubleWork.pdf>

This resource outlines the challenges that adolescent English language learners (ELLs) face in trying to meet grade-level academic expectations while they are still acquiring the English language – and it recommends strategies to surmount them. The report is critical for all individuals who work with secondary ELLs, whether as classroom teachers, support teachers, or administrators.

Students with Exceptionalities

- › Banotai, Alyssa. Bright Students with Dyslexia: Can learn to access class content through self-accommodation (2009). <http://speech-language-pathology-audiology.advanceweb.com/ebook/magazine.aspx?EBK=SP061509#/6/>

This article describes an effective aural reading approach for students with dyslexia who are inadequate visual decoders or readers. The approach uses audio texts to help students gain access to content and to expose them to the rich language of print.

- › Bulletin 118: Statewide Assessment Standards and Practices. <http://www.louisianaschools.net/ide/bese/1041.html>

This publication, beginning on page 95, provides the regulatory policy for assessment of students with special needs, adopted by the Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- › The International Dyslexia Association (2008). Dyslexia basics. http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Basics_Fact_Sheet_5-08-08.pdf

This fact sheet provides basic information about dyslexia, including its definition, diagnosis, causes and effects, signs, and treatment.

- › The International Dyslexia Association (2009). Multisensory structured language teaching. http://www.interdys.org/ewebeditpro5/upload/Multisensory_Structured_Language_Teaching_Fact_Sheet_11-03-08.pdf

This fact sheet explains the rationale, evidence of effectiveness, and key principles of multisensory, structured language teaching.

- › Kingore, Bertie. (2002). Reading Instruction for the Primary Gifted Learner. <http://www.bertiekingore.com/readinginstruction.htm>

This resource expands teacher knowledge about the characteristics and needs of advanced and gifted readers. In addition, it explains how to differentiate reading instruction for these children and provides the classroom teacher with helpful strategies and ideas.

- › Louisiana Department of Education. Access Guide: A Resource for Louisiana Educators and Families. <http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov/accessguide/>

This resource facilitates student access to the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum. It includes differentiated instructional support strategies, accommodations, technology tools, and online links. It also provides suggestions to maximize academic success for all students, including students with disabilities and advanced learners.

- › Louisiana Department of Education. Access Guide: Students with Significant Disabilities, Literacy View. <http://sda.doe.louisiana.gov/Site%20Pages/LiteracyView.aspx>

This site provides educators and family members of students with significant disabilities with links to presentations and webinars, as well as useful tools, tips, and ideas for providing literacy access to students with significant disabilities.

- › Stanberry, Kristin, & Raskind, Marshall H. (2009). Assistive Technology Tools: Reading. <http://www.adlit.org/article/33077>

This article presents a wide range of assistive technology (AT) tools that help students who struggle with reading. The tools help facilitate decoding, reading fluency, and comprehension by presenting text as speech. Categories include audio books and publications, optical character recognition, paper-based computer pen, speech synthesizers and screen readers, and variable-speed tape recorders.

- › Stanberry, Kristin, & Raskind, Marshall H. (2009). Assistive Technology Tools: Writing. <http://www.adlit.org/article/33078>

This resource provides information on a wide range of assistive technology tools available to help students who struggle with writing. Categories include abbreviation expanders, alternative keyboards, graphic organizers and outlining programs, a paper-based computer pen, portable word processors, proofreading and speech recognition software programs, speech synthesizers and screen readers, talking spell-checkers and electronic dictionaries, and word prediction software programs.

State Actions for Improving Adolescent Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a State Literacy Team made up of literacy experts and key stakeholders to support the implementation of Louisiana’s Adolescent Literacy Plan • Communicate state literacy goals to stakeholders in clear, compelling terms • Provide Webinars and face-to-face sessions for leaders to learn about the new Standards and how to support teachers’ transition to the new Standards • Involve educators at every level, including faculty representing teacher preparation programs, in the discussions on literacy development and instruction • Build public awareness and advocacy for literacy by communicating gains in student achievement through implementation of research-based reading programs • Develop and disseminate both print and electronic messages documenting the importance of the adolescent literacy plan • Set expectations, guidelines, and oversight to ensure strong implementation of the adolescent literacy plan at the local level • Disseminate the adolescent literacy plan at professional meetings; post the literacy plan on the Louisiana Department of Education’s Web site • Promote integration of literacy improvement targets, aligned to state targets, with other school improvement efforts at the district and school level • Create funding streams to support literacy efforts • Develop a technical assistance plan to support districts and schools with literacy improvement efforts • Establish guidelines for literacy coaches, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, library media specialists, and district appraisal staff to support local literacy efforts • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities, a priority • Increase awareness and capacity of leadership within systems to understand and address the needs of English language learners • Engage school and district leadership to prioritize the needs of English language learners, emphasize accountability for serving these students, and promote transparency regarding student outcomes • Work with administrators of teacher preparation programs to ensure teacher candidates have the knowledge and skills to deliver strong, research-based literacy instruction • Evaluate the impact of literacy efforts and refine them based on multiple indicators of literacy performance
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for districts and schools to implement the <i>Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects</i>: Conduct awareness Webinars and face-to-face sessions; revise the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum (LCC), incorporating transition activities to support the content currently being assessed in each grade, and develop and deliver professional development modules for the revised LCC to include evidence-based strategies and resources • Assist districts and schools in using appropriate resources (e.g., strategies, accommodations, and technologies) to help all English language learners meet English language proficiency standards • Convene teams of teachers, administrators, curriculum directors, library media specialists, etc., to discuss the Standards and implications for reading and writing instruction in the content areas • Align the Comprehensive Curriculum with the Standards • Develop and disseminate curriculum resources and identify best practices for literacy instruction and reading achievement • Assist teacher preparation programs in revising coursework to reflect the Standards, literacy content expectations, and adolescent literacy

<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a statewide longitudinal data system to ensure assessment data collected from districts are captured in a central location • Strategically use data systems to track student performance, identify areas of need, design policies, and evaluate the impact of the literacy initiative on student performance and progress toward mastery of Standards • Provide information and technical support on the use of valid and reliable formative and summative assessments • Establish internal and external partnerships to facilitate the collection and use of data to inform instruction • Communicate student literacy achievement from state-wide assessment to all stakeholders
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Develop and disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on intervention (RTI) to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Examine how strategies that work with other students can be applied and adapted for English language learners and vice versa • Provide support to districts to implement differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning principles for all students, including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and advanced learners • Provide mechanisms for districts and schools to identify and intervene with students who are not demonstrating grade-level literacy skills • Develop a system of tracking the response to intervention shown by students receiving supportive or intervention services • Provide technical support on the use of current funding and securing additional funding and other resources for intervention services that support literacy
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and disseminate materials, resources, and tools that prepare pre-service and in-service teachers to deliver high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Provide professional development for district and school leaders, instructional/literacy coaches, and teachers in the implementation of the components of the adolescent literacy plan, including the Standards • Support local literacy programs and additional literacy supports to address the specific learning needs of struggling readers and writers, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Support professional development for in-service teachers that focuses on success for English language learners, particularly to strengthen teacher ability to provide language acquisition instruction across subject areas • Provide technical support to literacy providers on implementing the adolescent literacy plan to improve achievement and mastery of Standards • Target intensive support for schools with the greatest need (as defined by poverty or low student literacy achievement) • Design a literacy Web page with resources to support districts and schools with their literacy efforts • Identify demonstration sites with strong literacy programs (and higher education partnerships) to serve as models that schools could visit • Develop, deliver, and monitor professional learning opportunities for teachers and district and school leaders • Provide professional development for library media specialists, speech-language pathologists, district appraisal staff, paraprofessionals, and higher education staff to support literacy efforts • Continually update and add resources to enhance the adolescent literacy plan • Provide reports that include disaggregated data by subgroups on reading and writing achievement • Promote connections between schools and public libraries to enhance literacy efforts • Collaborate with higher education faculty regarding pre-service and in-service support for teachers on effective, research-based literacy • Make English language learners a priority in postsecondary education, especially in developmental courses in which subject-area language acquisition is critical for these students • Review pre-service coursework, as well as Louisiana Licensure and certification requirements, to inform recommendations for improvement

<p>Professional Learning and Resources <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide professional development and technical support for district and school leaders, caregivers, and other stakeholders, including media specialists, speech-language pathologists, librarians and museum staff, etc., in the implementation of the adolescent literacy plan, including the Standards• Provide professional development for district appraisal staff, paraprofessionals, and higher education staff to support literacy efforts
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District Actions for Improving Adolescent Literacy

<p>Leadership and Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a district literacy leadership team composed of multiple stakeholders, including principals and higher education leaders, and create a plan to support literacy • Create a plan to enhance content area literacy instruction, using literacy leaders at all levels and across all content areas • Articulate clearly the district’s goals for literacy improvement through multiple channels of communication • Communicate expectations for principals as literacy leaders, keeping the focus on instructional improvement and student learning outcomes • Find ways to create hybrid leadership roles in which teachers can be in the classroom part of the time, but also engaged in instructional coaching or shared leadership the rest of the day or week • Provide leadership training, as needed, to build capacity of site and district administrators and teacher leaders to manage and monitor best practices in literacy instruction • Assist principals in the implementation and evaluation of the literacy plan • Offer support programs for principals, such as study groups, professional learning communities, and mentoring partnerships that focus on improving instruction in literacy • Integrate planning for implementation and sustainability of literacy efforts into other planning done at the district and school levels (e.g., school improvement planning, budget plans, staffing plans, etc.) • Continuously review current funding sources and explore new funding sources to support adolescent literacy goals • Ensure careful implementation of sound literacy practices • Ensure that schools have the flexibility and support to design organizational structures and schedules to differentiate literacy instruction and provide intervention based on students’ needs • Assist schools in developing schedules that include time for teacher teams to study state standards, plan instruction, analyze student data and work products, and determine instructional modifications and interventions • Document and report literacy progress to the superintendent or district level contact person at least monthly • Monitor implementation of literacy programs and intervene in schools where students are not being well served • Examine literacy improvement strategies being implemented across the district to determine their value and whether to expand or modify based on data • Provide updates and information on literacy improvement efforts and progress to the school board, as well as parents and the community, at least monthly • Provide opportunities for school-based staff to share stories of success and lessons learned from literacy efforts • Engage higher education literacy leaders and professional literacy associations in the district’s literacy plan • Attend teacher team meetings, when possible, to model support for literacy improvement efforts • Encourage collaboration and provide opportunities among library media specialists and other literacy leaders to network • Make advancing the literacy of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities, a priority • Define the roles and responsibilities of instructional/literacy coaches, interventionists, speech-language pathologists, library media specialists, and appraisal staff to support school-based literacy efforts • Revise the evaluation system so that it addresses specific teaching effectiveness metrics, includes consequences to address ineffective performance, and rewards exemplary teachers
<p>Standards-Based Curriculum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for schools to implement the <i>Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects</i> • Ensure English language learners and those with exceptionalities receive services from qualified staff and have access to print-rich resources to meet proficiency standards

<p>Standards-Based Curriculum <i>[continued]</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the literacy skills and proficiency levels needed to ensure students are college- and career-ready • Align core curriculum to standards and assessments to support instruction grounded in research on effective practice • Ensure that schools have the range of instructional materials, multimedia materials, diverse texts, classroom libraries (in all content areas) and resources needed to improve students' literacy skills • Support teachers and literacy leaders in refining their skills to meet the needs of readers and writers across all content areas • Ensure that all students have access to highly qualified teachers, resources, and organizational supports to advance reading and writing in all content areas
<p>Assessment System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support schools in the selection and administration of formative and summative assessments • Develop an assessment/data management system that maximizes utility of formative and summative data and minimizes the loss of instructional time • Ensure entire assessment system (measures and data analyses) focuses on student mastery of Standards • Develop a district-wide plan for collecting, interpreting, and using data to monitor and evaluate progress and make program improvements • Conduct data reviews at administrator/principal meetings to guide improvement efforts • Ensure assessment data are presented in user-friendly formats and available in a timely fashion to make program adjustments where needed • Expect administrators to frequently communicate data to district leaders and other stakeholders – provide a format and structure for accomplishing this • Develop the skills of literacy leaders and teachers to interpret and use data to inform instruction • Provide structures/protocols for teacher teams to analyze and use data to improve the success of students • Use summative assessment data to evaluate the overall effectiveness of literacy efforts
<p>Instruction and Intervention (RTI)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on high-quality literacy instruction aligned with the Standards • Disseminate information and provide professional development and technical support on intervention (RTI) to meet the needs of all students, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities • Examine how strategies that work with other students can be applied and adapted for English language learners and vice versa • Ensure a system of support for adolescents, including differentiation of instruction and interventions for all students, including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and emerging and advanced literacy learners • Provide support to schools to implement differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning principles for all students, including English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and advanced learners • Model a systemic process of intervention and monitoring student progress • Reallocate resources to support high-quality literacy instruction and intervention aligned with the Standards • Monitor instruction regularly and compile data from classroom observations to inform district- and school-level professional development • Support the use of technology as a tool and a topic to improve literacy outcomes • Assist schools in redesigning instruction to promote greater student engagement and motivation • Ensure schools increase the amount and quality of writing instruction
<p>Professional Learning and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that professional development is based on student data, supported by rigorous research, and aligned to the Standards • Provide professional development that is ongoing, job-embedded, and differentiated to meet the needs of individual schools and teachers • Require schools to schedule time for formal, structured collaboration and reflection on literacy practices (e.g., teacher teams) • Incorporate principles of adult learning, including structured collaboration and reflection, into professional development activities • Offer professional development sessions in a variety of formats (e.g., online, workshops, summer academies) and customize the sessions for each content area

**Professional
Learning
and
Resources**
[continued]

- Develop administrators' skills to evaluate teachers' use of effective literacy strategies
- Develop partnerships with community-based organizations, including public libraries, to promote and support local literacy efforts
- Support professional development for in-service teachers that focuses on success for English language learners, particularly to strengthen teacher ability to provide language acquisition instruction across subject areas
- Partner with higher education faculty to provide supports to build the knowledge and skills of teachers to provide research-based literacy instruction
- Support collaboration between instructional/literacy coaches and LDOE field instructional coordinators
- Extend professional learning opportunities to all literacy leaders to build capacity across the district and schools
- Monitor the outcomes of professional development investments
- Collect data to evaluate the impact of professional development on changes in teacher knowledge and instructional practice and student learning outcomes
- Use data to inform future decisions about professional development
- Establish a system for evaluating the quality of professional development literacy providers and work only with those providers that help the schools produce positive results
- Expand learning time for all students, including English language learners, through after-school, weekend, and summer programs to provide continuous and varied opportunities
- Promote thoughtful use of technology, home visits, and parent-teacher conferences that include translation services and other engagement strategies
- Support family literacy programs
- Make sure effective teachers are placed in the classrooms and schools with the greatest needs
- Provide incentives to effective principals and teachers to teach in schools with large numbers of struggling readers
- Coordinate funds across programs to support the literacy efforts at a sufficient level to assure their success

School Literacy Capacity Survey

When planning to improve literacy instruction and outcomes for adolescents, principals and staff can complete this simple survey to help determine the school’s current literacy capacity. Analysis of the results can help determine the school’s current strengths and provide a starting point for the improvement process that will lead to improved literacy practices and increased student achievement. It is important to rate each statement based on the degree to which the practices are currently being implemented within your school.

The components of this Web-based survey mirror those of Louisiana’s Adolescent Literacy Plan and provide a systemic and holistic approach to establishing an effective literacy framework. **Survey responses are completely anonymous – respondents are not asked to identify themselves.** The survey can be administered annually to explore faculty perceptions and to monitor changes.

Directions:

Step 1: Have all school administrators and staff complete the survey at <https://leads13.doe.louisiana.gov/srv/?P1=N&P2=N&P3=10&P4=AuSleCPrvLPz> within a two-week period.

Step 2: Upon completion of the survey by all school staff, the principal or designee should contact one of the LDOE staff members listed on the online survey, by e-mail, to request a customized report.

In order to receive a customized school report, **the survey must be completed online.**

Step 3: Consult the Louisiana Adolescent Literacy Plan for detailed action steps for improving adolescent literacy, beginning with the component(s) the survey results identify as starting points.

Step 4: For additional information or assistance regarding *Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan*, please contact the LDOE Literacy Office at 225.342.3647.

Current Practice Rating: 1 = An infrequent or rare occurrence at this school 5 = Frequent or common occurrence at this school 	Item Averages
Leadership and Sustainability	
1. A Literacy Leadership Team/School Improvement Team is actively involved in literacy improvement efforts.	
2. Literacy is a primary focus in our school improvement strategies and activities.	
3. Our school and district maintain active partnerships with parents and community members to realize the shared literacy vision.	
4. Adequate fiscal resources are provided to support literacy improvement efforts.	
5. Leaders ensure extended time for literacy instruction is provided during the school day (intervention classes, use of literacy strategies in content area classes).	
6. Time is protected during the school day for teachers to collaborate in teams (e.g., grade-level, vertical, departmental).	
7. Teacher teams use a specific protocol for examining student work.	
Leadership and Sustainability Average	
Standards-Based Curriculum	
1. The school uses State Standards and the Comprehensive Curriculum as the foundation for academic literacy instruction.	
2. Reading and writing strategies are integrated in all classes.	
3. Students are provided with exemplary writing samples, as well as given exposure to real-world writing tasks.	
4. Students write to demonstrate their learning.	
5. Classroom libraries with a wide range of topics at various reading levels are maintained, incorporated into purposeful lessons, and made available to students for free reading.	
6. Students are provided with access to the curriculum in appropriate and challenging formats (e.g., diverse texts, technology Integration).	
7. Teachers differentiate reading and writing assignments by offering students choice.	
Standards-Based Curriculum Average	

Assessment System	
1. Valid and reliable reading and writing measures are used to screen and place students and to monitor their progress toward benchmarks.	
2. Diagnostic measures are used to provide more in-depth information for individual students, when necessary.	
3. Curriculum-based assessments in a variety of formats (multiple choice, short answer, constructed response, essay) are used to measure student progress toward performance standards.	
4. Those who administer assessments are adequately trained in administration and data recording, and follow a procedure to share data with stakeholders.	
5. Data from assessments are effectively managed and disseminated to parents and other stakeholders in a timely and easily-interpreted manner.	
6. Timely feedback is provided to students regarding their reading progress.	
7. Summative assessment results are used to evaluate effectiveness of instruction and programs.	
Assessment System Average	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI)	
1. Teachers model and explain literacy strategies and when and why to use them.	
2. Teachers provide students with opportunities to apply literacy strategies/skills and offer support and corrective feedback, when needed.	
3. Teachers use word study, repeated readings, and partner reading to improve reading fluency (accuracy, rate, prosody).	
4. Teachers provide direct instruction in word meaning and independent vocabulary strategies.	
5. Teachers effectively use a variety of before, during, and after reading strategies to support learning and literacy.	
6. Teachers promote student motivation and engagement by offering choice in assignments, opportunities to work with peers, real-world applications, and clear goal setting.	
7. Students are encouraged to discuss text content and subject matter in small groups.	
8. Teachers use Universal Design for Learning principles and materials to differentiate content, process, and product.	
9. Teachers monitor individual student growth and use the data to drive instruction.	
10. The school has an intervention system for struggling readers that allows the flow of students in and out of various levels of support, as needed.	
11. The school uses a common framework and rubric to teach and assess writing to ensure a consistent approach across all content areas and grade levels.	
12. Teachers use technology as a tool (e.g., software, digital devices) to support student learning and as a topic in which students learn to use technology tools to access, organize, and communicate information.	
Instruction and Intervention (RTI) Average	
Professional Learning and Resources	
1. School-wide professional development is based on student literacy needs.	
2. Individual, targeted professional development is provided based on teachers' Professional Growth Plans and observational checklist data.	
3. Teachers are involved in the planning and design of professional development.	
4. Paraprofessionals and pre-service teachers (if interning in the school) are included in professional learning opportunities (i.e., collaborative teams, program-specific professional development).	
5. Professional learning is ongoing and provided through a variety of media (face-to-face, Web-based, text-supported), as well as a variety of methods (i.e., teacher teams, mentoring, coaching).	
6. The school utilizes a higher education partnership that supports literacy development of students (e.g., serves on Literacy Leadership Team, helps to plan and provide local professional development, participates in state provided and other professional development with school staff).	
7. The school utilizes a coordinated system of support that links school resources with those in homes and in the local community to provide greater support for students.	
Professional Learning and Resources Average	

Sample Professional Growth Plan (PGP) Template

Name: _____ Position: _____

This sample Professional Growth Plan (PGP) is designed to guide your thinking toward professional growth goals and objectives. It will also guide your planning and consultations. Ideally, your PGP should address **literacy improvement** and the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching <http://www.doe.state.la.us/Lde/uploads/5564.pdf>). An electronic version of this PGP can be accessed at <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/15846.pdf>.

Part 1: Possible Goals

When thinking about possible goals for your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *How do my knowledge, skills, dispositions, and performances measure up against the Louisiana Components of Effective Teaching?*
- » *Where do I need to grow professionally in order to optimize my teaching effectiveness?*
- » *What areas for professional growth will have the greatest potential to improve the quality of teaching and learning in my department, school, or district?*

My Possible Goals (3-5)

Part 2: District/School/Department Linkages

When aligning your professional goals with the known needs of your department, school, or district, consider the following:

- » *Which of my professional goals are most directly related to implementing the elements of Louisiana's Adolescent Literacy Plan and increasing student achievement?*
- » *For which of these goals can I identify reasonable outcomes, measures, or products that will serve as evidence of my professional growth?*
- » *How will these goals be supplementary or complementary to the professional growth plans of colleagues in my school and/or district?*

My goals relate to district/school/departmental improvement needs in the following ways:

Part 3: Specific Goal(s) and Intended Outcomes

The specific goal(s) for my PGP and intended outcomes are:

Part 4: My Plan

When developing your PGP, consider the following questions:

- » *What am I going to do to achieve my goals?*
- » *What are the initial steps in my plan?*
- » *What activities will help me achieve my goals and objectives?*
- » *How will I make the time to do what I plan?*
- » *What district and school resources will I need?*
- » *What evidence will I collect to demonstrate achievement of my professional development goals and how will I organize my evidence?*

A. I will engage in the following activities:

B. I will document my progress in achieving my professional development goal(s) with the following artifacts (e.g., logs, lesson plans, audio and videotapes) and/or outcomes (e.g., evidence of student learning):

C. I may require the following resources for the full implementation of my PGP:

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