

# OHIO'S PLAN TO RAISE LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT



## Acknowledgments

OHIO'S PLAN TO RAISE LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT is not stagnant and is designed to be a working document to meet state, regional, and local needs for supporting language and literacy development. Ohio's State Literacy Team assembled in June 2017 to develop the state's vision and direction for literacy. This team came together again in June 2019 to reflect on two years of development and implementation and provide additional recommendations for accelerating the progress of this work.

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## Introduction

Literacy skills lay the foundation upon which every individual's education rests. When a learner receives the necessary tools to develop strong language and literacy skills, he or she becomes able to achieve personal autonomy and pursue aspirations. Ohio is committed to supporting an education system that prioritizes the language and literacy development of **all** learners in keeping with its overarching strategic plan for education, *Each Child, Our Future*. That plan promotes the importance of early learning and expanding access to quality early learning experiences. Further, it calls for Ohio and its schools to develop literacy skills in all age groups, grades and subjects.

*Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement* serves as a guide to evidence-based language and literacy teaching and learning for all learners from birth through grade 12. Acquiring language and literacy skills affects learners' access to, and interest in, content materials and instruction at all grade levels and all aspects of their lives. Thus, Ohio does not treat language and literacy as a separate field of study or course, but layers them over all aspects of education. It is critical that every educator and educational activity promote language and literacy development.

This plan articulates a state literacy framework aimed at promoting proficiency in reading, writing and communication for all learners. It is driven by scientific research and encourages a professional movement toward implementing data-based, differentiated and evidence-based practices in all manners of educational settings. Specifically, this plan illustrates the strong language and literacy efforts in place in Ohio and the state's vision to expand and strengthen them to support improvement.

In 2012, Ohio established a literacy development framework under the state's Striving Readers State Literacy Plan: *Reading into the Future*. This plan outlined a comprehensive systems approach to ensuring reading achievement. In 2017, Ohio convened a State Literacy Team comprised of birth through grade 12 stakeholders involved with birth through grade 12 literacy. The Ohio Department of Education asked its members, who have unique expertise in language and literacy content, assessment, instruction, intervention, district and state professional learning design and program evaluation, to develop an updated state literacy plan. The team recommended expanding the existing State Systemic Improvement Plan (Ohio's Early Literacy Plan) and capitalizing on Ohio's regional support system. The group's recommendation to align state, regional and local efforts for language and literacy development for all learners led to *Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement* published in January 2018.

The State Literacy Team reconvened in June 2019 to reflect on the initial implementation of *Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement*, analyze updated state data and offer recommendations to enhance the plan. Recommendations include the following revisions:

- Focus on the need for differentiated core instruction across a multi-tiered system of supports that aligns to the science of reading;
- Integrate Ohio's K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards;
- Promote collaboration among educators, such as content area teachers and intervention specialists; and
- Enhance the graphics and visualizations used throughout the document to help bridge the gap between research, education jargon and instructional practice.

The updates to *Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement* are based on these recommendations, as well conversations and resources shared during the State Literacy Team convening. The team will continue meeting to review and analyze state, regional and local progress and revise the plan as needed to meet the needs of Ohio's diverse learners.

This plan is **not stagnant** and is a place to begin exploring dispositions and knowledge. One of the Department's goals for the plan is to inspire educators to dig deeper, seeking opportunities to grow their knowledge, abilities and skills in the science of reading.

This plan is organized into eight sections:

1. Ohio's Theory of Action
2. Alignment of Ohio's Literacy Improvement Efforts
3. Why a State Comprehensive Literacy Plan is Needed
4. Ohio's Literacy Vision
5. Objectives, Strategies and Activities
6. Measuring Success
7. Ohio's Plan for Monitoring Progress
8. Implementing Evidence-Based Practices

The eight sections are modeled after Ohio's Local Literacy Plan template. The local literacy plan is developed by early childhood education programs and local education agencies working to raise learner performance in literacy. By organizing *Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement* this way, the Ohio Department of Education strives to encourage and help districts, community schools and early childhood education programs develop local plans that align to the state's plan and meet local needs.



## Section 1: Ohio's Theory of Action

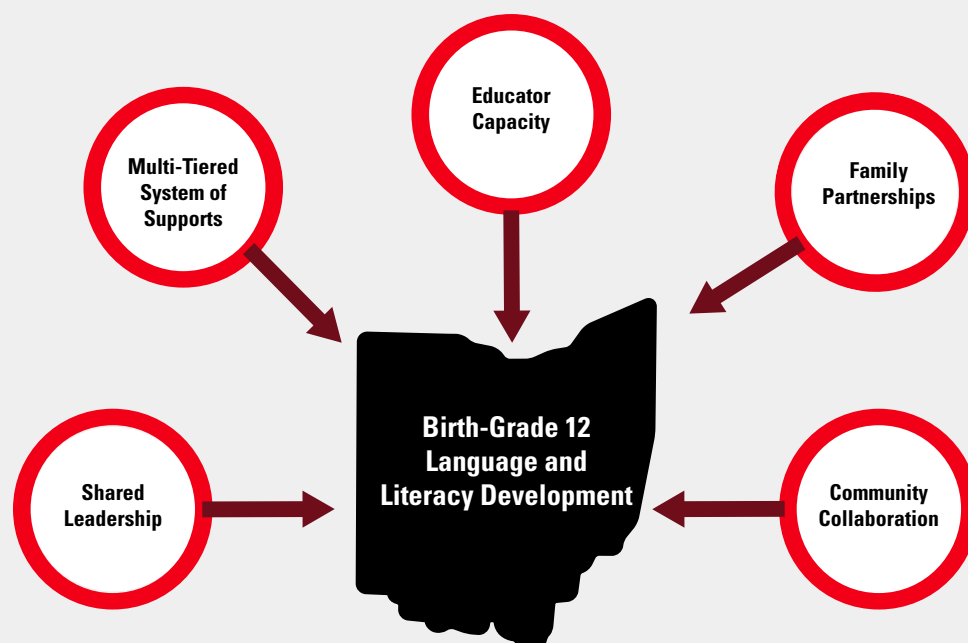


Figure 1: Ohio's Theory of Action

Ohio's state, regional and local leaders agree that more must be done to ensure all learners have access to high-quality language and literacy instruction and appropriate intervention, from birth through grade 12. Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement aligns with and builds on the state's current literacy-related policies and practices (see page 7) and promotes evidence-based language and literacy instruction and intervention. To achieve this alignment, the state is coordinating and linking efforts through the following strands of action (see Figure 1).

These strands include:

- Shared leadership;
- Multi-tiered system of supports;
- Educator capacity;
- Family partnerships; and
- Community collaboration.

### Shared Leadership

Strong leadership gives vision, energy and direction to literacy improvement efforts. Shared leadership means the responsibility for leading and supporting the successful implementation of evidence-based strategies belongs to district leaders, building administrators and classroom teachers. Sharing leadership is critical to implementing evidence-based instruction and intervention. This means that all educators are involved in the identification of the challenge, causes of underperformance, solutions to be implemented and performing leadership tasks that support the improvement approach.

This is accomplished through structures such as leadership teams (district leadership teams, building leadership teams and teacher-based teams) described in the Ohio Improvement Process. These teams share accountability for data-driven strategic planning, implementation, feedback and plan adjustment. Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement addresses shared leadership through training and coaching on evidence-based language and literacy practices and systems to support literacy improvement. This includes targeted training and resources for state and regional staff, administrators, principals, instructional coaches and teacher-leaders.

## Ohio's Multi-Tiered System of Supports

The multi-tiered system of supports structure provides a framework for supporting learners based on their unique needs. It can guide staff in designing effective instruction and appropriate interventions as part of school improvement efforts. A multi-tiered system of supports for reading includes full access to grade-level instruction for all learners that is differentiated and designed to meet the needs of all learners (Tier 1) and additional targeted (Tier 2) and/or intensive intervention (Tier 3) for learners experiencing difficulties. The purpose of the three-tier model of instruction is to provide effective core instruction and address reading difficulties as quickly as possible. Under this model, each tier adds a level of intensity that is designed to accelerate the learner's rate of learning and avoid learners requiring intervention for multiple years (Kilpatrick, 2015). As a learner responds positively to the instruction, the intensity is gradually faded. The movement within the tiers of instruction is fluid and data-based, and the tiers represent instruction and supports, not categories of students.

Such a system includes a continuum of evidence-based, systemwide practices to address academic and behavioral needs. It also calls for frequent, data-based monitoring to inform instructional decision-making to empower each learner to achieve high standards (Sansosti & Noltemeyer, 2008; Shores & Chester, 2008). A multi-tiered system of supports can be used at local, regional and state levels to address the varied, often complex needs of learners (Hayes & Lillenstein, 2015). Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement includes training and coaching for state, regional, district and school teams in screening, progress monitoring, instructional decision-making (including Universal Design for Learning) and communicating with families within a multi-tiered system of supports.

## Educator Capacity to Provide Instruction Aligned to the Science of Reading

Educators and quality instruction are the most fundamental components to student acquisition of literacy skills and knowledge. Professional development and technical assistance tied to evidence-based language and literacy development and instructional practices are key to building the capacity of teachers to maximize their impact. Ohio is building educator capacity through embedded, sustained professional development and coaching that focuses on evidence-based language and literacy practices and interventions. Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement emphasizes the need for professional learning and resources that deepen educators' understanding of how children learn to read, diagnose why some children struggle to read, and sharpen educators' abilities to implement reading instruction and intervention that is aligned to the science of reading and culturally responsive. Much of the professional development supports teachers already serving in the classroom. The Department also is partnering with the Ohio Department of Higher Education and colleges and universities to enhance these areas in teacher preparation programs.

**[A] key element of teacher quality  
is the specialized knowledge  
teachers utilize when teaching.**

*- Piasta, 2009*

## Family Partnerships

Family partnerships are essential to support learner progress and achievement in language and literacy development. Ohio's work focuses on the importance of building these partnerships in early childhood and kindergarten through grade 12 educational settings. Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement emphasizes how state, regional and local educational entities can develop goals and strategies for supporting families in their critical roles in children's literacy development. The skills of phonological awareness, letter recognition, phonemic awareness, oral language, vocabulary, comprehension, motivation and the connection of reading material to everyday life begin developing at birth. Families play an important role in promoting them. Schools' strategies for partnering with families must support the adult behaviors that directly support the language and literacy skills development of children. By communicating with families, offering resources and guidance for literacy development at home, and developing strategic family partnerships, schools can create holistic and sustainable support systems for learners from birth through graduation. Language and literacy support for families offered by schools and communities should:

- Provide all families opportunities to be active supporters of their children's language and literacy development;
- Promote language and literacy interactions at home that are enjoyable for children and families;
- Provide clear, timely understanding for families about their children's progress;
- Equip families with the developmentally appropriate strategies and resources they need to support their children's learning, such as access to books;
- Promote literacy in families' home languages;
- Incorporate the interests and cultures of children and their families; and
- Communicate high learning expectations for all children (Boone, et. al., 2017; Caspe & Lopez, 2017; Richards-Tutor, et. al., 2016).

## Community Collaboration

The final component of Ohio's Theory of Action is community collaboration. Everyone in the community can contribute to children's literacy development. Community partners interested in the healthy development of children are essential, such as libraries, after-school programs, cultural institutions, health care providers, businesses, philanthropy and the faith-based community. There must be a shared understanding and mutual reinforcement of efforts in their approach to developing children's reading skills. State-, regional- and local-level partnerships help drive literacy improvement and keep in focus why proficient literacy skills are critical. These partnerships include networks that share successes and challenges, provide opportunities to problem-solve and time to consult with each other to strengthen local literacy plans and community improvement efforts.

## Section 2: Alignment of Ohio's Literacy Improvement Efforts

### Ohio's Language and Literacy Drivers

Ohio's vision is that each child is *challenged* to discover and learn, *prepared* to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and *empowered* to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society (*Each Child, Our Future*, 2018). There may be no greater purpose for an education system than to provide all learners with effective evidence-based instruction to build language and literacy knowledge and skills so they can enjoy full lives of learning and success. Ohio maintains a portfolio of aligned policies and practices aimed at ensuring all learners acquire essential literacy skills. The Department promotes alignment of all school improvement efforts into one comprehensive plan. Clear alignment of local literacy plans to other improvement activities and local improvement efforts is critical. Ohio's portfolio includes a variety of funding sources, practices, legislation and other policy drivers.



## Ohio's Learning Standards

Ohio has developed high-quality learning standards aligned across grades that define what learners should know and be able to do. These include:

- Early Learning and Development Standards (birth to kindergarten entry);
- Ohio's Learning Standards (kindergarten-grade 12, including standards for literacy in history and social studies, science and technical subjects for grades 6-12);
- Ohio English Language Proficiency Standards;
- Ohio's Learning Standards Extended for learners with significant cognitive disabilities; and
- Ohio's K-12 Social and Emotional Learning Standards.

## System of Assessments

Ohio has developed a standards-aligned system of assessments that measures language and literacy development and outcomes using the following:

- Early Learning Assessment for preschool-age children;
- Kindergarten Readiness Assessment for learners entering kindergarten;
- K-3 reading diagnostic assessments used to screen students in kindergarten-grade 3 for reading difficulties;
- Ohio's State Tests in English Language Arts for grades 3-8; and
- High school end-of-course exams in English language arts.

## Accountability System and Report Cards

Ohio has an accountability system and report cards that describe academic performance through student growth and achievement data. Ohio School Report Cards include information about student accomplishment in English language arts in grades 3-8 and high school. Student performance on assessments appears in the Achievement, Progress and Gap Closing components of the report cards. The Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers component also shines light on proficiency rates and improvement among the youngest struggling readers.

## Ohio Improvement Process

The Ohio Improvement Process supports focused school improvement. The improvement process advances the state's Reading Achievement Plans and local literacy plans to help districts identify learner needs, identify root causes, set goals, develop action plans and monitor continuous improvement.

## Strong Regional System of Supports

Ohio has a strong system of support for districts and schools that includes 16 regional state support teams. Each state support team has at least one early literacy specialist, in addition to early childhood and school improvement consultants. Early literacy specialists provide support and deliver literacy improvement professional learning to districts across the state. In addition, 52 educational service centers support literacy improvement, planning and implementation.

## Quality Preschool

Ohio's Step Up To Quality rating system ensures all publicly funded, birth to age 5 preschool and child care programs provide effective support for learning and development. Step Up To Quality requires programs to implement ongoing screening and assessments to monitor children's learning and development across Ohio's standards, including language and literacy. In programs rated highest in Step Up To Quality, early childhood educators use assessment results to inform improvements to individual instruction.

## Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee

To promote the mastery of age-appropriate reading skills at the earliest stages of a child's academic experience, Ohio enacted the Third Grade Reading Guarantee in 2012. This law requires all districts and schools to screen all K-3 students to determine whether they are on track or not on track to read on grade level. Each learner identified as a struggling reader is required to receive a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan to individualize reading instruction based on the learner's identified needs. The services provided through these plans must be grounded in scientific evidence to ensure progress toward proficient reading. As part of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, the Department is updating guidance and resources associated with these plans to reflect the latest research on reading difficulties.

## Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project

Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project (2012-2015) involved eight school districts. The goals of the pilot project were to evaluate (a) the effectiveness of early screening and reading assistance programs for children at risk for reading failure; and (b) whether those programs could reduce future special education costs. The pilot's external evaluator found a cost savings attributable to the pilot. All participating school districts that met the requirements for the project in Year 3 demonstrated meaningful gains in learner rates of improvement that are likely to be sustainable. Ohio projects that, over time, all school districts will experience special education cost savings exceeding the initial pilot investment (Morrison, 2015). Several of the practices tested in Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project were included in Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot (see below) to test their scalability and sustainability.

## Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan: Early Literacy

### Ohio's Early Literacy Plan

Stakeholders from across the state helped develop Ohio's Early Literacy Plan using the active implementation framework (Fixsen et al., 2013; National Implementation Research Network, 2013). To develop the goals and strategies that formed the basis for Ohio's Theory of Action (Appendix B), the stakeholder group analyzed the framework's drivers, which included competency, organization and leadership. Stakeholders reviewed the results of Ohio's Dyslexia Pilot Project to identify critical supports Ohio would need to provide for schools taking part in the Early Literacy Pilot.

### Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot

Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot supports educators and leaders implementing evidence-based language and literacy strategies as part of their instruction and interventions. It involves two cohorts in 15 high-needs districts. Implementation includes professional learning in the science of reading, instructional and systems coaching, family engagement and use of data to inform instruction. The pilot serves as the foundation for the design and implementation of evidence-based strategies contained in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is undergoing an independent evaluation by an external evaluator. That evaluation is informing prekindergarten-grade 5 improvement efforts and the development of a statewide professional learning plan for educators serving learners from birth to grade 12.

### Ohio's State Personnel Development Grant

Ohio currently is implementing its third State Personnel Development Grant. This grant aims to scale and sustain strategies tested through Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. The current grant brings together three concepts:

1. Professional learning targeting recent research on language and literacy core instruction and interventions;
2. Advances in understanding of implementation research to further develop educators' competencies; and
3. A systemic approach to build capacity and increase sustainability beyond the life of the project.

## Guide for Ohio's Goals and Objectives

Taken together, the above portfolio of policies and practices drives Ohio's commitment to improving literacy outcomes for all learners. State leaders will continue to ensure these efforts align with the goals and objectives of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement (described in Section 5), as well as other school improvement efforts. This portfolio will continue to expand as the Department annually examines data and identifies targets for improvement.

## Section 3: Why a State Comprehensive Literacy Plan is Needed

This section summarizes Ohio's comprehensive needs assessment. This assessment focuses first on learner performance data, then on a root cause analysis and ends with data and recommendations from the external evaluation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot. This analysis illustrates the critical need for explicit support for implementing evidence-based language and literacy instruction and intervention to improve learning outcomes, not only in the classroom but across the educational system (state, regional, district-school, grade levels, classrooms, family and community).

In June 2019, Ohio's State Literacy Team examined selected 2018 school-year data from birth through grade 12 to update the state's comprehensive needs assessment.

### 2018 Learner Performance Data

From birth, many of Ohio's students face challenges to achieving their full educational potential. Consider the following about Ohio children:

- One-fourth of all Ohio children under age 6 live in poverty, and one-half are in families living below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (Ohio Poverty Report, 2017);
- Young children represent one of the fastest growing segments of Ohio's homeless population (Ohio Housing Finance Authority, Revisiting the Silent Crisis, 2018);
- The number of children in the custody of Ohio's children services agencies has been rising since 2010. More than 15,000 children were in custody in 2018 and 39 percent of those were under the age of 5 (Public Children Services Association of Ohio, 2019);

The societal challenges Ohio's students face can be seen through inequities in educational outcomes and are exacerbated by inequities in access to high-quality education.

Literacy inequities are visible statewide, but they are felt even more keenly in schools serving students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, referred to as "high-needs schools."

- In 2018, almost half (48.4 percent or 1,616) of Ohio's elementary, middle and high schools were high-needs schools (as defined by the U.S. Department of Education), serving more than 720,000 (43.9 percent) of Ohio's students;
- While about one-third (32.95 percent) of white, non-Hispanic students attended high-needs schools, 83.4 percent of black students, 61.3 percent of Hispanic students, 50 percent of American Indian students and 56.4 percent of multiracial students attended high-needs schools in 2018; and
- A strong majority (70.2 percent) of English learners attended high-needs schools in 2018.

## Birth Through Kindergarten Entry

Children in high-quality rated early childhood education programs perform significantly better on Ohio's Kindergarten Readiness Assessment than their peers, specifically on language and literacy (Compass Evaluation and Research, 2017). There continues to be a need to reach more students with quality early education programs and quality literacy instruction. Data show:

- Ohio served more than 195,000 children from birth through age 5 through its early childhood programming delivery systems, yet more than 163,000 children remain unserved;
- Ohio serves more than 21,000 infants and toddlers in early intervention; 60 percent have substantial adaptive, cognitive, communication, physical or social-emotional developmental delays;
- Almost 27,000 children with disabilities receive educational interventions between ages 3 and 5 in preschool special education programs; and
- In 2018, 150,000 (31.3 percent) of Ohio's K-3 students were not on track for reading on grade level. More than 40,000 of those students were Ohio's kindergartners entering a foundational year of learning already behind in language and literacy skills. Improving students' literacy skills by third grade is no small challenge.

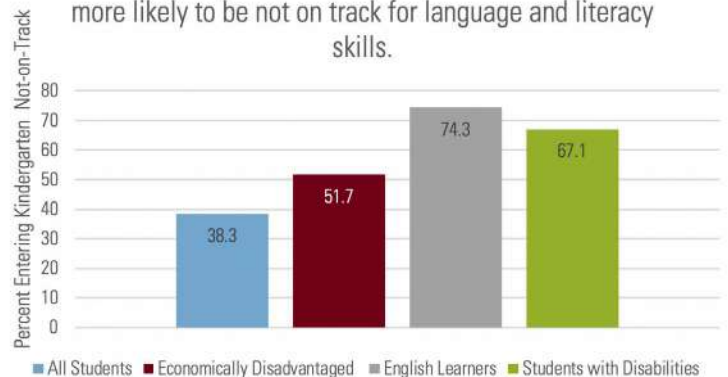
## Kindergarten Through Grade 12

Ohio is making important strides toward improving literacy; yet data across the K-12 spectrum reveal there still are significant numbers of students struggling in language and literacy. At every point, Ohio's disadvantaged learners experience this struggle most keenly.

In 2018, more than 40,000 of Ohio's kindergartners entered school not on track relative to language and literacy skills, therefore, beginning a foundational year of learning already behind in language and literacy skills.

More than 380,000 students were not proficient on Ohio's English language arts tests in grades 3 through 8 and high school, **including** more than 50,000 (38.9 percent) of **Ohio's third-graders**.

In 2019, Ohio's disadvantaged kindergartners were more likely to be not on track for language and literacy skills.



Ohio's disadvantaged students are overrepresented among the state's struggling readers. Among those students in grades 3-8 who are not proficient on the English language arts assessments:

**71.4 percent** are economically disadvantaged;  
**30.3 percent** are students with disabilities;  
**4.6 percent** are English learners; and  
**more than half** attend high-need schools.

#### *Impact over Time*

Student learning is cumulative by nature. Ohio students who enter kindergarten on track in language and literacy are seven times more likely to go on to score proficient on Ohio's third grade English language arts assessment. Students who are not proficient in reading by third grade are three times more likely than their proficient peers to not graduate on time.

By the time struggling readers reach high school, these cumulative effects are apparent and can have a profound effect on students' postsecondary options. In 2018:

**68 percent** of the students taking Ohio's English end-of-course high school exam scored proficient; and

**53 percent** of Ohio's ACT test-takers scored below the remediation-free level on the English language arts assessment.

**English learners** have unique strengths and face unique challenges. Though English learners are among Ohio's struggling readers throughout the K-12 spectrum, data suggests a need for educators of English learners in middle and high school to address specific, and targeted, literacy instruction.

Only 13.7 percent of 33.2 percent of English learners in grades 7-12 scored Early Advanced or Advanced on the Ohio English Language Placement Assessment compared to 33.2 percent of English learners in grades K-6.

Based on the relationship between Ohio's measures of literacy and graduation, we know the struggles Ohio's students face can have a profound effect on their futures. Among Ohio's 2018 high school graduates, 85 percent had earned diplomas after four years (on time). While this represents an improvement over time, it still means more than 20,000 students did not graduate on time or at all. Moreover, Ohio's most disadvantaged students are overrepresented among students who do not graduate on time.

## Root Cause Analysis

To identify the language and literacy needs of Ohio's learners, stakeholders participating in the development of the State's Systemic Improvement Plan engaged in a root cause analysis. A root cause analysis is a structured, facilitated team process aimed at identifying breakdowns in processes and systems that result in undesirable outcomes, such as low literacy achievement. The purpose of a root cause analysis is to find out what happened, why it happened and determine what changes need to be made.

The stakeholder team identified the following five areas as constituting the primary root causes of literacy underperformance:

1. *Learners who "start behind, stay behind"* - Although learners may make progress in school, for example, make a year's worth of growth in one school year, students who begin kindergarten academically behind generally remain behind.
2. *District infrastructure/support for educators* - Districts are challenged in providing effective support to educators to support literacy instruction. Specifically:
  - District administrators have many responsibilities and currently are experiencing initiative overload;
  - The larger the district, the less likely it is that a teacher will receive effective supports;
  - Districts often lack systems and structures that effectively plan for and implement evidence-based literacy instruction. It was found that programs changed frequently and did not identify evidence-based practices that can be implemented with fidelity; and
  - Due to limited funding and resources, many children lack access to early childhood programming and preschools, which affects their readiness for kindergarten and their earliest introduction to literacy development.



3. *Instructional practices* - Districts either were not using effective instructional practices or not implementing them with fidelity. Specifically, districts:
  - Used outdated special education and intervention practices;
  - Lacked differentiation in all tiers of instruction;
  - Continued intervention(s), even when progress is not occurring;
  - Lacked effective progress monitoring and data literacy skills, for example, analyzing and using data to inform instruction;
  - Had a limited understanding of how to build emergent and early literacy skills in young children; and
  - Lacked deep knowledge of Ohio's Learning Standards for English language arts, particularly foundational reading skills.
4. *District/building culture* - The culture of the district or building often was not conducive to effective improvement. Specifically, districts and buildings lacked:
  - Collaboration between special educators and general educators;
  - A collective belief that all children can learn and all educators can teach; and
  - The implementation of proactive planning.
5. *Family knowledge and involvement* - Families were not being appropriately leveraged as partners in literacy improvement. Specifically, families lacked:
  - Meaningful educator and family partnerships; and
  - Depth and/or meaning in family engagement interactions.

## External Evaluation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot

The University of Cincinnati's Evaluation Services Center is conducting a five-year external evaluation of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot from school years 2017 through 2021. The evaluation considers quantitative and qualitative data regarding:

- Gains in educator knowledge in the science of reading;
- Implementation of evidence-based language and literacy strategies;
- Implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports; and
- Student outcomes in foundational literacy skills for preschool through grade 3.

The data presented below calls for establishing infrastructure within schools to support an effective multi-tiered system of supports and providing professional learning for educators in the science of reading. Other areas examined through the external evaluation, but not included in this section, include:

- Instructional coaching;
- Classroom implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices;
- Results of curriculum-based measures;
- Data on whether students are on track or not on track in grades K-3;
- The Kindergarten Readiness Assessment; and
- The grade 3 English language arts test.

The pilot includes two cohorts of schools, with the first implementing in 2016-2017 and the second implementing in 2017-2018. For more information, see the [yearly reports of Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan](#).

## Enhancing Infrastructure Within Schools

One component of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot is to develop or enhance pilot buildings' multi-tiered system of supports for reading instruction. A key focus is to ensure core (Tier 1) instruction is differentiated and meeting the needs of all students. Building leaders take part in professional learning to develop a schoolwide reading plan that addresses areas growth within the multi-tiered system of supports using the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory (St. Martin, et al., 2015).

Building leadership teams use the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory to assess their strengths and weaknesses implementing a multi-tiered system of supports for language and literacy. The inventory contains 27 items across four subscales, or components of support, listed below. Each item is rated from 0 (not in place) to 2 (fully in place). The target score for each subscale and overall is 80 percent. The subscales are as follows:

- *Teams* measures established leadership and grade-level teams to support Tier 1 reading systems and effective meeting processes;
- *Implementation* measures planning and instructional time, including schoolwide expectations and procedures;
- *Resources* measures reading program guidelines, universal screening assessment schedules, and coaching and professional learning availability; and
- *Evaluation* measures fidelity of universal screening, data-based decision-making, schoolwide reading plans and grade-level instructional plan fidelity.

Supports have led to rises in scores related to Tier 1 instruction, demonstrating improvement in the systems needed to successfully meet the needs of all learners. Both cohorts increased their scores for the full inventory (Overall) and for each subscale. Both cohorts also reached the 80 percent benchmark for both the Teams and Resources subscales, with the greatest gains in Resources (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 2. Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 1

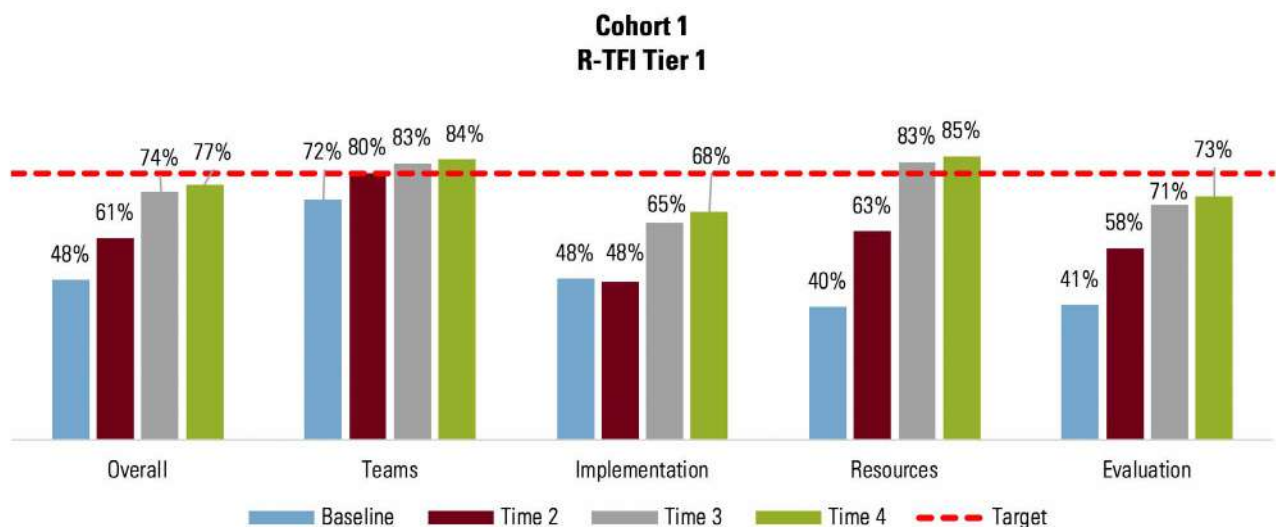
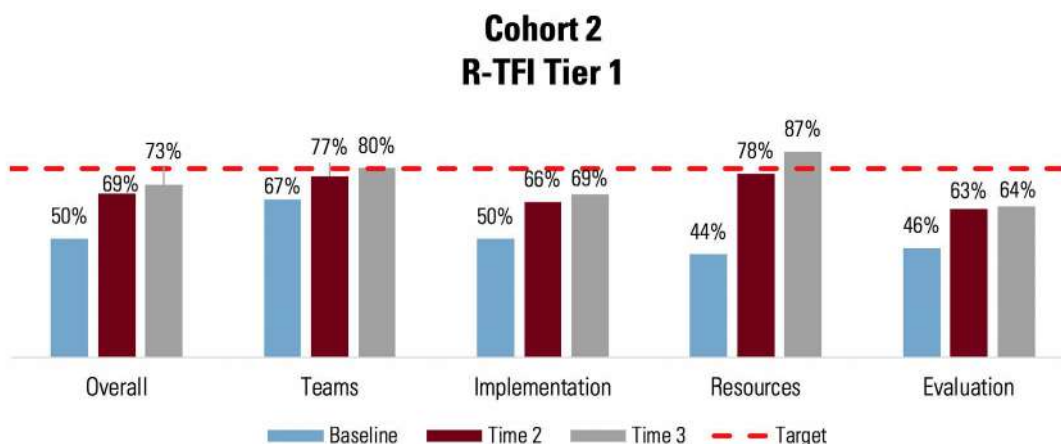


Figure 3. Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory Tier 1 total and subscale scores for Cohort 2



## Enhancing Educators' Knowledge of the Science of Reading

Another component of Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot was to provide all participating classroom educators, intervention specialists, speech language pathologists, literacy coaches, principals and paraprofessionals with professional learning in the science of reading. Educator knowledge was measured at the end of each year of the two-year professional learning program. The first cohort of pilot schools completed the professional learning program in June 2018, while the second cohort of pilot schools completed the professional learning program in June 2019.

The professional learning series contained two pretests and two post-tests. Participating teachers took the first pretest, engaged with four units of content related to word recognition, then took the post-test. Teachers then took the second pretest, engaged with four units of content related to language comprehension, then took the post-test. The Department saw an overall knowledge increase from pre- to post-test in both cohorts for word recognition and language comprehension, as displayed in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4. Percentage correct on pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 1 and preschool educators in Cohort 1.

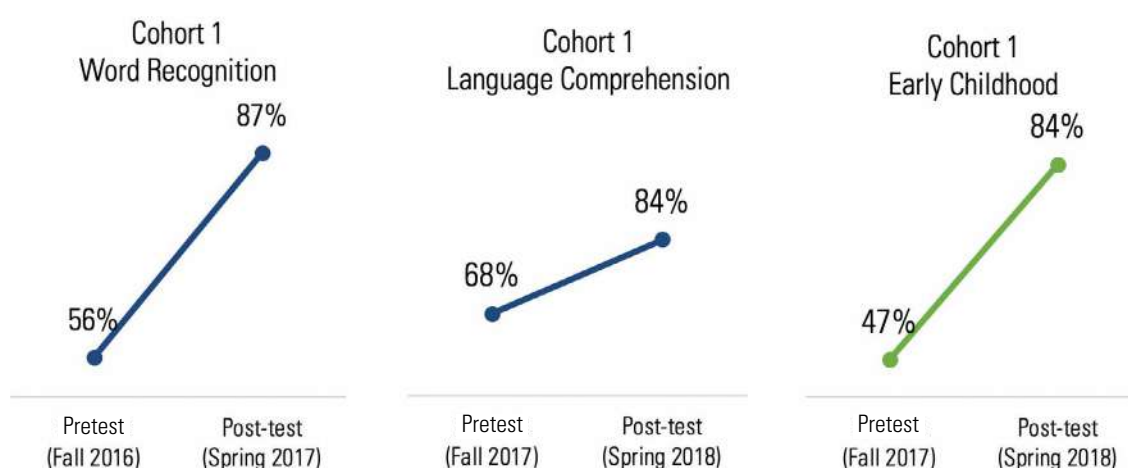
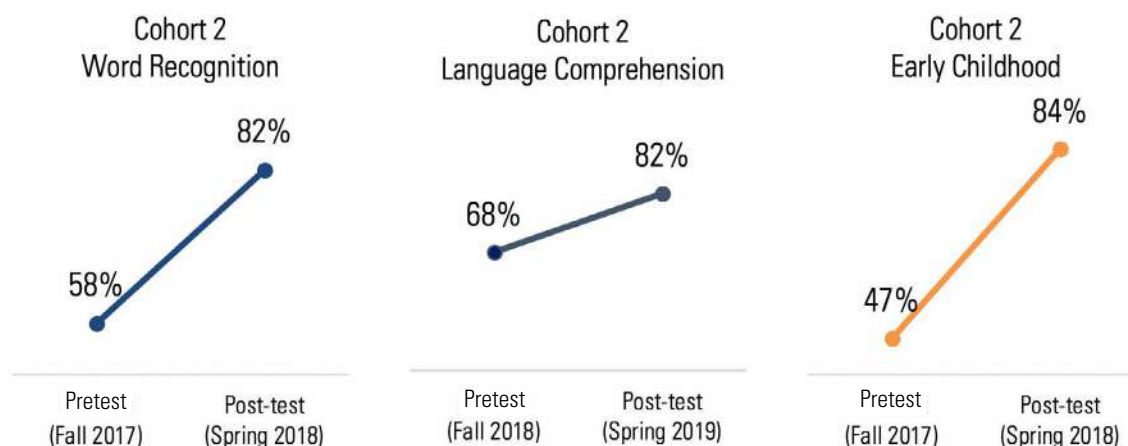


Figure 5. Percentage correct on pre- and post-tests for kindergarten through grade 3 educators in Cohort 2 and preschool educators in Cohort 2.



After the first year of this two-year training, external evaluators met with participating educators in each pilot school to hear their perspectives on the professional learning program. They found that, **“Educators acknowledged the desire to include the [professional learning program’s] content in higher education coursework. Educators mentioned that they wished they had been taught the [professional learning program’s] strategies in their undergraduate education and administrators echoed that sentiment”** (Dariotis, et al., 2019).

The focus of the external evaluation will shift in the final years of the pilot to examining the implementation of evidence-based language and literacy strategies in classrooms and impact on student outcomes.

## Ohio’s Need Drives Ohio’s Vision

The data reveals the need for Ohio to build the capacity to support evidence-based language and literacy instruction at the state, regional and local levels to improve outcomes for all learners. The need applies to Ohio’s most disadvantaged learners from birth through grade 12, including students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, homeless students and students who are English learners. Each data point discussed in this section shows a significant lack of literacy achievement from birth through grade 12. Collectively, this data provides the focus for Ohio’s plan outlined in the next section. State activities outlined in Section 5 respond directly to areas identified by the root cause analysis in an effort to raise literacy achievement in Ohio.

## Section 4: Ohio's Language and Literacy Vision

**Vision Statement:** Ohio's vision is for all learners to acquire the knowledge and skills to become proficient readers.

The Ohio Department of Education and its partners view language and literacy acquisition and achievement as foundational knowledge that supports student success. To increase learner's language and literacy achievement, the Department is urging districts and schools to use evidence-based systems and high-quality instruction, select high-quality instructional materials and employ culturally responsive practices.



Ohio's language and literacy vision strives to reduce language and literacy barriers for each learner. Further, it aims to significantly increase the number of learners who develop the language and literacy skills they need for grade-level reading comprehension and thus are prepared for their futures.

Children need to develop proficiency in language and literacy for success in all the academic subjects, experiences and opportunities they will encounter after finishing formal schooling. Underdeveloped literacy skills lead to underachievement in academic subjects and often affect school and social behavior (McGee, et al., 2002; Morgan, et al., 2008).

Reading difficulties are associated with higher risks of depression, higher rates of dropping out, decreased likelihoods of earning college degrees and lower income levels (Miller, et al. 2010; Maughan, et al., 2003; Hernandez, 2012; McLaughlin, et al., 2014). The plan is grounded in scientific research and evidence-based language and literacy practices and represents all learners.

To achieve this vision, Ohio is:

1. Using the **Simple View of Reading** (Gough & Tunmer, 1986) to drive all literacy content, conversation, development and organization of resources necessary to support the state's comprehensive plan.
2. Ensuring all learners are represented and supported throughout **the language and literacy development continuum**, which includes emergent, early, conventional and adolescent literacy.
3. Providing specific recommendations for **learners having difficulty** reading or writing.
4. Enhancing **partnerships and collaboration** among general education and special education practitioners and stakeholders.
5. Enhancing **the state's infrastructure supports** to build implementation capacity at the state and regional levels.

The Department will communicate this vision across the educational system, ensuring alignment of literacy efforts occurring across Ohio Department of Education offices, state partners, regional supports, districts, buildings and classrooms, family supports and community engagement. Literacy acquisition and achievement will serve as the lever for school improvement. This plan serves as an extension of [Each Child, Our Future](#) (2018), specifically Strategy 9.



## Bridging the Gap Between Research and Practice

**“There is intense public interest in questions surrounding how children learn to read and how they can best be taught. Research in psychological science has provided answers to many of these questions but, somewhat surprisingly, this research has been slow to make inroads into educational policy and practice.”**

*-Castles, 2018*

In 2018, the Department made a commitment to use Gough and Tunmer’s (1986) Simple View of Reading and other models supported by cognitive science, neuroscience and education research to promote child literacy statewide. Though many Ohio educators have embraced this vision and are implementing reading instruction aligned to the science of reading, other practices not aligned with this science still are prevalent throughout Ohio’s education system. With State Literacy Team guidance, the Department has enhanced Ohio’s language and literacy vision to provide specific support for districts and schools using evidence-based instruction.

Research indicates there are two chief reasons why the shift to the Simple View of Reading and similar models may be difficult:

1. Often educators misperceive that the science of reading, including the use of the Simple View of Reading as a framework to represent this science, as focused on phonics instruction alone.
2. Educators often are not told why this instruction aligned to the science of reading is so critical for developing a proficient reader’s brain (Castles, et al., 2018).

The Department works to develop and promote resources that address these two problems and help educators understand and implement language and literacy practices based on reading science.

**“My firm conviction is that every teacher should have some notion of how reading operates in the child’s brain.”**

*-Dehaene, Cognitive Neuroscientist*

*As you read the remaining portions of this section, please visualize a current learner. The age or grade of the learner is not important as learning to read and attaining language and literacy skills is critical at all ages and grade bands. As you read through the following segments, determine possible next steps in meeting the needs of a learner to increase language and literacy achievement.*

## The Simple View of Reading

Ohio’s literacy plan is grounded in the theoretical framework identified in the Simple View of Reading (see Figure 6). The Simple View of Reading is a formula based on the widely accepted view that reading includes two basic components: decoding (word-level reading) and language comprehension. Several research studies have validated this formula.

Ohio’s root cause analysis of poor language and literacy performance among students (Section 3) indicated that districts either were not utilizing effective instructional practices [in both components of the Simple View of Reading] or not implementing them with fidelity. Understanding the Simple View of Reading can help educators assess language and literacy strengths and weaknesses, then provide appropriate evidence-based instruction. Ohio will continue to offer guidance and support to educators to ensure all learners receive appropriate instruction in both components of the Simple View of Reading.

## The Simple View of Reading

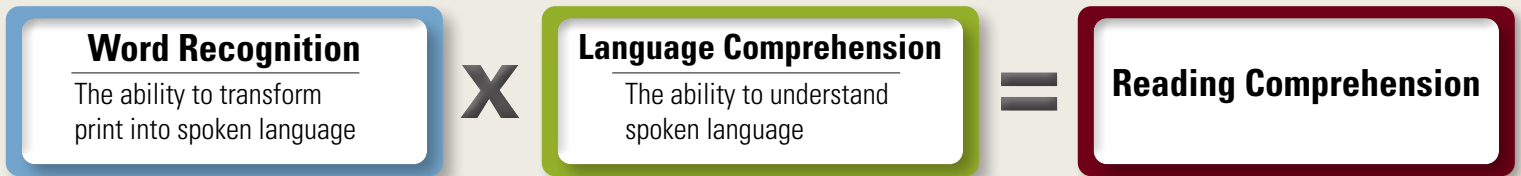


Figure 6. The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986)

The literacy goal of Ohio's education system is to ensure all learners have access to high-quality, evidence-based language and literacy instruction and become proficient readers. The state can achieve this goal only if it provides support at all levels of the education system in both the word recognition and language comprehension aspects of language and literacy instruction.

### Culturally Responsive Practice

*Each Child, Our Future* prioritizes actions that support the whole child and promote equitable education quality and access for all children. Culturally responsive practice is an approach to teaching that aims to do both. Culturally responsive practice is an approach that encompasses and recognizes both students' and educators' lived experiences, cultures and linguistic capital. Culturally responsive educators reflect on their students' as well as their own lived experiences, cultures and linguistic capital to inform, support and ensure high-quality instruction. They have high expectations of their students and demonstrate positive attitudes toward student achievement; they are committed to involving their students in multiple phases of academic programming, thereby supporting the unique abilities and learning needs of each student and fostering student success. The ongoing commitment to reflect and engage in this kind of exemplary practice to inform, support and ensure high-quality instruction lies at the core of culturally responsive practice. This definition is drawn from the work of Gay (2010), Hammond (2014) and Ladson-Billings (2009).

Research shows that students are more likely to master literacy skills if the instructional materials and approaches have relevance to their own cultures. This allows learners to connect with the content in more meaningful, engaging ways. Ohio is committed to ensuring that each learner is ready for rigor and independent learning in a culturally responsive setting (Hammond, 2015).

A systematic approach to teaching that recognizes a learner's unique culture can strengthen that learner's connectiveness to his or her school and enhance learning (Kalyanpur & Harry, 2012, Tatum, 2009). Ohio's literacy plan promotes culturally responsive practices through Hammond's (2015) Ready for Rigor Framework, which addresses four areas of practice in culturally responsive teaching:

1. **Awareness:** Educators acknowledge their own sociopolitical positions to sharpen their cultural lenses while managing their own social-emotional responses to student diversity.
2. **Learning Partnerships:** Educators establish and capitalize on mutual trust and respect to help their students rise to high expectations, respond to feedback and be intellectually challenged.
3. **Information Processing:** Educators understand how culture influences information processing in the brain and how to plan for and use culturally relevant information-processing strategies that are common to oral cultures.
4. **Community Building:** Educators integrate cultural elements into the classroom and use cultural practices to create a socially and intellectually safe space, while creating routines that reinforce self-directed learning and academic identity.

Establishing an explicit approach to culturally responsive teaching will enhance all learners' experiences through respecting and valuing their diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

## Including All Learners in the Language and Literacy Development Continuum

Language and literacy develop along a continuum. Starting at birth, children develop skills and move through and between the phases of emergent, early, conventional and adolescent literacy (Figure 7). Aspects of these phases overlap. Ohio will continue to provide learners individualized, differentiated support and instruction across the continuum. Although some descriptions of these phases of literacy development include reference to age or grade level, Ohio's vision and plan include all learners in all phases of literacy development, regardless of age or grade, and presumes competence for all learners.



Figure 7. Language and Literacy Development Continuum

### Presumed Competence for All Learners

Ohio is committed to the belief that all learners, no matter the complexity of their disabilities, have the potential to grow their skills and knowledge in language and literacy. It is essential to approach the literacy needs of students with disabilities with the deep belief that these students can and will succeed; that they are able to achieve the same expectations for reading accomplishment as all other students. "Inclusive education is characterized by presumed competence, authentic membership, full participation, reciprocal social relationships, and learning to high standards by all students with disabilities in age-appropriate general education classrooms. It is critical that supports are provided to students and teachers to enable them to be successful" (NCIE, 2011). These foundational beliefs about learners are reinforced and maintained throughout Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.

All learners have the right to actively participate and engage in high-quality instruction and assessment. Ohio's plan addresses learners who have the most complex needs, including those with significantly diverse intellectual abilities. This stance means that Ohio has high expectations for growth and achievement and focuses on abilities rather than disabilities (Jorgensen, 2005; Jorgensen, McSheehan, & Sonnenmeier, 2007). We cannot lower our expectations for any student regardless of his or her circumstances or attributes.

### Presumed Competence for Educators

Teaching language and literacy to learners at any age requires great depth of knowledge in complex processes, as well as sincere collaboration among educators. Research has shown that "a key element of teacher quality is the specialized knowledge teachers utilize when teaching" (Piasta, 2009), but "there is a strong disconnection between the science of reading and educational practice" (Seidenberg, 2016). Ohio educators who are taking part in Ohio's Early Literacy Pilot also have observed this (see Section 3).

Using language and literacy practices supported by scientific research is critical, especially for learners who may have difficulty learning to read and/or are in the process of learning the English language. To meet the needs of all learners and improve the state's literacy achievement, all Ohio educators must commit to:

- Believing all students can learn to read at or above grade level;
- Implementing scientifically proven instructional and diagnostic practices that meet the diverse needs of learners;
- Providing integrated supports and services for students with disabilities, along with practices supported by science; and
- Prioritizing learner needs and scientifically proven methods over default practices or long-held personal beliefs about what strategies work for learners. Choices educators make for learners must be driven by research and data (Kilpatrick, 2015).

**“With the feelings of confidence and empowerment, the teachers just...glow and they feel that they are doing the right thing, they feel respected by each other...and with that, the students are feeling successful...and becoming more confident.”**

*-Margo Shipp, Regional Early Literacy Specialist, State Support Team 6  
on teacher efficacy in Riverside Elementary School and  
moving from “my student and your student to our students.”*

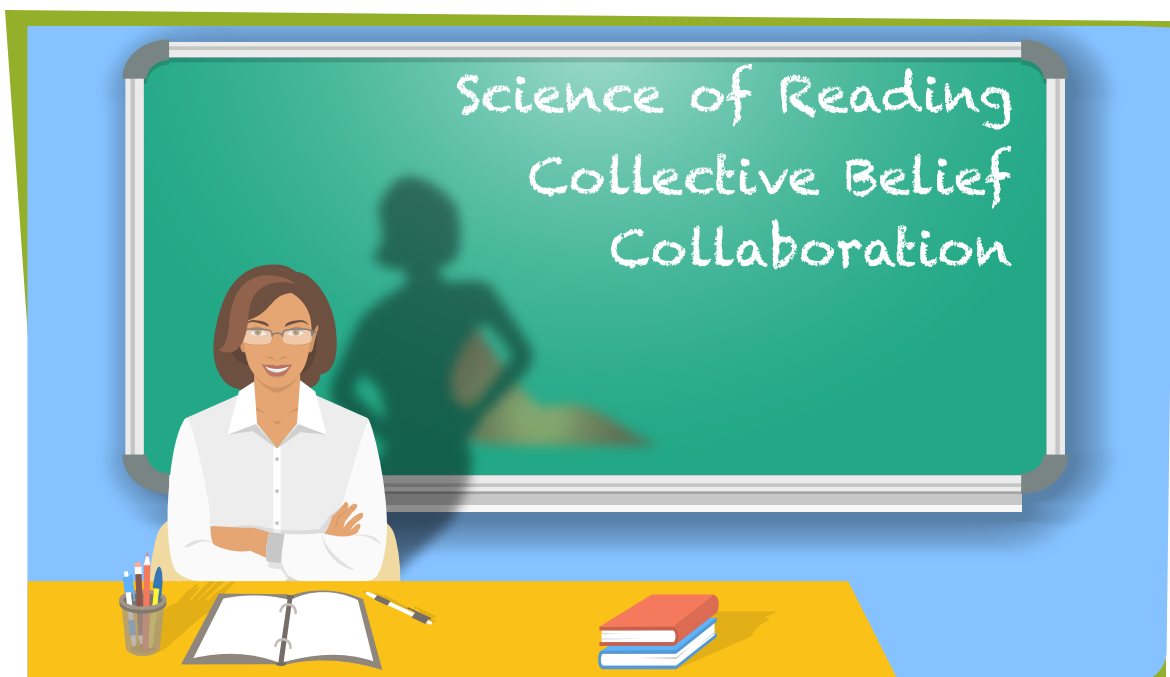
Educational systems must be strengthened to:

- Support educators in sharing expertise;
- Provide teachers time for planning instruction collaboratively; and
- Encourage shared responsibility for the teaching of all learners, referred to in education as “collective efficacy.” This exists when educators have a collective belief in their abilities to affect students positively (Hattie, 2016; Bandura, 1997).

Implementing evidence-based language and literacy strategies and promoting collaboration among educators begins with commitment and support from education leaders. This support can be provided through the following supports:

- Analyzing whether instructional decisions and their implementation are affecting learner outcomes;
- Ensuring content-rich, accessible, high-quality instructional materials are aligned to the science of reading;
- Providing sustained, intensive, job-embedded, data-driven and classroom-focused professional learning that supports evidence-based language and literacy strategies;
- Using assessment information that allows educators to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners; and
- Dedicating time for collaborative preplanning that includes all educators.

Combining the power of the science of reading with a collective belief in the ability to positively impact student achievement, as well as sincere collaboration empowers educators to transform the current state of language and literacy instruction and achievement in Ohio.



## Emergent Language and Literacy

**Word  
Recognition**

**X**

**Language  
Comprehension**

**=**

**Reading Comprehension**

Phonological  
Processing

Oral Language

Print Awareness

*Figure 8. Emergent literacy components supporting later acquisition of the components of the Simple View of Reading.*

Raising language and literacy achievement begins with the implementation of emergent skills to build the foundation for early communication and literacy. With adult support, all learners can engage in meaningful activities that develop skills as early as infancy and can continue developing skills throughout the early childhood years. Emergent literacy skills include the evidence-based, literacy-related steps in phonological processing, print awareness and oral language a child takes before being able to read a text (Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001).

Researchers have established that these skills are facilitated through specific types of child interactions with the environment, peers, caregivers and educators (Heath, 1982; Teale & Sulzby, 1986; Bowers & Vasilyeva, 2010; Guo, Justice, Kaderavek & McGinty, 2012; Girard, Girolametto, Weitzman & Greenberg, 2013). Early intervention and attention to early indicators of skill deficits may lead to the prevention of future reading difficulties. **Appendix D illustrates three emergent literacy skills and how each skill relates to later conventional reading and writing.**





## Phonological processing:

Children begin processing sounds before they are born (Mahmoudzadeh, et al., 2013). Phonological processing continues as children age and helps develop the sensitivity children need to support phonological awareness, phonological naming and phonological working memory (Anthony & Francis, 2005). Developing these skills in young children is essential to setting a foundation for learning, reading and spelling.

## Print awareness:

Early experiences with print lay the foundation needed for young children to begin building concepts of print and print knowledge, including naming print in the environment, understanding that print carries meaning, understanding the different purposes of print and developing their own print through drawing and writing. Establishing the foundation for print awareness includes:

- o Exposing infants and toddlers to positive experiences with print, which includes reading books aloud and playing with toys that highlight letters and numbers;
- o Ensuring infants physically experiment with the books adults read to them and look at the pictures they contain;
- o Mimicking how adults hold and manipulate books and pointing to objects in books as they notice that the pictures contained in them represent real objects (Paulson & Moats, 2018).

**English learners may need explicit instruction on directionality of print in the English language (for example left to right, top to bottom).**

## Oral language:

Young children benefit from interactive, child-directed conversations with caregivers who are responsive to their comments, questions and levels of understanding (Suskind, 2015). Conversations in which the caregiver and child take turns responding are important to brain development, and taking turns has shown to be a more powerful influence on brain development than the sheer number of words heard by children (Gabieli & Romeo, 2018).

Opportunities to increase vocabulary and expand background knowledge occur when caregivers repeat what children say, expand their sentences and ask open-ended and closed questions. Reading children's literature aloud continues to be one of the best ways to expose and teach new vocabulary to children, and a strong evidence base has emerged for reading aloud to promote understanding of text (Hudson & Test, 2011). These concepts are critical to developing effective communication. That communication can be in the form of traditional verbal speech or another mode, such as sign language; direct selection or eye gaze on words, letters or images; gestures; facial expressions; or augmented voice.

## Early Language and Literacy

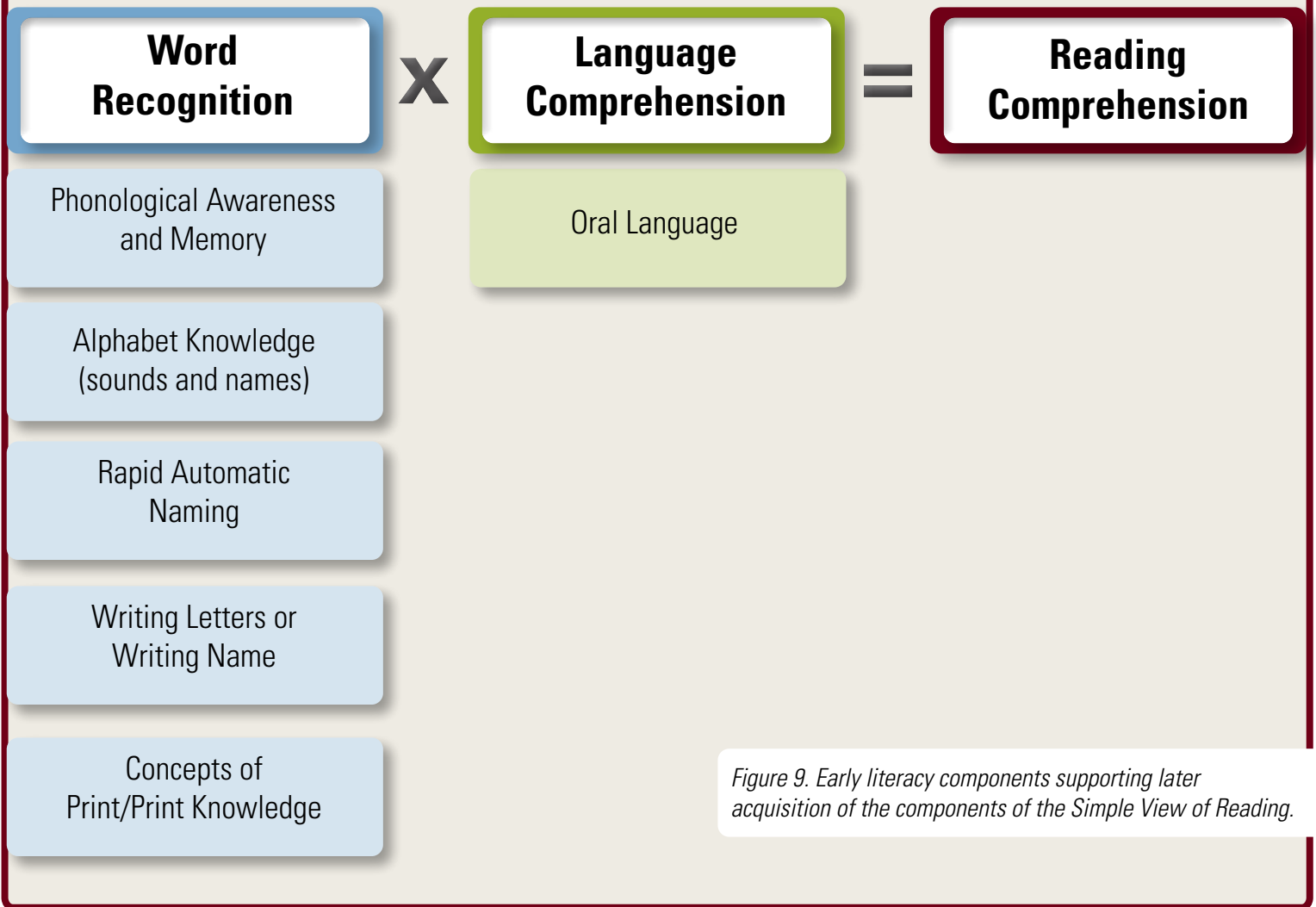


Figure 9. Early literacy components supporting later acquisition of the components of the Simple View of Reading.

Early literacy, next in the learning continuum after emergent literacy, includes complex skills that focus on decoding, recognition of words and language comprehension. These skills lay the foundation for reading, writing and communication proficiency. These concepts are represented in Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards, Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts and Ohio's Extended Standards for English Language Arts.

The [National Early Literacy Panel](#) identified 11 literacy variables that predict later measures of literacy development (see Appendix E). Ohio uses the research that confirms these 11 variables when developing evidence-based resources to promote emergent and early language and literacy development. Children's mastery of these early skills leads to successful application of "conventional" language and literacy components.

## Conventional Language and Literacy

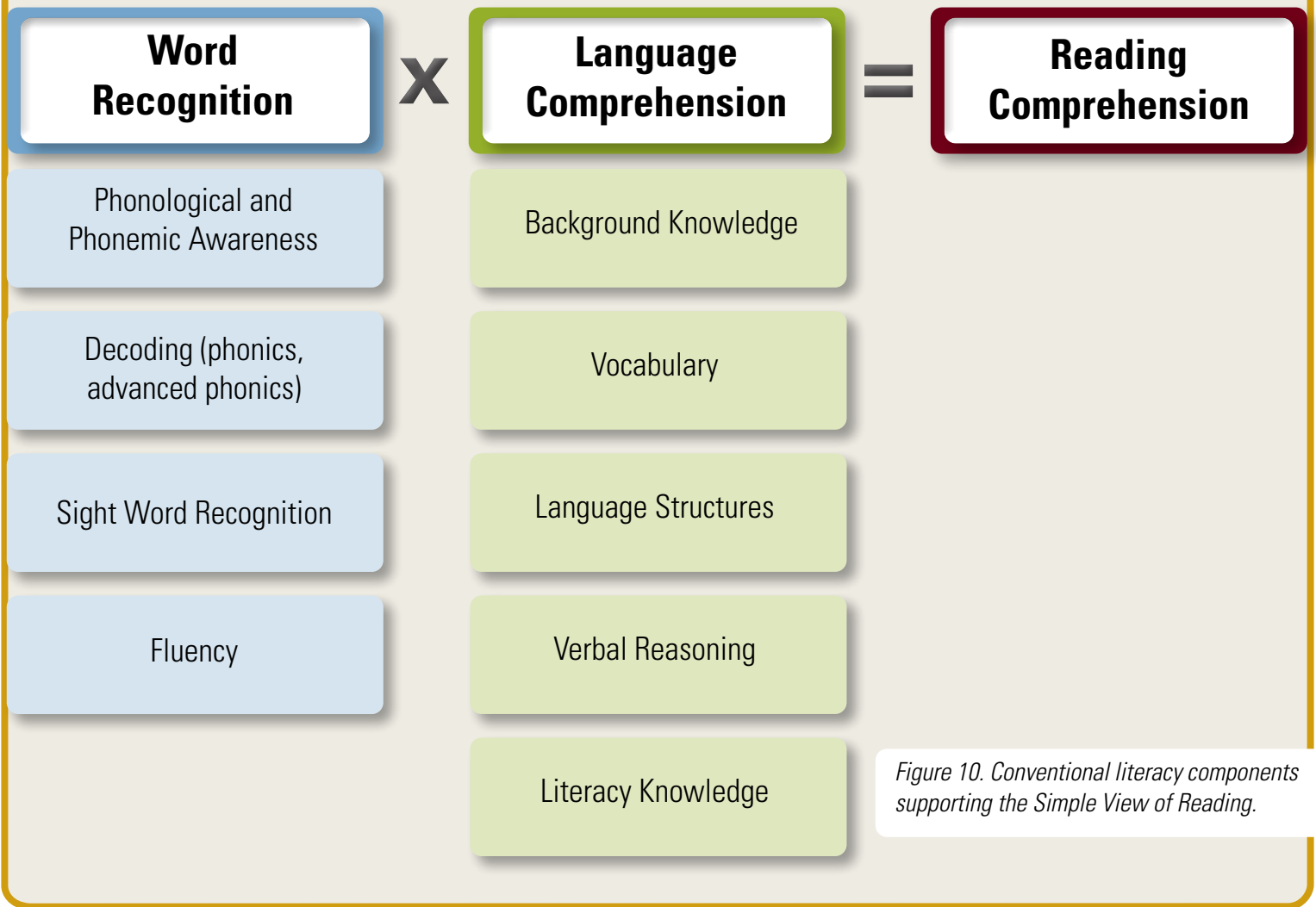


Figure 10. Conventional literacy components supporting the Simple View of Reading.

## Conventional Language and Literacy

Conventional language and literacy generally refer to decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing and spelling (NELP, 2009). Researchers have identified these areas as the focus of elementary and secondary literacy learning. They are represented in Ohio's Learning Standards and Extended Standards for English Language Arts in kindergarten through grade 12. The National Reading Panel (2000) calls these skills Five Components of Reading:

1. Phonemic awareness
2. Phonics
3. Fluency
4. Vocabulary
5. Comprehension

"[A] synthesis of the empirical research on reading instruction suggests that students with significant intellectual disabilities and associated disabilities can learn phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills with direct instruction" (Woods-Field, et.al., 2015). Learners in this phase also develop conventional writing skills that enhance oral language, communication and reading comprehension and sets the stage for communicating in writing.

Figure 10 illustrates the components that must become “increasingly automatic” in word-level reading (Scarborough, 2001). All learners must develop the neural pathways associated with automatic word-level reading, including learners with sensory disabilities. The desired outcomes are the same, but the instructional means to develop those pathways may vary depending on the needs of the learner, for example using visual phonics or adapted instructional materials. These skills include the following components of the alphabetic principle, which are the predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds:

### **Phonological awareness:**

Phonological awareness includes the awareness of the speech sound system that includes words, syllables, onset-rime, first sounds and phonemes. Included under the umbrella of phonological awareness is phonemic awareness, the awareness of individual phonemes, which are the smallest sound units of speech. A learner’s ability to perceive individual phonemes often is the most difficult component of learning to decode and often is the reason learners struggle to read. This difficulty occurs because the brain is not designed to develop these skills, so learners need support and explicit instruction to develop this ability (Willingham, 2017). Learners who use alternate modes of communication may use sign or augmented voice to take part and demonstrate phonological awareness.

### **Decoding:**

Decoding includes basic and advanced phonics, applying letter-sound correspondence and word analysis skills – or patterns of spelling. The most effective way to teach decoding to all learners, including nonverbal learners and those with significant intellectual disabilities, is through explicit and systematic instruction (National Reading Panel, 2000; Woods-Field, et al., 2015).

### **Sight word recognition:**

Sight word recognition includes building sight vocabulary, allowing a learner to instantly and effortlessly retrieve words (automaticity), including both regularly and irregularly spelled words. Recent research supports teaching and learning sight word recognition aligned to orthographic mapping rather than through strategies focusing on visual memory. Orthographic mapping is “the mental process we use to store words for immediate, effortless, retrieval...[requiring] sufficient phoneme awareness skills, sound/symbol skills, as well as the ability to notice the connection between the oral sounds in the words and the written letters in written words,” (Kilpatrick, 2016). Research also supports this shift in instruction for students with significant intellectual disabilities. Typical sight word instruction for students with intellectual disabilities usually focuses on visual word recognition and limited exposure to phonemic awareness and phonics instruction (Woods-Field, et al., 2015).



## Fluency:

For a learner, becoming proficient in word-level reading leads to word reading fluency. Fluency is defined as reading with sufficient accuracy, rate and expression to support comprehension (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006).

Figure 10 also includes the areas learners become “increasingly strategic” at using when they become more skilled (Scarborough, 2001). These areas include:

## Background knowledge:

Background knowledge influences a reader’s ability to develop a “situation model” of a text by allowing the reader to determine what is important in the text. Background knowledge also helps a child more deeply understand the text by applying any relevant knowledge he or she already possesses. Research indicates an individual with more expertise in a subject will comprehend texts within that expertise better than texts outside of that expertise, and an individual with some knowledge in many subjects will comprehend more texts than a person without knowledge in many subjects (Willingham, 2017; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1993, 1997, 1998).

Learners who have limited exposure to community experiences, travel, social opportunities or a wide array of incidental learning that can occur naturally for other learners must develop background knowledge through explicit teaching or simulation. Background knowledge may be limited for learners with complex disabilities because they may have limited exposure to academic (Tier 1) content instruction; social-emotional or medical needs that cause absence from school; motor challenges that limit their access to text and other learning materials; and communication challenges or sensory sensitivities that may limit interaction their interaction with other children, adults or content (Quenemoen & Thurlow, 2019). Educators must design learning opportunities to include rich and explicit teaching of knowledge and skills across content areas that develops background knowledge for all learners, including students with disabilities and English learners (Wexler, 2019).

## Vocabulary:

Vocabulary includes the words that are spoken (expressive) and words in listening (receptive). “Children use the words they hear to make sense of the words they will eventually see in print. . . . By understanding words and their connections to concepts and facts, children develop skills that will help in comprehending text” (Erickson, et. al., 2009, Neuman and Dwyer, 2009). Vocabulary also includes the breadth (the amount of words a learner knows) and depth (the strong connections between the words a learner knows, including sound-spelling connections) of word knowledge (Willingham, 2017). Strong vocabulary instruction includes explicit instruction of new words with multiple examples and using new words in a variety of contexts. Learners must be taught how to use context, such as parts of speech, to determine word meaning. Morphology (the study of the forms of words) must be taught to ensure learners have access to moderately challenging reading material to build and develop vocabulary in addition to the vocabulary being explicitly taught (Willingham, 2017; Beck, et al. 1982; McKeown, et al., 1983; Fukkink, et. al., 1998; Bowers, et al., 2010; Goodwin, et al., 2010).



## Language structures:

Language structures include syntax (the arrangement of words in a sentence) and semantics (the meaning in language). Skilled readers must be able to connect sentences, read to interpret and understand the meanings of texts (Willingham, 2017). Texts can be challenging for learners to understand when they have structures or grammar patterns that are uncommon. A reader needs at least an implicit understanding of the grammatical structure of language and may need additional support if the language structure of text differs from that of the learner's normal communication method, for example, in the way English text differs from American Sign Language.

## Verbal reasoning:

Verbal reasoning includes drawing inferences and understanding different types of figures of speech. Learners must make inferences and construct meaning from the text. They need to think logically about what they read to make meaning and integrate their own experiences with the text to make connections using new and existing knowledge. Learners who are very literal may be challenged by verbal reasoning, especially when using figures of speech or making subtle references to humor, and will need additional support and explicit instruction.

## Literacy knowledge:

Literacy knowledge includes concepts of print and text genres. It is important for learners to understand concepts of print, such as reading from left to right and top to bottom, how to hold a book and punctuation cues. This may not be natural for all learners, so it must be explicitly taught.

Increased background knowledge and vocabulary across grade levels and subjects will enable children to exhibit inferential and narrative language skills. The greater a learner's background knowledge, the more he or she will be able to understand and discuss topics beyond the immediate context. **Ensuring learners have adequate background knowledge to make necessary connections in text and continue to comprehend and learn through text as they progress through school requires building children's knowledge** (Willingham, 2017). Additionally, the greater a learner's academic vocabulary, the more he or she will be able to comprehend words in text and use words in formal writing. Promoting the development of knowledge and academic language skills is critical for learners in all content areas and must be supported across the continuum of literacy development for *all* learners (Browder, et al. 2008; Spooner, et al., 2011).

The components of reading identified in the Simple View of Reading are represented throughout Ohio's Learning Standards and Extended Standards for English Language Arts in kindergarten through grade 5. They are evident in these strands, or areas of the standards: Foundational Skills; Speaking and Listening; Language; Literature; Informational Text; and Writing.

Although all grades from K-5 contain standards addressing each component of reading, the **emphasis** of instruction shifts throughout the grade levels as students progress toward proficiency. Appendix F depicts the general subskills in each of the five components of reading that are emphasized as learners move through the elementary grades—this is not about balance, but a changing emphasis. Educators must be aware that students who are not progressing in a typical manner will continue to need support targeting the earlier subskills. Mastering these components will lead to greater success in a learner’s adolescent years. However, this plan stresses the importance of continuing to target these areas for learners who struggle to read regardless of their grade levels or disability status, into middle and high school.

**Educators must consider several factors when differentiating instruction for English learners. This includes identifying their English language proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading and writing to identify appropriate language-based expectations and evidence-based reading supports.** -Fairbairn & Jones-Vo, 2010

### Developing Writing Proficiency (Early, Conventional and Adolescent Language and Literacy)

Writing is an essential component of learners’ academic experiences and, like reading, requires explicit, evidence-based instruction. Writing benefits reading in many ways, including reinforcing decoding skills through the encoding process and making connections between the components of language comprehension through writing in response to what is read (Conrad, 2008; Graham & Hebert, 2010). Even proficient readers may struggle with writing, making it critical to provide explicit writing instruction for all students (Graham & Perin, 2007).

During the early and conventional language and literacy phases, **handwriting instruction** positively influences developing reading and spelling skills by improving learners’ perceptions of letters and further developing the networks in the brain involved in letter processing (Wolf, et al., 2018; Berninger, 2012; James, et al., 2016).

## What is dysgraphia?

Students with impaired handwriting may have the specific learning disability dysgraphia. The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke defines dysgraphia as “a neurological disorder characterized by writing disabilities...the disorder causes a person’s writing to be distorted or incorrect” (NINDS, 2019). Dysgraphia occurs when there is “a breakdown in the communication pathways between the mind’s image of a letter and the hand’s ability to produce that letter in written form.”

-Moats & Tolman, 2018

Developing background knowledge during this time is critical for learners to produce coherent writing that addresses the increasingly demanding content and sources introduced throughout the grade levels. Writing also can be a powerful tool to teach learners how to think critically (Langer & Applebee, 1987).

Berninger and Amtmann synthesized the research on writing development through the Simple View of Writing, later expanded and retitled the Not-So-Simple View of Writing (Berninger & Amtmann, 2003; Berninger & Winn 2006). This framework includes transcription, self-regulation and text generation with **working memory** as the center of these components and is applicable to early, conventional and adolescent literacy.

## Transcription:

Transcription includes letter formation, handwriting, keyboarding, spelling, braille, punctuation and spatial organization for words and sentences, which are foundational writing skills that are explicitly taught. These foundational skills must become accurate and fluent so as to not interfere with higher-level skills needed for composition (Kim & Schatschneider, 2017).

Attention to handwriting instruction and handwriting fluency is critical to not impede text generation (Graham, et al., 2009).

## Self-regulation and executive function:

Self-regulation and executive function skills are used by every person, every day. These skills enable people to plan, focus on, remember and carry out instructions, juggle multiple tasks successfully, regulate behavior and delay immediate demands in favor of long-term goals. At times, people may have challenges with executive function skills (retrieved from [www.OCALI.org](http://www.OCALI.org)) that can carry over into literacy development, including writing. Learners may be challenged to navigate text, maintain attention to develop comprehension, juggle the task demands of reading, comprehending and learning, or applying new skills. Tools such as graphic organizers, visual images to support vocabulary meaning and comprehension, visual task analysis and other tools that can hold small increments of text meaning while learners develop the big picture can be very beneficial. Once learners' use of self-awareness, tools and strategies becomes intrinsic, they can manage these skills independently and self-regulate.

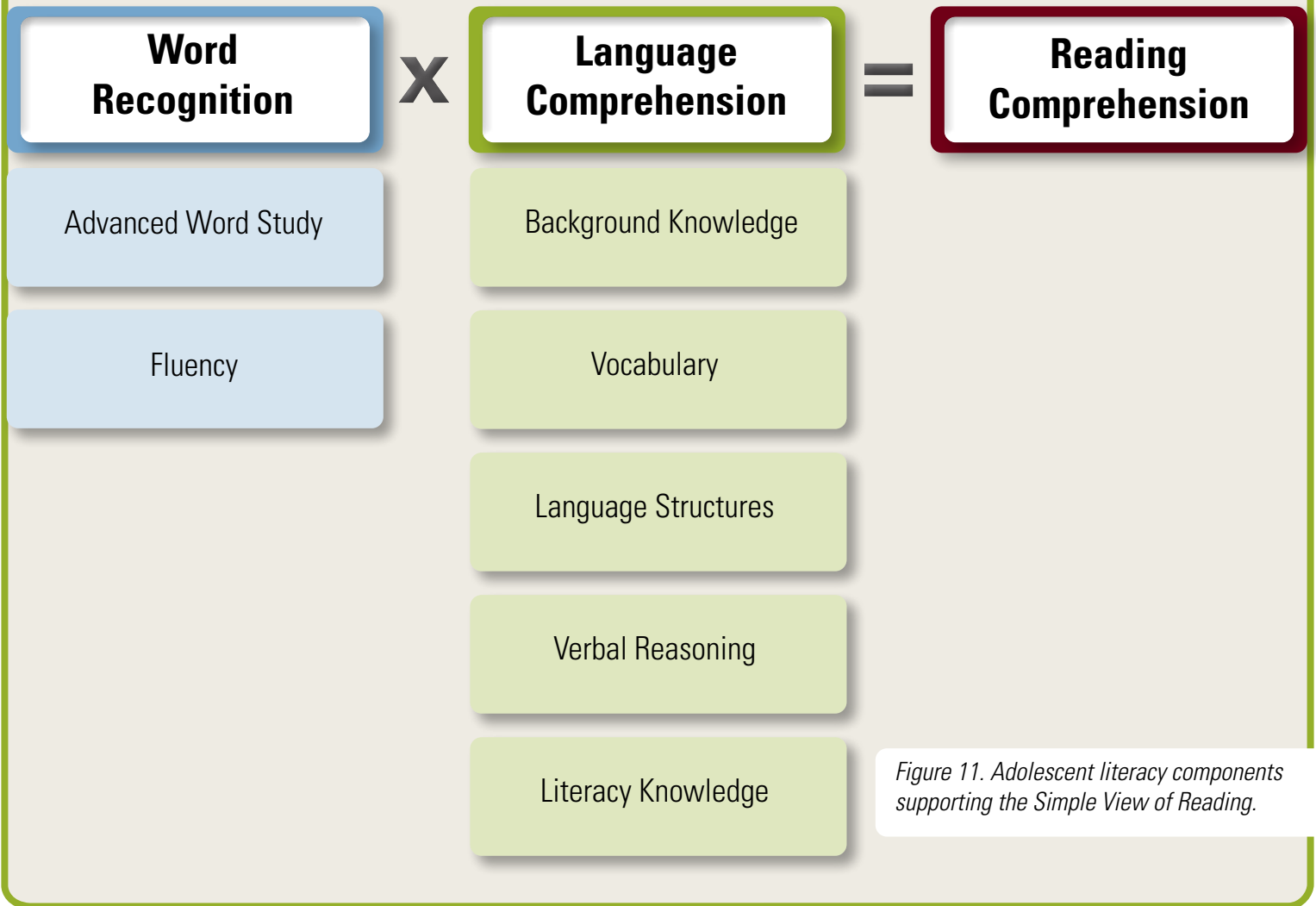
## Text generation:

Text generation includes the generation and organization of ideas at the word, sentence and paragraph level. It is mostly influenced by oral language skills. Explicit instruction and practice in vocabulary, grammar and conversation-level oral language is needed to support students in text generation (Kim & Schatschneider, 2017).

**“[W]hen all of [this] is in place—when the mechanics aren’t too burdensome and the writer has sufficient information to work with—writing may be the most powerful teaching tool we have. Writing assignments quickly alert students and their teachers to information students have missed or failed to understand, enabling to fill in gaps or correct errors before it’s too late. If student’s have absorbed the right information, writing about it forces them to retrieve it in a way that lodges it in their long-term memories, where it can be drawn on in the future. Cognitive scientists call this retrieval practice.”**

-Wexler, 2019

## Adolescent Language and Literacy



Adolescent language and literacy begins to build on conventional language and literacy around grade 4 and continues through high school. Academic language and disciplinary texts become increasingly complex and learners need to read, write, understand, interpret and discuss multiple texts across contexts (IRA, 2012). These changes, as well as developmental changes in adolescents, lead to a shift in the five components of reading of conventional literacy to the following five essential areas: (1) advanced word study; (2) fluency; (3) vocabulary; (4) comprehension; and (5) motivation (Roberts, et al., 2008).

The above essential components must be integrated into all content areas and become the shared responsibility of all secondary educators and specialists who support learners across this grade range. This does not mean all educators become reading teachers, but that all educators differentiate instruction within their disciplines to ensure all learners have equitable opportunities to access discipline-specific text, discourse and writing.

To meet the needs of all learners in this phase, districts and schools implement **evidence-based strategies across content areas**, such as explicit vocabulary instruction and extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation; provide literacy instruction and support that is **discipline-specific**; and provide **individualized intensive intervention in reading**, as needed.



## Strategic evidence-based practices across content areas:

Strategic evidence-based practices (Appendix G), especially those related to explicit vocabulary and comprehension strategy instruction, must be used consistently **across content areas** to support learners in acquiring knowledge. Knowledge acquisition takes place through comprehending complex texts and providing integrated scaffolds and accommodations to provide access to content area learning and assessment (Kamil, et. al, 2008). This is not meant to turn content area teachers into reading teachers or to focus exclusively on strategy instruction but to ensure learners acquire skills to read, comprehend and interpret content area text even as some learners may still be developing foundational literacy skills (Denton, 2012). When learners are supported in using common evidence-based strategies across the content areas, the depth and breadth of the content covered can be increased (Kamil, et al., 2008).

Though some evidence-based strategies are relevant across content areas, academic disciplines contain their own specialized vocabularies, text genres, warrants for arguments and citation styles—features linked to the types of knowledge unique to the discipline (Goldman et al., 2016). This suggests that teachers in such disciplines are best suited to teach students how to analyze, evaluate and create such texts (Denton, 2012).

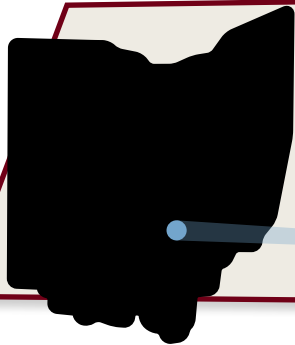
## Disciplinary literacy:

**Disciplinary literacy** moves beyond the common strategies used across all content areas and focuses on the unique strategies experts use to engage with text in an academic discipline (Shanahan, 2012). Ohio's Learning Standards for English Language Arts include the strand Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects 6-12. These learning standards require the learner to use common literacy strategies and develop a keen sense of the specific strategies used to convey knowledge in that discipline. Disciplinary literacy strategies are based on how an expert in this discipline would read and use the text, which differs greatly across disciplines (Shanahan, 2012). For example, disciplinary literacy in history requires a deep understanding of source context, disciplinary literacy in literature means a sensitivity to literary devices and disciplinary literacy in science demands analyzing how tables and figures intersect with accompanying text.

## Individualized intensive interventions:

In addition to implementing strategic evidence-based practices across content areas and discipline-specific strategies in core (Tier 1) instruction, some learners will require and must receive **individualized intensive interventions provided by trained specialists**. The inability to read at grade level in the secondary setting may be caused by a variety and combination of factors, such as problems with decoding, academic language, motivation, vocabulary, background knowledge or comprehension and must be addressed through explicit instruction and interventions. Educators should guide their choices of interventions by appropriate, diagnostic assessments that are flexibly designed to identify learning and motivational needs. Specialists then can provide individualized interventions that include explicit instructional focus that meet a learner's needs (Kamil, et al. 2008). Individualized intensive intervention is meant to accelerate learning so learners can make substantial progress toward reading successfully in their content area classes and increase their motivation to read. This level of intensity means the learner must progress at a faster rate than typically is expected in the amount of time instruction is occurring (Denton, 2012).





**“Secondary teachers have received high-quality professional development and been given the tools to help deliver content to our students. Students are now set to achieve at a higher level with interventions, and we now have a system in place that spans and bridges elementary, middle and high school.”**

-Casey Coffey, Superintendent, New Lexington Schools

## Learners with Difficulties in Reading or Writing K-12

As illustrated in Section 3, there are many learners who have not yet acquired language and literacy skills across all phases of the emergent through adolescent continuum. Many learners in Ohio struggle to learn to read and do not acquire adequate conventional literacy skills before entering middle and high school.

### Differentiated Core Instruction Aligned to the Science of Reading (Tier 1 Instruction)

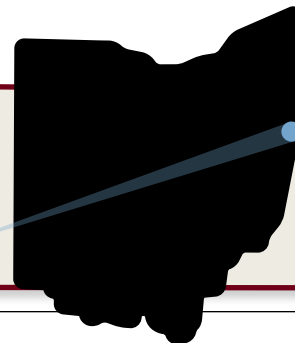
Learners may be characterized as struggling, or having reading disabilities, when they simply have not received sufficient instruction in word-level reading, writing and content to build the necessary skills and background knowledge they need to understand text. Insufficient instruction should not be attributed to an individual educator or group of educators but is the result of a flawed system and may be the result of low expectations for specific subgroups of learners.

The Department encourages district and school leaders to develop and strengthen supports for differentiated core instruction in kindergarten through grade 12 by:

- Using instructional practices and accessible assessments supported by the science of reading;
- Ensuring all educators have access to content-rich, high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading;
- Ensuring educators have access and training in assessment to plan for and implement differentiated instruction; and
- Providing educators with the opportunity to collaborate and plan for differentiated instruction.

**“Intervention is only effective to accelerate learning when your core instruction is extremely sound...you can’t intervene your way out of poor core instruction.”**

-Jack Cunningham, North Elementary Principal, East Liverpool Schools



### Types of Reading and Writing Difficulties

For educators to determine which scientifically proven methods to use when working with a learner who is having difficulty reading, they must understand the type of reading difficulty the learner is experiencing. Research shows evidence of three types of reading difficulties under the Simple View of Reading. The reader with typical or proficient skills is strong in both word reading and language comprehension (see Figure 12).

1. The reader characterized as having a **phonological difficulty** is weak in word reading but strong in language comprehension.
2. The reader characterized as having a **language difficulty** is strong in word reading but weak in language comprehension.
3. The reader with a **mixed reading difficulty** is weak in both word reading and language comprehension (Compton, et al., 2014; Kilpatrick, 2015).

Like the Simple View of Reading, this is a simple model, and each learner has individualized needs educators must address through assessment and instruction.

		Language Comprehension	
		Strong	Weak
Word Reading	Strong	Typical Reader	Language Difficulties
	Weak	Phonological Difficulties	Mixed Reading Difficulty

Figure 12. Types of reading difficulties organized under the Simple View of Reading (Adapted from *Essentials of Assessing, Preventing, and Overcoming Reading Difficulties*, Kilpatrick, 2015)

Educators must recognize the differences and implications associated with each type of struggling reader. Assessments used for diagnosing reading problems and monitoring reading progress, reader placement and exit criteria (also known as decision rules), as well as the likelihood of success in core instruction or with a specific intervention, are tied to the needs of the learner.

- Learners who have difficulties characterized as **phonological** will require assessments of word-level reading broken down by the skills needed in word-level reading, such as decoding and phonological skills, including phonemic awareness, letter-sound knowledge and rapid automatic naming, and interventions directly associated with the teachable word-level reading skill;
- Learners with challenges characterized as a **language difficulty** require more language-oriented assessments and interventions associated with linguistic comprehension, such as vocabulary, background knowledge, working memory, inferencing and comprehension monitoring; and
- Learners who experience **mixed reading difficulty** will require diagnostic assessments in both word-level reading and language comprehension, as well as interventions addressing both needs.

### Specific Note on Learners with Dyslexia

Ohio law defines dyslexia as “a specific learning disorder that is neurological in origin and that is characterized by unexpected difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities not consistent with the person’s intelligence, motivation, and sensory capabilities, which difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language” (Ohio Revised Code 3323.25). The International Dyslexia Association expands this definition by adding, “Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge” (IDA, 2012). Researchers estimate the prevalence of dyslexia is somewhere between 11 and 17 percent of the population. (Katusic, et al., 2001; Shaywitz, 2003).

**The statistics and research associated with dyslexia suggest that all educators are likely to encounter learners with characteristics of dyslexia and, with support, can easily know what to look for to plan for instruction.**

-Moats & Dakin, 2008

There are many misconceptions about dyslexia that research does not provide evidence for. These misconceptions include:

- Learners who are dyslexic “see things backwards” or make letter reversals, such as seeing b for d. These are common errors among developing readers, regardless of age or ability levels, that educators can address through explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and phonics (Kilpatrick, 2015); and
- Using colored overlays with learners who are dyslexic will accommodate eyestrain. Research provides limited support for using colored overlays to accommodate eyestrain independent of reading ability, but there is no research to validate this accommodation to support reading in learners who are dyslexic (Kilpatrick, 2015).

Ohio will continue to support core instruction that is explicit, systematic and structured. In doing so, it will provide learners who are dyslexic core instruction alongside their peers who are not dyslexic. These learners may or may not require intensive supports. By combining high-quality core instruction aligned to the science of reading and targeted interventions, Ohio intends to ensure learners who are dyslexic will become proficient readers.

## Enhancing Partnerships and Collaboration of All Educators and Stakeholders to Address Inequities in Educational Experiences

Ohio’s root cause analysis (Section 3) indicates *the culture of districts or buildings often is not conducive to effective improvement*. This may be due to a lack of collaboration between special educators and general educators. Ohio’s plan reflects the belief that all children can learn, all educators can teach and proactive planning is key to successful implementation for *all* learners.

Ensuring *all* learners have access to content-rich, high-quality language and literacy instruction requires general education and special education practitioners to work together to plan, implement and review all literacy efforts. They can do so using **Integrated Comprehensive Systems** as an approach to grow proficiency for all learners. Integrated Comprehensive Systems are centered around four cornerstones:

1. Focusing on equity and best practices.
2. Establishing equitable structures, such as location and arrangement of students and staff.
3. Implementing change by leveraging funding and regulations to deliver service more proactively.
4. Establishing access to high-quality teaching and learning for ALL learners by developing teacher capacity (Frattura & Capper, 2014).

Through the State Personnel Development Grant, Ohio previously has tested the Integrated Comprehensive Systems approach. This approach was developed to support educational leaders as they promote equity by transforming entire educational systems (Frattura & Capper, 2014). Schools and districts in several Ohio regions have used the approach to support shared leadership, a concept identified in the Ohio Improvement Process.

An Integrated Comprehensive Systems approach addresses a full range of inequities, including race, ethnicity, social class, ability and gender. It includes an equity measure for continual feedback leading to improvement, and it reallocates resources to ensure their equitable distribution within current levels. Department and regional literacy staff hosted a yearlong series in the 2019 school year to train regional staff from state support teams and educational service centers to apply the fundamental principles of this approach in implementing evidence-based language and literacy strategies. Continued training is an important element of this plan and will allow the state and regional entities to help districts and schools ensure equitable access to instruction and literacy systems for all students.

## Infrastructure to Support Ohio’s Literacy Vision

Since publishing the 2018 version of *Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement*, Ohio has continued to enhance the state and regional infrastructure by developing a literacy unit at the Department. It has hired literacy specialists representing elementary, intermediate and high schools, as well as enhanced regional supports by adding Ohio literacy lead positions and adolescent literacy specialists. The Department is prioritizing its professional development offerings and support services to educational service centers and state support teams. The Department will continue working to grow the capacity of the regional system to provide universal, targeted and intensive support to schools and districts.

## Section 5: Objectives, Strategies and Activities

Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement includes a set of state-level objectives backed by strategies and activities designed to provide technical assistance to regional supports, districts, schools and early childhood education programs. These objectives are outlined below. The Department will collect data and information to measure the impact of its effort to drive continuous improvement and measure state, regional and local efforts.

### Objectives

Efforts to achieve the vision outlined in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement are focused on these four objectives:

1. Support quality planning and data-driven decision-making through district and school engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process.
2. Ensure districts, community schools and early childhood education programs develop meaningful, usable evidence-based language and literacy plans aligned to the state literacy plan, District Improvement Plan and that are sustainable.
3. Support the fidelity of implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices.
4. Provide financial support for literacy improvement efforts and help identify and implement sustainable practices.

Ohio will continue to provide support across the state's education system to increase literacy achievement in classrooms, buildings, districts and regions. To achieve the objectives outlined above, Ohio is focusing on five components outlined in the state's Theory of Action (see Appendix B).

- Through **shared leadership**, educational entities will use **proven practices** to provide language and literacy instruction and interventions to all learners.
- Educational entities will implement a **multi-tiered system of supports** thoroughly and make **data-driven decisions** to meet the needs of all learners.
- By **increasing educator capacity**, all learners will have access to high-quality, evidence-based language and literacy instruction that includes interventions to meet their individual needs.
- **Families** will be more equipped and engaged partners in their children's language and literacy development.
- **Community collaboration** will enable more learners to experience language-rich, literacy-based environments outside school and before entering school.

## Objective 1: Support Quality Planning and Data-Driven Decision-Making Through District and School Engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process.

**Strategy 1: Capacity for data-driven decision-making:** Provide educational leaders professional development on using language and literacy data to drive district leadership team and building leadership team decision-making through a tiered support approach.

**Strategy 2: Educator professional learning:** Provide educators professional learning focused on using language and literacy data to drive teacher-based team decision-making through a tiered-support approach.

### *State Activities:*

- Technical assistance webinars: Develop and provide technical assistance webinars that teach district leadership teams, early childhood education professionals, building teams and teacher-based teams how to analyze literacy data;
- Targeted technical assistance: Regional support teams develop and provide targeted technical assistance and coaching for building leadership teams focused on support for teacher-based teams; and
- Individualized technical assistance plans: Regional literacy specialists develop individualized technical assistance plans for high-needs local districts, schools and early childhood education programs developing actions to move from data and decisions to implementation. Supports help ensure implementation with fidelity and building sustainability.

## Objective 2: Ensure Districts, Community Schools and Early Childhood Programs Develop Meaningful, Usable Evidence-Based Language and Literacy Plans Aligned to the State Literacy Plan, District Improvement Plan and that are Sustainable.

**Strategy 1: Technical assistance for developing plans:** Provide educational leaders technical assistance to help them understand the state's comprehensive literacy plan and how to develop a local literacy plan that uses a tiered-support approach.

**Strategy 2: Statewide evidence-based clearinghouse:** Develop language and literacy tools and resources for Ohio's online, evidence-based clearinghouse.

### *State Activities*

- Local literacy plan support for all: Develop and provide technical assistance webinars that teach districts, community schools and early childhood education programs how to create local literacy plans;
- Local literacy plan targeted support: Regional support teams develop and provide targeted technical assistance for districts, community schools and early childhood education programs developing local literacy plans;
- Local literacy plan intensive support: Regional literacy specialists develop individualized technical assistance plans for high-needs local districts, community schools and early childhood education programs developing local literacy plans;
- Resources and tools: The Ohio Department of Education's literacy team will work with the Department's Office of Learning and Instructional Strategies and the Office of Research, Evaluation and Advanced Analytics to develop or identify the language and literacy resources and tools to be included in Ohio's Evidence-Based Clearinghouse;
- Annual literacy academy: The Department's literacy team will conduct an annual literacy academy that highlights theories of language and literacy development (including brain research), effective leadership practices for furthering literacy, content elaboration and best practices for data analysis and planning instruction and intervention.



## Objective 3: Support the Fidelity of Implementation of Evidence-Based Language and Literacy Practices.

**Strategy 1: Professional development supporting evidence-based leadership practices:** Involve educational leaders in professional development focused on evidence-based leadership practices and systems that support educators as they implement practices to further learners' language and literacy development through a tiered-support approach.

**Strategy 2: Professional development supporting evidence-based teaching practices:** Engage educators in professional learning focused on implementing evidence-based language and literacy practices through a tiered-support approach.

**Strategy 3: Provide family engagement opportunities:** Offer Ohio families opportunities to support evidence-based language and literacy practices at home through a tiered-support approach.

**Strategy 4: Support stakeholder and community partnerships and engagement.** Involve stakeholders and community partners in developing and implementing literacy-improvement efforts.

### State Activities

- Leadership practices support for all: Develop and provide a professional learning series for educational leaders on leadership practices to promote learner language and literacy development;
- Leadership practices targeted and intensive support: Provide in-person professional learning and coaching to educational leaders on leadership practices to promote language and literacy development;
- Instructional and systems coaching support for all: Develop and provide a professional learning series for educational leaders and literacy coaches in instructional and systems coaching (see Appendix C);
- Targeted support for Ohio Improvement Process implementation: Develop and provide targeted support for implementing the Ohio Improvement Process, focusing on evidence-based literacy practices;
- Multi-tiered system of supports that includes targeted and intensive support: Provide professional learning to staff of each region on the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory, a literacy-specific multi-tiered system of supports needs assessment that examines teams, implementation of tiered instruction, evaluation and resources.
  - Develop professional learning to support regional staff who are using data from the Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory to drive system and instructional change in districts and schools using the Ohio Improvement Process.
  - Provide professional learning, support and coaching services to districts and schools for administering and interpreting the results of a literacy specific multi-tiered system of supports needs assessment;
- Support to increase educator capacity that includes targeted and intensive support: Develop a web-based platform to support the sharing of evidence-based literacy instructional practices.
  - Develop a regional network of literacy specialists to increase support for districts implementing evidence-based literacy practices throughout the state.
  - Pilot professional development and coaching related to both instruction and systems. These will be for school teams using evidence-based language and literacy strategies and will address each essential component of reading instruction and writing outlined in Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.
  - Coach teams on evidence-based language and literacy strategies, addressing each essential component of reading instruction and writing;
- Family engagement support for all: Publish a Family and Community Support Literacy Toolbox, in addition to supporting the implementation of Partnerships for Literacy (P4L) (Wellman & Boone, 2018);
- Family engagement targeted support for early childhood education: Support regional implementation of Sit Together and Read (STAR) (Justice, 2018) and Sit Together and Read at Home (STAR @ Home) (Justice, 2018).

## Objective 4: Provide Financial Support for Literacy Improvement Efforts and Help Identify and Implement Sustainable Practices.

**Strategy 1: Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy and Comprehensive Literacy State Development subgrants:** Use the federal Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy and Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant funds to promote networks of consortia and model sites to target support to districts, community schools and early childhood education programs serving all learners, including those with the greatest needs.

**Strategy 2: Sustainability:** Ensure **Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy and Comprehensive Literacy State Development** subgrant applications fully address capacity-building and program selection so applicants will be able to sustain evidence-based language and literacy practices beyond the funding period.

### State Activities

- **Develop Comprehensive Model Sites:** As part of the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant, Ohio will establish model literacy sites across Ohio's 16 regions. These will be district- or community-based and include schools and early childhood education programs that serve children from birth to kindergarten entry, kindergarten to grade 5, and middle and high school;
- **Prioritize subgrants:** Evaluate grantees based on model implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices for each grade band;
- **Create sustainability tools:** The Department will work with state partners to create tools and technical assistance that further sustainable, evidence-based language and literacy practices across classrooms, buildings, programs, district, regions and the state;
- **Continue implementing the State Systemic Improvement Plan:** Ohio will continue to implement the State Systemic Improvement Plan to increase evidence-based early literacy instruction and interventions for preschool through grade three children, specifically focused on diverse learners;
- **Seek continuous improvement:** The Department will use knowledge gained from all literacy improvement programs to inform its continuing efforts to implement evidence-based language and literacy instruction and intervention for children from birth through grade 12.

## Section 6: Measuring Success

### Measuring Success of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement

Ohio will measure the success of its literacy activities using learners' results on Ohio's Early Learning Assessment, Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Ohio's State Tests in English language arts. Ohio is committed to analyzing data sources that influence learner outcomes along the way.

To measure the success of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement, the State Literacy Team will examine these questions and data sources annually:

1. Are districts', community schools' and early childhood education programs' local literacy plans aligned to the state's plan and their overall improvement efforts? Data sources will include:
  - Local literacy plans.
2. Are districts, schools and early childhood education programs engaging in data-driven decision-making and the Ohio Improvement Process? Data sources include:
  - School improvement applications;
  - Step Up To Quality early childhood quality rating & improvement system; and
  - Local literacy plans.
3. Are districts, schools and early childhood education programs implementing evidence-based language and literacy practices? Data sources include:
  - State-level achievement;
  - Spring and fall surveys completed through the Comprehensive Continuous Improvement Plan;
  - Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory;
  - Early Literacy Pilot; and
  - Ready Schools Language and Literacy Plan.
4. Are network activities productively supporting effective implementation, feedback and improvement? Data sources include:
  - Family, community, district and regional surveys;
  - Reading Tiered Fidelity Inventory; and
  - Semiannual and annual reporting.
5. Are the literacy outcomes for learners from birth through grade 12 improving at least at the rate set by Ohio's Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan for the state's most disadvantaged learners? Data sources include:
  - Ohio's Early Learning Assessment;
  - Kindergarten Readiness Assessment;
  - Ohio State Tests in English language arts grades 3-8 and high school.;
  - Ohio's English Language Proficiency Assessment for English learners; and
  - Ohio's Alternate Assessment for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Ohio submitted goals to the U.S. Department of Education through its Every Student Succeeds Act Consolidated State Plan. The Department will measure the success of this comprehensive state literacy plan against these same learner performance goals (see Appendix H).

## Measuring Success of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant and Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant

Ohio will analyze the performance of districts, schools, early childhood education programs and consortia awarded subgrants under the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant and Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant. Each awardee will establish goals based on local data to measure progress. The Department will work with awardees to monitor progress toward their goals and more deeply analyze data.

To gauge awardee's performance under these grant opportunities, Ohio will analyze:

1. The percentage of 4-year-old children (if applicable) who achieve significant gains in oral language skills on the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Early Learning Assessment for preschool.
2. The percentage of fifth grade learners (if applicable) who meet or exceed proficient on state reading and English language arts assessments.
3. The percentage of eighth grade learners (if applicable) who meet or exceed proficiency on state reading and English language arts assessments.
4. The percentage of high school learners (if applicable) who meet or exceed proficiency on state reading and English language arts assessments.

Ohio will analyze these four data points annually and share its findings with stakeholders and the State Literacy Team to guide Ohio's continuing literacy development efforts.

## Section 7: Ohio's Plan for Monitoring Progress

Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement is founded on the principle that *all* learners deserve and must have access to the highest-quality, evidence-based language and literacy instruction, curriculum and resource materials. To achieve this, the Department will monitor state, regional and local efforts that support resources and practices, ensure alignment and interconnect.

### Monitoring State Literacy Activities

The literacy team works to ensure alignment of the literacy improvement work occurring across all agency offices and throughout the state. The director of the Ohio Department of Education's Office of Approaches to Teaching and Professional Learning and its assistant director of literacy oversee the monitoring and coordination of all literacy activities for learners from birth through grade 12 outlined in Sections 4 through 6 of this document. The Department continues to work to make sure programs and initiatives align and interconnect. As a result, staff also monitors the alignment of literacy practices and policies inside and outside the Department. These leaders will review all practices and policies across Department offices and partner agencies to make sure messages about literacy improvement and content align. This work is critical to the Department because Ohio's literacy programs and resources are extensive and include implementing multiple literacy initiatives across offices and agencies. These must align with one another to achieve the greatest impact for Ohio's learners.

### Monitoring Regional Literacy Activities

#### Practice-to-Policy Feedback Loop

The Department collaborates with a regional network of literacy specialists. To ensure alignment of their efforts, the Department developed a Practice-to-Policy Feedback Loop to connect Department and regional staff. Through this system, the Department monitors literacy activities in the regional network to ensure they align with the state's and, at the same time, respond to local and regional needs. Feedback loops allow the Department to support improvements and adjustments in implementation. This allows for a deeper understanding of what is working and what is not ([implementation.fpg.unc.edu](http://implementation.fpg.unc.edu)). Figure 13 illustrates the reciprocal, Practice-to-Policy Feedback Loop protocol supported by research. The feedback loop allows the Department to receive and respond to direct feedback from the education community.

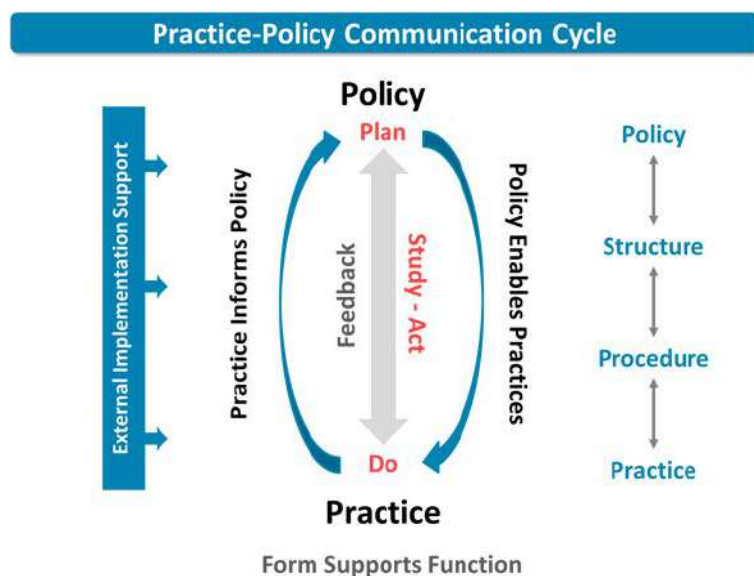


Figure 13. State Implementation and Scaling-up of Evidence-based Practices Center (SISEP) and the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's FPG Child Development Institute



## Needs Assessment for Regional Literacy Networks

To support successful implementation and inform future regional literacy improvement practices across Ohio's 16 regions, the Department will develop a regional needs assessment. Results from the needs assessment will guide planning and establishment of regional literacy networks led by regional literacy specialists and state support team or educational service center staff. Regional literacy networks will use results to guide practices that build statewide capacity. The 16 regional literacy networks will establish implementation plans to use with model literacy sites. This will ensure the implementation of evidence-based literacy practices among network members and scale practices from model sites.

## Monitoring Local Literacy Activities

### Reading Achievement Plans

Ohio has a policy requiring specified districts and schools to submit Reading Achievement Plans to the Ohio Department of Education. Each of these plans serves as a district's local school improvement plan for reading and may be interchangeable with a local literacy plan. Reading Achievement Plans are required for districts or community schools that meet the following criteria for two consecutive school years, for example, 2017-2018 and 2018-2019:

1. The district or community school received a grade of "D" or "F" on the Improving At-Risk K-3 Readers component of its Ohio School Report Card.
2. Fewer than 60 percent of the district's or community school's students scored proficient or higher on Ohio's grade 3 English language arts test.

Regional literacy specialists read all plans, and the state monitors each submitted plan for compliance and quality. Districts receive feedback in the form of strengths and suggestions for improvement. Districts' and community schools' plans are posted on the Department's website.

Monitoring of districts' and community schools' Reading Achievement Plans inform state and regional efforts to support districts in implementing evidence-based language and literacy instruction and intervention. These supports include professional learning, individualized coaching by regional state support teams and educational service centers, and state-level technical assistance.

### Literacy Subgrant Awardees

Each Striving Readers subgrantee and Comprehensive Literacy State Development subgrantee is required to submit a local literacy plan aligned to Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. Ohio monitors Striving Readers subgrantees using implementation rubrics based on three goals:

1. Fidelity of implementation and plan alignment.
2. Performance on plan goals and objectives.
3. Fiscal accountability.

For more details, see the [Ohio Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Grant Proposal](#) and [Ohio Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Proposal](#).

The Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant proposes to establish model literacy sites across Ohio's diverse 16 regions. Model sites will serve as incubators for sustainable literacy development practices and demonstration sites for districts and schools considering implementing new practices.

Monitoring efforts at the state, regional and local levels allows the Department to make mid-course corrections to its plan when needed and celebrate successes, especially at the local level. Aligning monitoring efforts further improves the Department's ability to implement and achieve the vision of Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement.

## Section 8: Implementing Evidence-Based Strategies

Findings from the needs assessment conducted by Ohio's State Literacy Team, coupled with the expectations of the Every Student Succeeds Act, point to the need for Ohio to support schools and districts in implementing evidence-based instruction and intervention strategies aligned to the science of reading. To meet the needs of the greatest number of districts, schools, early childhood education programs and families, the Department developed an evidence-based clearinghouse. To ensure the clearinghouse is successful and has a positive impact on student achievement, the Department is designing professional development programs to be delivered through a tiered delivery approach, the Ohio Coaching Framework (see Appendix C), and networked improvement communities.

### What is an Evidence-Based Strategy?

Evidence-based strategies are **programs, practices or activities** that have been evaluated and proven to improve student outcomes. The term "evidence-based" appeared extensively in the Every Student Succeeds Act. The federal government's emphasis on using evidence confirms its belief in the importance of making decisions based on rigorous evaluation.

Resources created before the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act might claim to be "evidence-based," but it does not necessarily mean these practices meet the Every Student Succeeds Act definition of evidence-based.

A **program** is a packaged set of lessons and additional academic content used to teach a subject at a particular grade level (adapted from the definition of *Curriculum Programs and Materials in the R-TFI*) or a branded intervention or product (adapted from the definition of *program type* from the What Works Clearinghouse).

*Example: Core Knowledge Language Arts*

A **practice** is a lesson or repeated instruction intended to introduce, develop or improve a skill. A practice is not a branded intervention or product, but rather a method, approach or strategy for teaching (adapted from the definition of the program type from the What Works Clearinghouse).

*Example: Develop awareness of the segments of sounds in speech and how they link to letters (IES Practice Guide for Foundational Reading)*

An **activity** is what students are doing to learn and/or practice a skill, from engaging with a teacher during modeling, to supported practice and ultimately independent practice.

*Example: Students read a passage chorally, paying close attention to the phrasing and then provide feedback on how they read the phrases differently.*

### What is the difference between evidence-based and research-based?

The terms "evidence-based" and "research-based" are frequently used interchangeably, but they are different — and it is important to understand the difference.

A strategy that is evidence-based likely also is research based; however, the reverse is not always true. A program or strategy — especially if it is newly developed — may be research-based but not meet the formal definitions of evidence-based.

For a strategy to be considered "evidence-based," its efficacy must have been evaluated by someone other than just the people or organizations that developed the strategy. The outcome of the evaluation(s) will determine what, if any, level of evidence the strategy meets.

While generally there is research that goes into the development of a strategy, it must be evaluated for efficacy, as outlined by the Every Student Succeeds Act, to fulfill Ohio's state or federal requirements related to evidence-based strategies.

## Convergence of Evidence for Learning to Read (The Science of Reading)

Neuroscience now is confirming what educational and psychological research has revealed in the past 20-30 years about how individuals learn to read. Scientists now can explain how the brain works when an individual is reading and what the brain needs to transform itself from a nonreading brain to a reading brain. This information comes from studying functional MRIs of the human brain and confirms the research that supports explicit, systematic instruction in components of reading instruction outlined by the National Reading Panel (2000). Evidence converging from several fields, including psychology, education, linguistics and neuroscience, overwhelmingly aligns. Ohio plans to continue learning from this body of research to help develop and update the resources and support available to Ohio educators to improve the literacy of its children.

**“It is simply not true that there are hundreds of ways to learn to read... when it comes to reading we all have roughly the same brain that imposes the same constraints and the same learning sequence”**

-Dehaene, 2010



## Knowledge, Skills and Abilities Needed in Evidence-Based Language and Literacy Strategies Across the Educational System

Each level of the education system must develop different levels of knowledge, skills and abilities related to evidence-based language and literacy strategies. Educators working directly with learners need deep knowledge, skills and abilities in how to use an evidence-based strategy successfully. Educators who are further removed from student instruction such as district and building leaders, need deep knowledge, skills and abilities in how to select high-quality resources to support or evaluate implementation strategies.

### Instructional Level

Educators providing instruction to learners in language and literacy must have deep knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- The components of word recognition and language comprehension;
- Explicit instruction and differentiation;
- Measurement of fidelity of instruction; and
- Collection and analysis of student data to inform instruction.

### Building Level

Building leaders must have knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- The components of word recognition and language comprehension;
- The changing emphasis at each grade level served (see Appendix F);
- Measuring the fidelity of adult implementation and student outcomes;
- Analyzing aggregated student outcome data based on the components of the Simple View of Reading;
- Determining the success of, and barriers to, implementation in each grade level and schoolwide;
- Identifying resources such as teacher time, staffing and high-quality instructional materials to support evidence-based instruction that meet all learner needs; and
- Knowing what to look for to tell them if explicit instruction in the components of the Simple View of Reading are occurring in instruction.

### District Level

District staff members, including curriculum, assessment, student services and other staff responsible for decisions related to literacy, must have knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- The processes used to select effective programs, practices and activities aligned to the Simple View of Reading to ensure the district's strategies will improve student outcomes;
- The components of word recognition and language comprehension and the changing emphasis at each grade level served (see Appendix F); and
- The assessments used to measure the degree of adult implementation, such as application of concepts and walkthrough tools. These determine if educators have effectively applied strategies and properly collected and analyzed student outcome data to identify successes and challenges.

### Regional Level

Regional educational service centers and state support teams must have knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- Research and evaluation to discern effective versus ineffective strategies in reading;
- Processes used to select programs, practices and activities to make sure that what the educational service center or state support team staff will support is aligned to the Simple View of Reading and will improve outcomes; and
- Developing training and coaching strategies aligned to the Simple View of Reading.

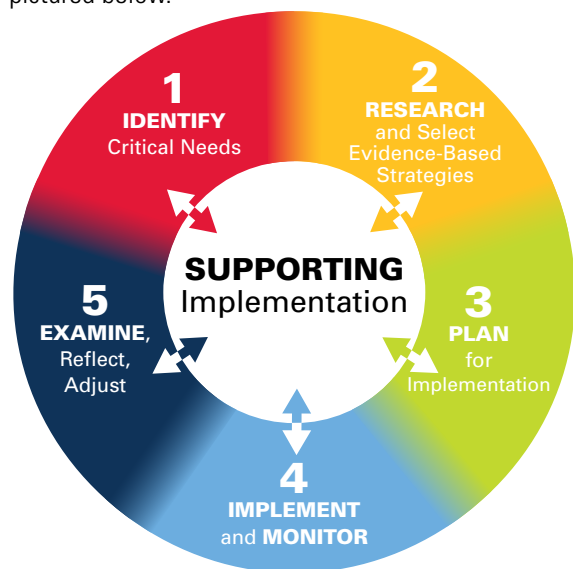
### State Level

State-level staff supporting literacy efforts must have knowledge, skills and abilities in:

- Research and evaluation to discern effective versus ineffective strategies in reading;
- Strategies that align to components of the Simple View of Reading; and
- Identifying ineffective practices promoted by other state staff or state guidance documents to streamline messaging and bring coherence to improvement efforts.

## Identifying the “Right” Evidence-Based Strategies

Ohio continues to develop resources to support schools in identifying and implementing evidence-based strategies through Ohio’s Evidence-Based Clearinghouse. The clearinghouse capitalizes on the plan, do, study, act cycle used in the Ohio Improvement Process, pictured below.



Because of a convergence of evidence on how learners acquire literacy skills through language and literacy instruction, schools should not have to ask, “Where do I find evidence-based strategies?” but rather, “Which of the evidence-based programs, practices or activities should I be implementing and with whom?”

See **Appendix I** for a protocol, adapted from the National Center for Systemic Improvement (2018), to use as a guide for choosing evidence-based strategies in step 2 of the Ohio Improvement Process, *Research and Select Evidence-Based Strategies*. For districts using Implementation Science concepts, this protocol is relevant to the [exploration stage](#). **This protocol only will be effective if the team has engaged in identifying critical needs, including a root cause analysis of those needs, in step 1.** Regional support teams for literacy, including participating staff from educational service centers and state support teams, can offer support for districts using this protocol.

## Ensuring Effectiveness and Improving on Strategies

The Department is investing in the identification and *implementation* of evidence-based language and literacy practices. Working with regional educational service centers and state support teams, the Department is developing tiered professional learning programs for districts, schools and early childhood education programs. The tiered approach includes activities and intensive supports for districts and schools most at risk. The Department also is enhancing Ohio’s Coaching Model to help districts and schools implement practices. Ohio plans to ensure its effectiveness through professional learning, coaching and networked improvement communities.

### Professional Learning

Ohio will update or develop job-embedded opportunities for professional learning based on Ohio’s Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement. These will reflect the state’s literacy standards for learners from birth through grade 12, model curriculum, e-learning modules and guidance documents. Resources will be available for all stakeholders on the Ohio Department of Education website. Targeted support will be provided through the Department’s Learning Management System and intensive support will be provided by regional state support teams and educational service centers.

Professional learning in literacy for educators will align with the science of reading and focus on the language development continuum—emergent literacy, early literacy, conventional literacy and adolescent literacy—discussed in Section 4. Professional learning specifically will emphasize foundational and extended literacy strategies grounded in research-based reading instruction, including the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), Scarborough’s Rope (Scarborough & Brady, 2002), and the four-part processing model for word recognition (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989).

To make sure regional support systems are prepared to meet districts and schools’ needs to learn about and implement the science of reading, the Department developed a four-year Regional Professional Learning Series. The series meets the criteria of high-quality professional development (sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven and instructionally focused) described in the Every Student Succeeds Act. The series intentionally weaves the concepts of presumed competence throughout and engages participants in discussions that support a diversity of students, for example, English learners and students with complex needs. This series began in the 2018 school year. Learn more about its scope in Appendix J.



## Coaching

Coaching for district staff is one support mechanism the Department has identified. Research supports coaching as an effective way to improve teachers' instructional skills and outcomes for learners (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Shidler, 2009). In Ohio's literacy plan, coaching serves as a tool for implementation and an intervention to improve outcomes for all learners—especially the most disadvantaged.

The Ohio Department of Education developed Ohio's Coaching Model under the State Personnel Development Grant and Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan. The State Personnel Development Grant focused on building the capacities of district-level, building-level and teacher-based teams to analyze data, plan for literacy instruction, and identify and undertake appropriate interventions. The grant expanded the use of process coaching, an Ohio-developed version of reflective coaching, to support systemic district language and literacy structures with the Ohio Improvement Process. Ohio's State Systemic Improvement Plan focused on early literacy, provided professional learning targeted at foundational language and literacy development, and included coaching for implementing instructional practices. Through these efforts, the Department learned it is critical to offer support through two types of coaching (see Appendix C).

Ohio's Coaching Model identifies coaching processes with different focuses:

1. **Instructional coaching** implemented at the classroom level.
2. **Systems coaching** implemented at the administration and leadership team levels.

The goal of *instructional coaching* is to develop educators' knowledge, skills and abilities in content-specific strategies to improve student learning. This type of coaching is for teachers, specialists and small teams of educators and paraprofessionals. It includes face-to-face conversations and use of video demonstrations.

The goal of *systems coaching* is to develop knowledge, skills and abilities in district and school infrastructures to promote the use of high-quality language and literacy strategies. This type of coaching often is provided to administrators, district leadership teams, building leadership teams and teacher-based teams.

The Department currently is developing and testing a **peer coaching model** using the resources received from the State Personnel Development Grant. Resources on the tested model are expected to be available statewide by the 2021 school year.

## Networked Improvement Communities

The Department recognizes the strength that comes from collaboration focused on implementation and shared problem-solving. The Department has developed a State Literacy Network consisting of state and regional literacy specialists who will develop statewide and regional resources. Additionally, each Regional Support Team for Literacy has established a regional literacy network that allows educators to learn together to build Ohio's capacity for implementing evidence-based language and literacy instruction for all learners. These networks operate based on the common conceptual frameworks described in Ohio's Plan for Raising Literacy Achievement.

### Regional Literacy Networks in Action: Region 15

State Support Team Region 15, along with its educational service center partners, have built a regional literacy system of support to provide local school districts with evidence-based research on language and literacy instruction. Within this regional literacy support system is an infrastructure needed to support both literacy instruction and coaching that align with building and district literacy needs. The targeted network audience includes superintendents, principals, literacy coaches, curriculum directors special education directors, and higher education faculty.

The regional literacy infrastructure features three annual Regional Literacy Peer to Peer Network and Coaches Network meetings facilitated by the Regional Literacy Support Team designed as a multi-year initiative. Content presented during the network meetings supports the key elements of a quality schoolwide elementary and secondary reading program with an in-depth focus for building literacy knowledge throughout Region 15.

**"In the past few years, I have witnessed renewed energy and effort by our region's educators to improve reading outcomes for students. Never in my career have I engaged in such powerful work."**

*-Beth Rice, Regional Early Literacy Specialist, State Support Team 15*

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