SOOKE SCHOOLS 62

Shaping Tomorrow Today

Façonner l'avenir, aujourd'hui



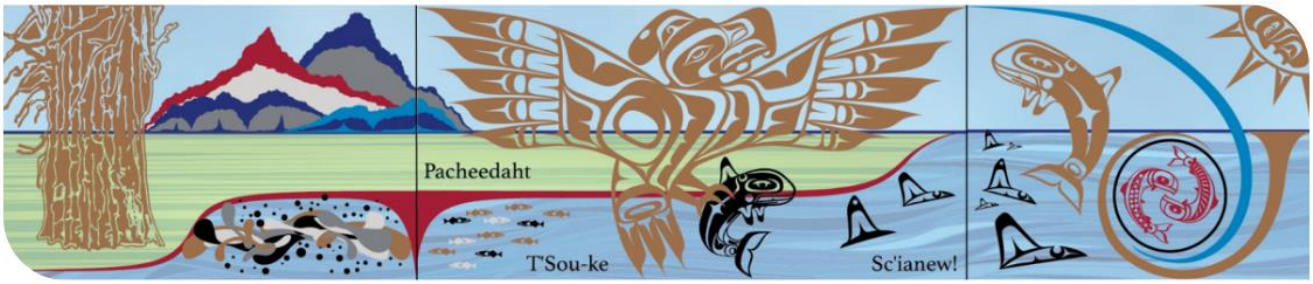
District Literacy Plan 2025 – 2029

Sooke School District #62

Equity Framework for Literacy

True equity requires acknowledging and understanding different perspectives and experiences. This means creating learning environments that embrace and represent different learning abilities and knowledge types, diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, and varied linguistic backgrounds of our student communities.

These inclusive educational practices form the core of our equity commitment. By fostering a sense of belonging and ensuring all learners receive responsive instruction and practice opportunities, students can develop strong literacy skills that enhance their future opportunities as educated citizens.



Harmonious by Artist Connie Watts

Evidence-Aligned Literacy Instruction for All Learners

Literacy is complex, involving many different skills and processes. While there is a well established body of research on reading, writing, and oral language, including how students develop skills and what instructional strategies are most effective, the evidence isn't settled. The field continues to study promising practices and their implementation in authentic classroom environments to make valuable recommendations for educators.

The Sooke School District is committed to facilitating comprehensive, responsive, and evidence-aligned instructional approaches, in alignment with and striving for the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care's definition of literacy: *the ability to understand, critically analyze, and create a variety of communication forms, including oral, written, visual, digital, and multimedia, to accomplish one's goals*. The focus is on all essential components of literacy development through explicit, purposeful teaching and a variety of opportunities for application and transfer across the curriculum. This learning often follows a progression from simple to complex concepts, and a cumulative approach ensures new learning builds upon previously mastered skills. Students are provided with many rich, meaningful opportuties to generalize and apply skills. Literacy instruction is inclusive; the teaching of skills across reading, writing, and oral language is essential for some, beneficial for all, and harmful for none.

Responsive Literacy Instruction for All Learners

Evidence-aligned instruction is necessary, but not sufficient on its own. While rigorous literacy practices are essential for ensuring that all students receive effective and equitable instruction, they must be implemented within a broader framework that acknowledges and values the whole child. Literacy instruction should be responsive to students' lived experiences, cultural identities, and emotional well-being.

Educators create inclusive, supportive learning environments where every student feels seen, respected, and supported. Students bring rich cultural knowledge, diverse language backgrounds, and unique perspectives to the classroom. When literacy instruction connects to students' realities and builds on their strengths, it becomes more meaningful, motivating, and impactful. Moreover, students who feel safe and confident are better able to take academic risks, engage deeply with texts, and express themselves in writing. A responsive approach attends to diverse groups of students while maintaining a high standard of instruction, ensuring that all learners have access to literacy skills and opportunities to use them in meaningful ways.

Early Literacy Instruction

Young children can joyfully learn foundational literacy skills through play – and it makes a difference.

- Pam Allyn

Early literacy instruction lays the foundation for lifelong learning. When children engage with language in ways that spark curiosity, build confidence, and celebrate progress, they are more likely to see themselves as capable readers and writers. This is especially important for multilingual learners, who bring rich linguistic and cultural knowledge into the classroom. Through playful exploration, purposeful routines, and supportive guidance, early literacy becomes more than just a set of skills – it becomes a meaningful part of how children connect with the world. A playful approach to learning ensures that all students, from the very beginning, experience literacy as empowering, inclusive, and filled with possibility.

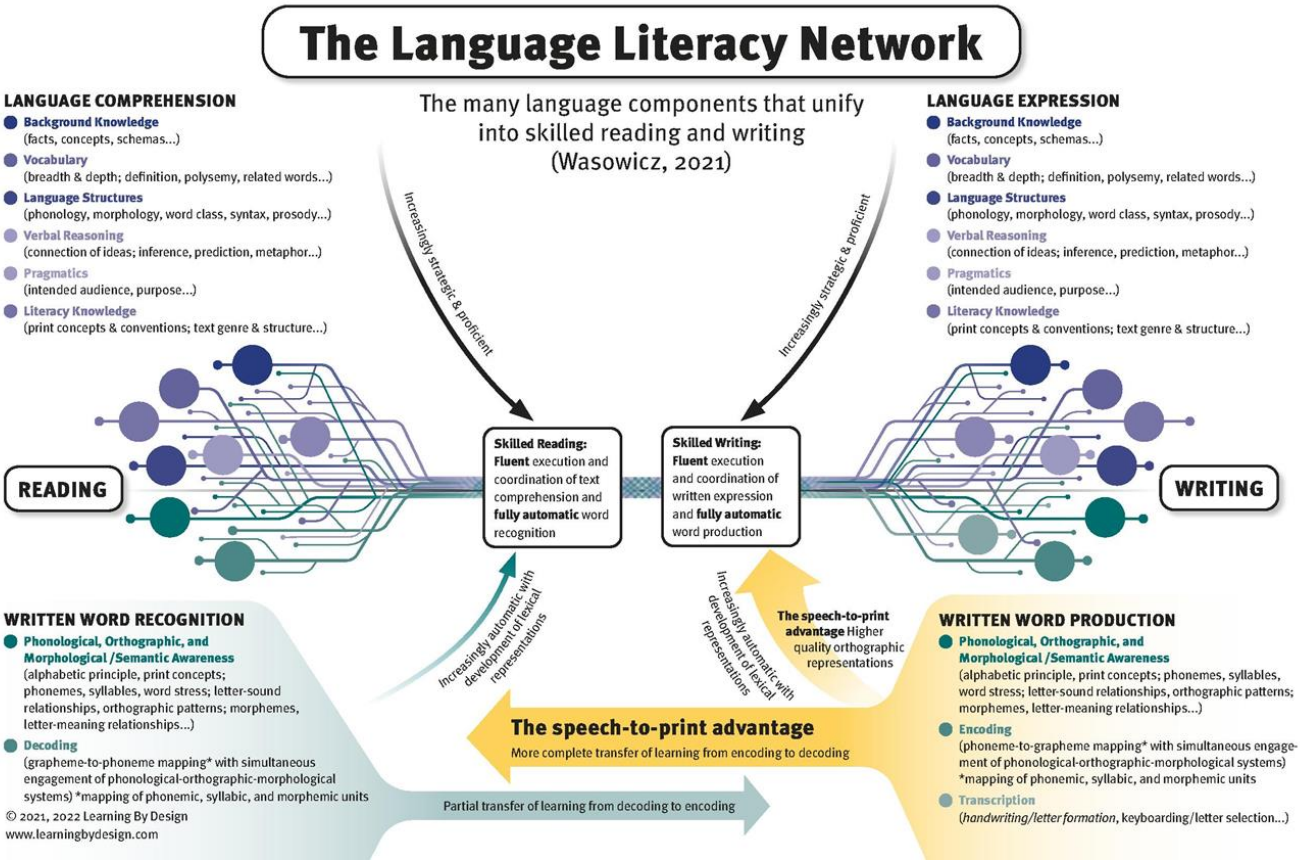


Figure 1: Language Literacy Network

Reading and writing cannot be separated.
Reading is like breathing in.
Writing is like breathing out.

- Pam Allyn

Literacy is a secondary system that depends on language as the primary foundation, as seen in Figure 1, which highlights the underlying language processes common to reading and writing. Reading and writing are symbolic representations of spoken language. This connection is so fundamental that it's practically impossible to discuss reading and writing instruction without focusing on language development. The relationship between language and literacy is bidirectional. As children's oral language skills increase, their literacy capabilities grow; strong reading and writing abilities reciprocally enhance language development. Early oral language development serves as a crucial predictor of later reading comprehension success. Its effectiveness extends beyond traditional classroom settings, and is particularly valuable for English Language Learners and students with learning difficulties. In SD62, speaking and listening are purposefully woven into all literacy-focused professional learning opportunities.

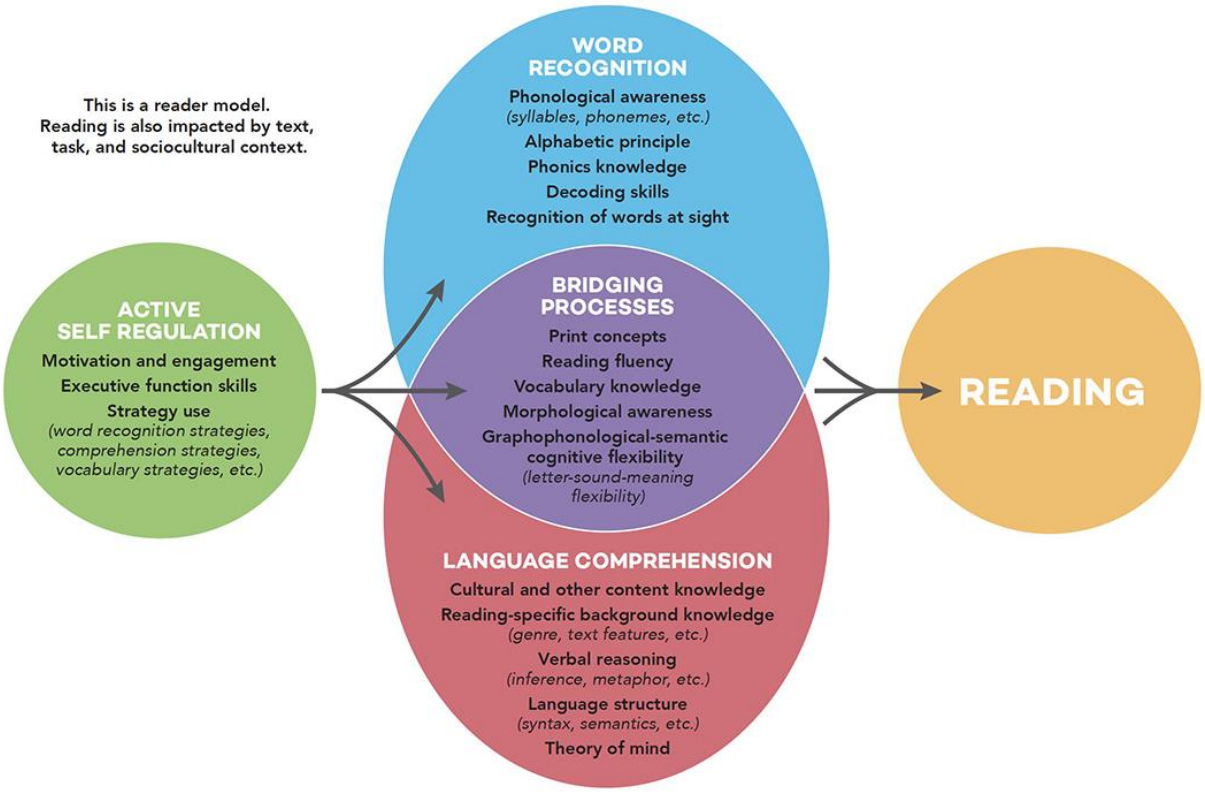


Figure 2: Active View of Reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)

Comprehensive Reading Instruction

The Active View of Reading seen in Figure 2, above, draws on a well-researched model of reading and its many components and processes, while also considering the individual learner profile. While our collective goal is to facilitate instruction that leads to skilled, proficient reading with understanding, a learner-focused approach to reading instruction must also take into account our students' self-regulation, motivation, and engagement.

Comprehensive reading programs develop and support the five essential components of reading, seen in Figure 3: phonological/phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Consequently, professional learning on evidence-aligned reading instruction incorporates: what skills are essential to teach, the various approaches to instruction within dynamic classroom environments, and how we can use assessment tools to ensure our students are responding accordingly. Teacher collaboration is key to guide the implementation of instructional strategies, routines, and practices, as well as to support the collaborative problem solving process that leads to responsive instruction.



Figure 3: Core Components of Reading (NRP, 2000)

Comprehensive Writing Instruction

Effective writing instruction goes far beyond grammar and spelling - it involves explicitly teaching and integrating multiple, interconnected skills. The Writing Rope, as seen in Figure 4, illustrates how skilled writing is the result of weaving together five key components: critical thinking, syntax, text structure, writing craft, and transcription skills. Comprehensive writing instruction supports students in developing each of these strands over time, through direct teaching, guided practice, and authentic writing opportunities. When students are supported in all areas of writing, they are equipped to write with clarity and purpose across genres and subject areas.

Importantly, effective writing instruction is also deeply connected to reading development. Reading and writing are reciprocal processes, so each supports and reinforces the other. As students read interesting and complex text, they build vocabulary, and awareness of grammar, text structures, and author's craft, which they can then apply in their writing. Likewise, as students write, they deepen their understanding of how language works, which in turn enhances their reading comprehension. When students engage in writing about what they read, they build stronger content knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills. A comprehensive and reciprocal approach ensures students don't just learn to read and write in isolation, but instead, become literate thinkers who can express and analyze ideas with clarity and confidence.

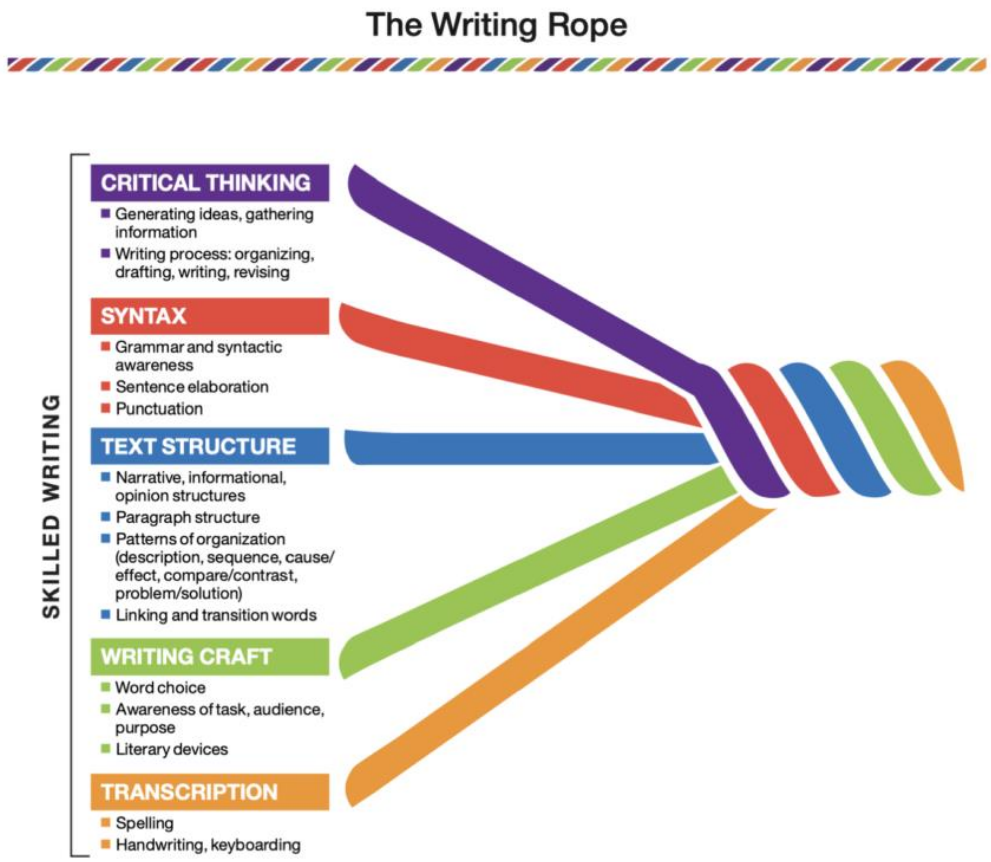


Figure 4: The Writing Rope (Sedita, 2019)

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support in Literacy

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) provide a systematic approach to organizing school-level supports to make sure that every student gets the right level of support to be successful – academicall, socially, and emotionally. Specific to literacy, this type of structure aims to catch students at-risk for or currently experiencing difficulties early and respond in a way that is inclusive, proactive, and equitable. Effective multi-tiered literacy frameworks are typically organized into three tiers (see Figure 5):

Tier 1 includes comprehensive, differentiated classroom instruction for *all* students

Tier 2 provides supplementary intervention for students who need some more support to stay on track

Tier 3 offers intensive, individualized support for students who need intervention in addition to what Tier 1 and 2 provide

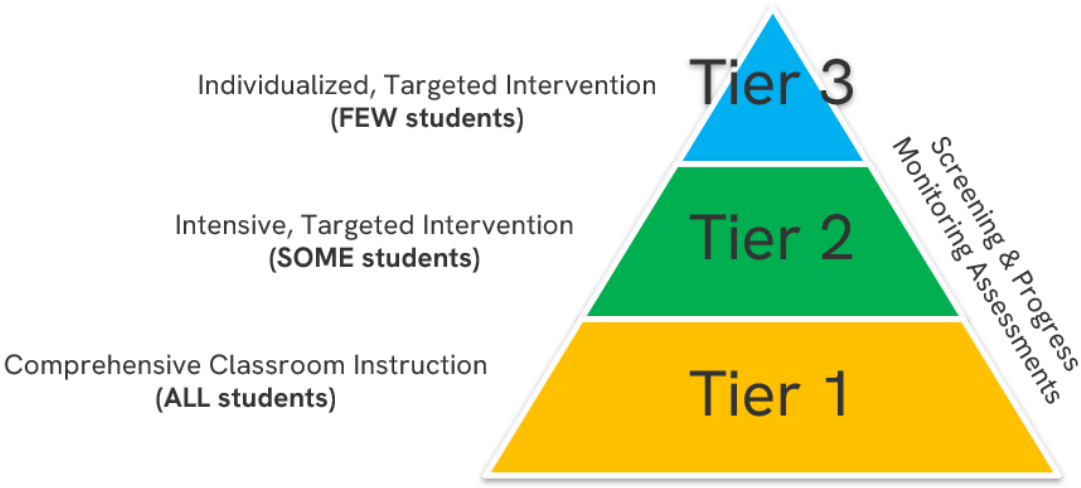


Figure 5: Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)

A key part of MTSS is being data-informed. In SD62, school teams regularly gather and review information, like universal screening results, classroom assessment information, observations, and other indicators, to understand how students are doing. This helps teachers to adjust instruction accordingly and make informed decisions about the kind of support each student may need.

It is crucial that this systemic approach to support starts in Kindergarten, as this aligns with research on the value and efficacy of early intervention. As further described in the Windows of Opportunity image, below, early identification and intervention can facilitate a preventative approach to support.

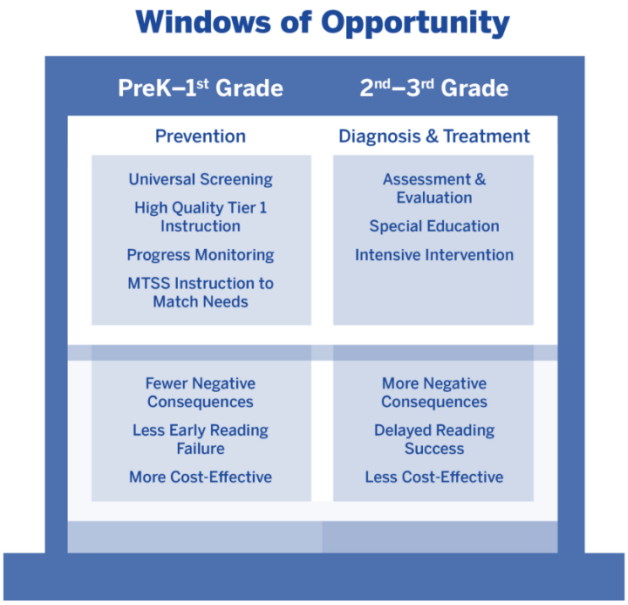


Figure 6: Windows of Opportunity (Catts & Hogan, 2021)

Literacy Assessment & Supplemental Supports

We never want to do one iota, one second, one minute of extra assessment that we don't have to do unless it answers a key question that makes us better teachers.

- Dr. Jan Hasbrouck

Teachers are always gathering information about what students know and can do across oral language, reading, and writing, including how students can apply, transfer, and generalize these skills to facilitate or communicate their learning across the curriculum. Use of a variety of assessment strategies to capture student learning in response to instruction (see Figure 7) can help teachers understand each learner's strengths and areas for growth, so they can plan effective, responsive instruction. When used thoughtfully, literacy assessment helps ensure all students, including multilingual learners and those who need extra support, get what they need to grow as confident, capable readers and writers.

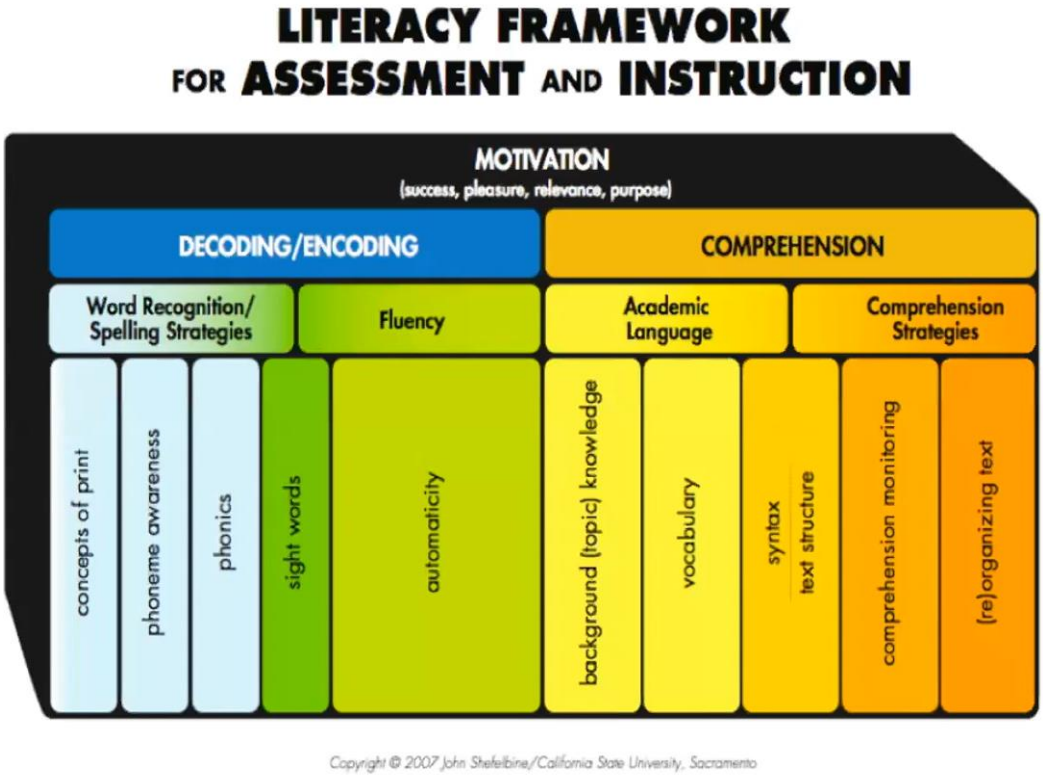


Figure 7: Literacy Framework for Assessment and Instruction (Shefelbine, 2007)

Effective Assessment and Ongoing Data Analysis

Ongoing Assessments: Teachers regularly assess student progress to guide instruction and provide students with timely, constructive feedback that supports and furthers their learning.

Transparent Communication: We are committed to keeping parents and caregivers informed with clear, transparent updates about their child's academic progress, so families can support learning at home.

Collaborative Data Review: School staff meet to review school-wide data, allowing for timely identification and response to student needs.

By working together and using data effectively, we strive to remove barriers and ensure every student has the support they need to succeed.

K-8 Universal Screening

Universal screening is the first step in a systematic assessment framework that reduces bias and supports equitable access to services. Screening measures are brief, dependable, and skill-focused, capturing specific indicators of risk for difficulties in literacy. Gathering universal information across grade groups allows for School-Based Teams to make equitable, informed, and responsive decisions on which students might benefit from intervention(s), ensuring that those students who need support are the ones who receive it.

Timelines:

- Fall Screening window – September to October
- Winter Progress Monitoring window – January to February
- (Optional) Spring Screening window – May to June

Recommended Measures

The following measures capture skills that are linked to skilled, effective reading with comprehension.

- Kindergarten – First Sound Fluency (FSF)
  - → Students identify the first sound in spoken words, demonstrating foundational phonemic awareness. This early literacy skill supports later abilities to manipulate sounds within words, which is essential for decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling).

- Grade 1 – Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)
  - → Students read simple nonsense words, demonstrating knowledge of letter-sound relationships & basic decoding skills. Decoding is a key part of becoming a strong reader. When students can read words with ease, they can better focus on the meaning of the text.
- Grade 2 to Grade 8 – Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)
  - → Students read a grade-level passage aloud, demonstrating reading fluency and accuracy. When students read fluently (i.e., their reading sounds like talking), their brains can pay more attention to understanding what the text is about. Reading fluency bridges the gap between sounding out words and understanding and analyzing what they read.

Next Steps After Universal Screening

Diagnostic Measures

As a district, we use universal screening data alongside additional assessments and observations to support all students' learning. Universal screening results can help us determine whether further diagnostic assessments or consultations with other school-based professionals may be needed for some students. Diagnostic assessments can help create a clear, focused plan for extra help by narrowing in on the exact skills a student needs to strengthen. In the classroom, diagnostic assessments guide day-to-day teaching by identifying what students already know and where they might need more instruction, support, or challenge. By gathering specific information about each student's knowledge and skills, educators are equipped with the data they need to tailor instruction and provide targeted interventions, ensuring every child receives the support they need to succeed.

Classroom Instructional Approaches

Classroom instruction at the elementary level combines both play-based and structured, explicit teaching strategies, offering students a range of opportunities for practice and application. These learning experiences take place in whole group, small group, and one-to-one settings to best meet the diversity in classrooms. As students progress to intermediate, middle, and secondary levels, literacy instruction expands to include disciplinary literacy, ensuring students build strong reading and writing skills across all subject areas. For students who need additional support with foundational literacy skills, a multi-tiered, responsive approach to support is employed ensuring that every student receives the targeted assistance they need to thrive.

K-8 Tier 2 Literacy Intervention

Small-group, targeted intervention is supplemental to comprehensive classroom instruction. Classroom teachers facilitate comprehensive instruction in oral language, reading, and writing to all students. Frequent, intensive LIT/LST interventions target specific foundational skills to build automaticity and efficiency to foster ease in student's cognitive capacities to focus on comprehension of texts. Additionally, LIT & LST's explicit instruction on foundational skills complements classroom teachers' writing instruction and supports students in their ability to communicate efficiently in writing.

Professional Learning for Classroom Teachers

Collaborative professional learning improves literacy outcomes by building a shared knowledge base and focusing on high-quality materials and pedagogical practices through learning sessions and school-based Collaborative Learning Rounds focused on student success.

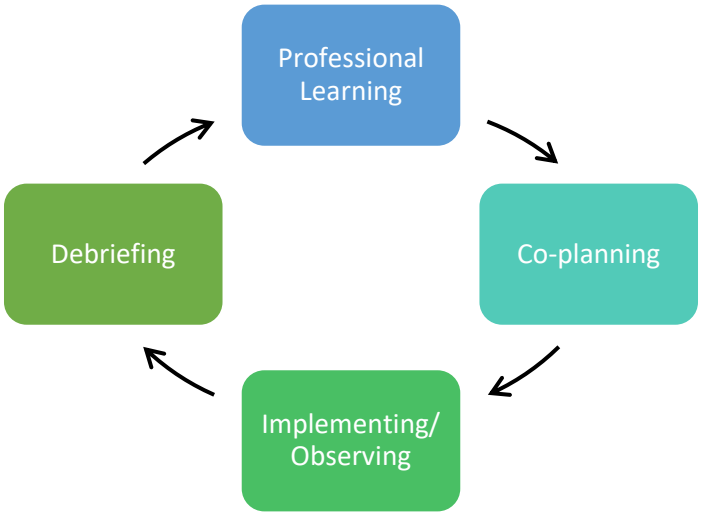


Figure 8: Collaborative Learning Round Cycle

Each school year, school-based cohorts of teachers are provided a year-long deep dive into literacy instruction:

- Professional Learning sessions and school-based Collaborative Learning Rounds

These job-embedded professional learning opportunities continue throughout the year to build educators' knowledge of evidence-based literacy practices and opportunities to reflect on

current practices, considering student screening and assessment data. Teachers collaboratively identify student strengths and areas of need to differentiate and adapt instruction to improve proficiency across oral language, reading, and writing. This learning cycle builds communities of practice, where teachers share and learn from one another.

Additional Implementation Strategies and Practices:

- Teacher Coordinator Collaboration - co-planning and implementation support
- Residencies – intensive school-based co-planning, co-teaching, reflection over 4-6 weeks

Learning is not a spectator sport.
Everyone does everything.

- Dr. Anita Archer

Teacher professional learning is grounded in the belief that all students deserve access to high-quality, inclusive instruction. Our focus is on evidence-aligned strategies and instructional routines for all learners while honoring students' diverse identities, backgrounds, and abilities. As students engage with more complex texts to support learning across the curriculum, teachers can embed explicit literacy instruction into broader units of study in science, social studies, and health.

As a District, we are committed to supporting student achievement and keeping families informed about how we measure our progress. We consistently review how our work aligns with the 2025-2029 Strategic Plan, ensuring our efforts stay focused and effective. We use school-based assessments and report card data to track academic growth, while also gathering feedback from students to understand their experiences and needs. We are committed to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities for our staff and seek their input to continually enhance our teaching practices.

We commit to continually assess the availability and quality of learning resources to ensure every student has access to the materials they need. Through these ongoing efforts, we strive to create a positive and successful learning environment for all students in our district.