



Independence School District Comprehensive Literacy Plan: Birth to Grade 12

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Introduction

The Independence School District (ISD) Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) is a resource for parents, caregivers, teachers, and administrators throughout the birth to college and career continuum. The CLP addresses the crucial role that early education plays in a child's literacy development. The ISD CLP supports teachers and administrators with information and resources to guide instruction, coordination of staff support, and alignment of goals. The CLP provides guidance on the components of the ISD Literacy Model.

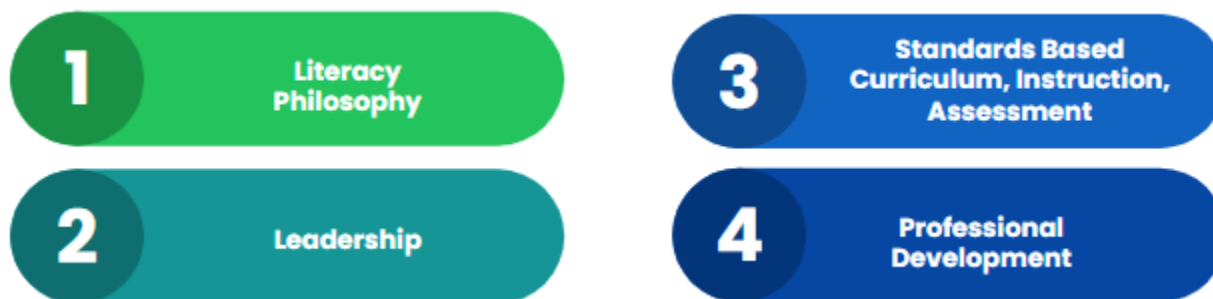
Pillars of ISD



The Independence School District has four pillars that are the district's focus. These include Literacy, Math Computation and Problem Solving, College and Career Readiness, and Increasing Student Attendance. The pillars are built upon the foundation of the Student and Family Experience.

Plan Organization

The ISD Comprehensive Literacy Plan is organized into four main components.



Each area works in concert to provide literacy development and academic achievement for all ISD students. The components are critical to providing each student with a comprehensive literacy education.

Overview of ISD Literacy Plan Components:

- 1 Literacy Philosophy:** The ISD has outlined beliefs and practices that ensure all students have equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction.
- 2 Leadership:** Leaders at the district, building, and classroom levels collaborate to build shared ownership and direction toward literacy success.
- 3 Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:** The ISD has clear expectations for what all students will know and be able to do. The curriculum is aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards. Educators bring the ISD curriculum to life by designing high-quality instruction for the students served. The Backward Design model by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) helps ensure that the curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned.
- 4 Professional Development:** The ISD provides ongoing, job-embedded professional development, including research-based practices. Instructional coaches provide ongoing support to meet the needs of each educator.

Independence School District Literacy Philosophy

Learning Beliefs

The Independence School District has the following learning beliefs to guide our work.

- Learning is our core purpose.
- Trusting relationships and commitment to our core values will foster learning at all levels.
- Effective teaching is the most essential factor in student learning.
- Effective leaders support continuous learner growth at all levels.
- ISD is committed to ensuring that every student learns and succeeds, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability.

Guiding Principles

Accessibility for All

The ISD recognizes literacy education is complex and requires our commitment to be purposeful and deliberate in all levels of literacy development across all contexts. We acknowledge the support needed for the non-academic barriers our students face including poverty, physical and mental health, and lack of social-emotional skills that impact the ability to learn at the highest levels. ISD educators recognize social and cultural diversity within our schools. Our learning environments provide access to rich literacy experiences that include print, digital, audio, and visual resources to ensure equitable, student-centered literacy engagement.

Curriculum

In the ISD, teachers develop a focused literacy curriculum that aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards with an emphasis on the ISD priority standards. The curriculum is well articulated and includes a coherent progression from birth to grade 12.

Teaching and Learning

In the ISD, teaching and learning engage students in critical thinking through the reciprocal processes of reading, writing, speaking, and listening for authentic purposes many times throughout the school day. Using the ISD Literacy Instructional Model, teachers utilize a structured instructional approach to support students in gaining proficient skill sets in comprehension, communication, and collaboration.

Assessment and Feedback

In the ISD, literacy assessments are used to monitor student growth and to drive purposeful instruction based on evidence from a variety of data. All students are screened in order for teachers to identify student literacy strengths and weaknesses. Through the analysis of this evidence, our schools utilize a multi-tiered system of support to provide targeted interventions and progress monitoring. Grade level and course curriculum mastery are monitored by the administration of ISD common assessments that are aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards and the priority Grade Level Equivalencies of the ISD. Literacy assessment and feedback are intertwined to ensure students are engaged in their own learning process.

Professional Development

In the ISD, each educator has access to high-quality professional learning so they can cultivate the strengths and address the needs of each student they serve.

Leadership

The Independence School District Comprehensive Literacy Plan aims to foster a community-wide approach to supporting and enhancing literacy outcomes. Leadership within the ISD community includes district leaders, building leaders, teachers, and families. The following outlines how each leader contributes to helping students become skilled readers.

District and Building Leaders

District and building leaders are instrumental in developing a successful literacy environment. The approach requires a common vision and coordination at all levels of the Independence School District. Areas of focus for district and building leaders include:

- **Goals and Vision:** A common understanding and shared commitment to the desired future vision and the milestones towards the goals.
- **Policies & Procedures:** Ensure compliance with federal and state mandates and policies about literacy.
- **Funding & Resources:** Commit guidance, support, and resources to ensure a cohesive curriculum is delivered to all students from birth through college and career readiness.
- **Assessment and Data:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by providing constructive feedback on teacher effectiveness and identifying students' strengths and weaknesses.
- **Professional Development & Instructional Practices:** Provide continuous literacy professional development for all staff and ample time and resources for ongoing professional learning in research-based strategies.
- **Tier One Core Curriculum & Supplemental Materials:** Understand the importance of literacy instruction and the processes, plans, and support necessary for student success. The Tier One core curriculum is accessible to all students. Students needing intervention or enrichment will be provided supplemental materials, instruction, and opportunities within and outside the school day.

Teachers

Improving literacy for all is heavily reliant on the pivotal role of teachers. The Independence School District Comprehensive Literacy Plan is crafted to provide support to educators across all tiers, enabling them to enhance student learning systematically. Emphasizing literacy across content areas underscores its significance as a collective vision. Areas of focus for teachers include:

- **Goals and Vision:** A common understanding and shared commitment to the desired future vision and the milestones towards building and student goals.
- **Policies & Procedures:** Comply with federal and state mandates and policies about literacy.
- **Assessment and Data:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by providing specific and effective feedback on identifying students' strengths and areas for growth through assessment and data analysis.
- **Professional Development & Instructional Practices:** Engage in continuous literacy professional development and utilize research-based practices to support ongoing learning.

- **Tier One Core Curriculum & Supplemental Materials:** Understand the importance of literacy instruction and the processes, plans, and supports necessary for student success. The Tier One core curriculum is accessible to all students. Students needing intervention or enrichment will be provided supplemental materials, instruction, and opportunities within and outside the school day.

Family Partnership

The family plays a paramount role as the primary partnership in their students' education. As stated in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), posted on the ISD website, the ISD takes steps to ensure families are involved and have access to schools in the following ways:

- **Strategy 4.1.1:** Improve and streamline communication with parents and the community through teachers, buildings, and the district.
 - Increase social media presence.
 - Survey families' preferred communication methods and streamline based on the results
 - District and Building Leaders review professional development in proactive communication.
 - Provide education on where to access school district communication/information.
- **Strategy 4.1.2:** Increase parental and patron involvement in the schools and district.
 - Track and grow parent involvement at the building level.
 - Actively recruit and retain parent and community partnerships.
 - Offer information/resources to families to improve their knowledge of district initiatives.
- **Strategy 4.2.1: Deepen customer service at all levels.**
 - Provide resources annually to frontline staff.
 - Provide Building Leaders training on communication methods for customer service.
- **Strategy 4.2.2:** Improve the transition of new students and families and those transitioning between ISD schools.
 - Welcome and engage new and transitioning students and families and a follow-up.
 - New students and families are welcomed and acclimated to the ISD through the admissions office and a follow-up.
- **Strategy 4.3.1:** Deepen community engagement through ISD Academies, AVID, and Leader in Me.
 - Increase partnerships with the ISD academies.
 - Increase service learning opportunities and contact available with community partners to support Leader in Me.
 - Increase college and community partnerships to support AVID.
 - Communicate volunteer opportunities and celebrate volunteer participation through the ISD Foundation.
 - Highlight social media, media, e-newsletter, and other communication channels.

Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Curriculum

The ISD literacy curriculum is aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards. Clear standards help improve teaching, inform planning, and maintain accountability. Curriculum development is ongoing, organized by the instructional leadership team, and designed by teachers. The curriculum is research-driven and continually evaluated through the lens of data analysis as well as a continuous cycle of feedback from all stakeholders. Using district and state priority standards, item specifications, performance level descriptors, and feedback from stakeholders, teacher leaders work together with the instructional leadership team to revise and edit the curriculum annually.

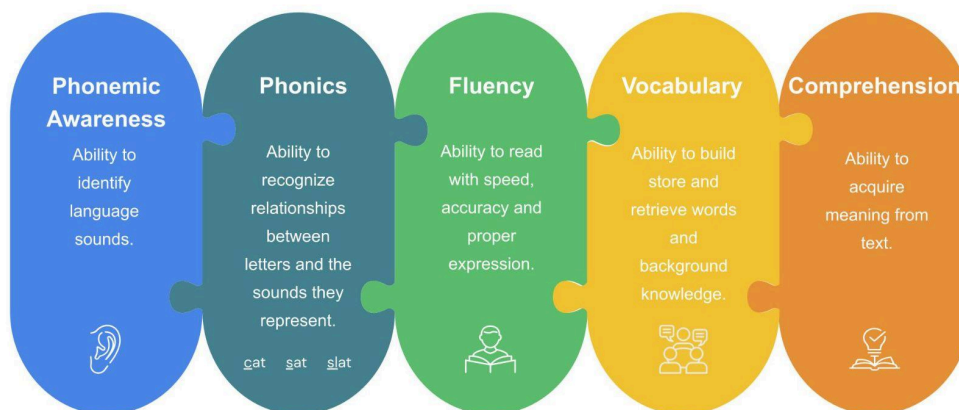
The curriculum is available to all staff through the employee portal. In addition, curriculum overviews are available to parents through the district website.

Instruction

ISD Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) supports instruction, assessment, and intervention decisions to improve literacy outcomes. The CLP emphasizes access to all students' Tier One core curriculum. Literacy instruction in the ISD consists of the five components of reading presented by the National Reading Panel (2000).

Figure 1

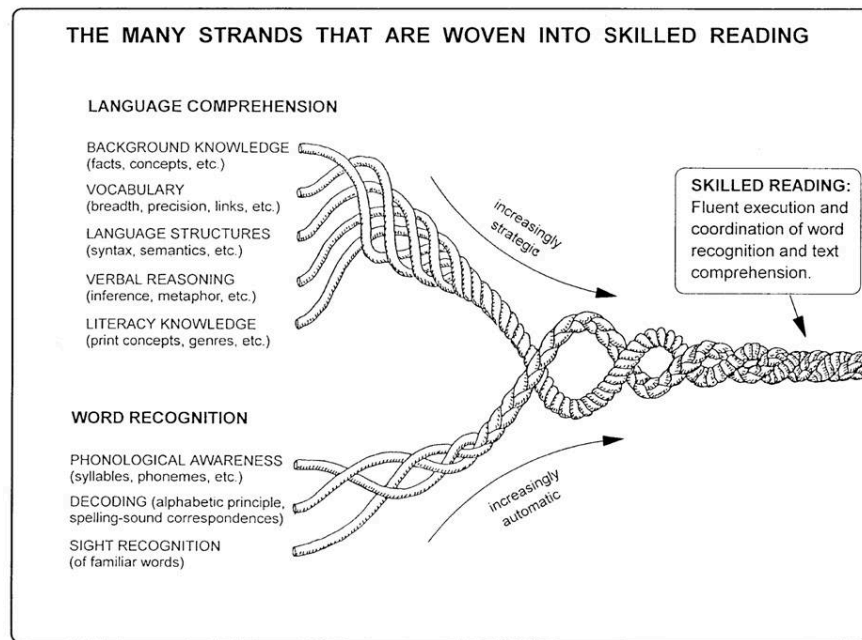
The Five Components of Reading



The ISD CLP was developed using Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001). The connections between language comprehension and word recognition strands guide the focus of curriculum and instruction in order to develop skilled readers. The eight reading strands combine gradually over time as educators make appropriate decisions for grade and course curriculums and differentiation.

Figure 2

Scarborough's (2001) Reading Rope



The ISD literacy instructional model (Figure 3) includes each of these components, which are essential for developing skilled readers. The model is circular, reflecting the understanding that mastery of each component is interdependent with the others; we do not teach them in isolation or achieve mastery of one component before moving on to the next.

Figure 3
Independence School District Literacy Instructional Model



The ISD believes in integrating these components into our daily instruction, allocating sufficient time to each at a developmentally appropriate level for every grade. Below, you will find

explanations and expectations regarding instructional practices for each of the five components within our literacy model.

Early Literacy: Birth to Five Years of Age

The district worked hard to align early literacy in ISD with literacy instruction at the elementary level. The early literacy components are as follows: Comprehension, Phonological Awareness, Letter and Word Knowledge, Print Concepts, and Emergent Writing.

Comprehension. Students should develop metacognition by using schema, visualization, inference, determining importance, asking questions and synthesizing to develop strategies necessary to understand and interpret what is being read.

During the planning of comprehension instruction, the following questions and considerations are made.

- Before instruction
 - What do I want students to learn/ know?
- During instruction
 - Present and engage students in meaningful activities specific to phonological awareness.
 - Support individualized learning.
- After instruction
 - Check for student understanding.

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during comprehension.

- Think-alongs
- Repeated Read-alouds
- Expansive vocabulary building
- Supplements class readings with class discussions and activities
- Intentional selection and preparation of high-quality texts from a variety of genres

Phonological Awareness. Phonological Awareness (*Strong phonological awareness provides the foundation for success in reading.*) is the ability to notice the sound structure of spoken words, such as syllables, rhyming parts, and individual phonemes. Phonemic awareness is the ability to identify, isolate, and manipulate individual phonemes in spoken words.

During the planning of phonological awareness instruction, the following questions and considerations are made.

- Before Instruction:
 - What do I want students to learn/know?
- During instruction
 - Intentional higher-order questions such as “Tell me about...”, “What do you think?”, “I wonder...”, “What would happen if...”, “Why do you think...”
- After instruction reflection
 - How meaningful was the learning objective/experience to the students?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during phonological awareness.

- Experiences that attend to:
 - Rhyming
 - Syllables
 - Compound Words
 - Onset and Rime
- Whole and small group experiences

Letter and Word Knowledge. Letter and Word Knowledge is the ability to recognize letters, their relationship to sound*, and understand that letters make up words. **Phonics is the study of the relationships between sounds and written language. Students need to develop strong phonics and word study skills in order to read and write unfamiliar words independently.*

During the planning of phonological awareness instruction, the following questions are considered.

- Before instruction
 - What do I want students to learn/ know?
- During instruction
 - How am I scaffolding individualized learning?
- After instruction
 - How meaningful was the learning objective/experience to the students?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during letter and word knowledge.

- Provide oral language experiences.
- Provide meaningful writing opportunities.
- Alphabet book read-alouds to build exposure and connections to letters.
- Read-alouds that focus on building word knowledge.
- Provide sensory exploration of the alphabet.

Print Concepts. Print Concepts is the understanding that print carries meaning and that it is organized and read in a particular way.

During the planning of print concepts instruction, the following questions and considerations are made.

- Before instruction
 - What do I want students to learn/know?
- During instruction
 - Notice and provide quality feedback
- After instruction reflection

- How meaningful was the learning objective/experience to the students?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during print concepts.

- Model and map conventions of print when reading.
- Model and map conventions of print when writing, including an awareness of the difference between writing and drawing.
- Intentionally create and use a print-rich environment.

Emergent Writing. Emergent writing is the knowledge and ability to use symbolic representations to convey the meaning of information, ideas, and emotions through markings, pictures, letters, and words.

During the planning of emergent writing instruction, the following questions and considerations are made.

- Before instruction
 - What do I want students to learn/ know?
- During instruction
 - Match student's enthusiasm and developmental skill levels by providing responsive and specific feedback.
 - Support individualized learning in teachable moments.
- After instruction
 - Analyze students' work to identify developmental progressions.

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during emergent writing.

- Provide a variety of age-appropriate writing utensils and materials
- Incorporate opportunities for daily writing
- Modeled, shared, and interactive writing

Elementary Literacy: Kindergarten to Fifth Grade Students

As laid out in the National Reading Panel (2000), ISD literacy instruction at the elementary level consists of five components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. ISD's curriculum has been developed with an explicit and systematic approach, which has been described as one of the best tools available to teachers (Archer & Hughes, 2012) to help students break the reading code.

Phonological Awareness. Phonological awareness refers to an individual's awareness of the sound structure of a spoken word (Gillon, 2017). It has been linked to the reading process because students who understand a word's sound structure are typically able to decode better than those who do not. Phonological awareness is a skill comprised of breaking down words into smaller parts. Some of the ways to break words into smaller components include breaking words into syllable sounds, onset and rhyme sounds, and phonemes.

Students being able to break words down into phonemes, or individual sounds that make up a word, is known as phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is a skill that falls under the umbrella of phonological awareness and is considered to be the most difficult of the

phonological awareness skills (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2022). Phonemic awareness was been shown to be the best predictor of whether a student will become a skilled reader (Yopp, 1995).

During the planning of phonological awareness instruction, the following questions are considered.

- What is the purpose of this lesson? (Today, we will be learning...)
- How will these phonological skills connect with today's phonics lesson?
- How will I ensure all students are able to work with today's skills successfully?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during phonological awareness.

- Rhyming
- Onset Fluency
- Blending
- Isolating Final or Medial Phonemes
- Segmenting
- Adding/Deleting/Substituting Phonemes

Phonics. The primary aim of phonics instruction is to help students read words (Ehri, 2003). Phonics teaches the relationship between written letters (graphemes) and spoken sounds (phonemes), helping students to read and spell effectively. Understanding the importance of phonics means recognizing its role in giving students the tools to become skilled readers and writers (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, 2022).

The ISD acknowledges the importance of providing systematic and explicit phonics instruction to all students. Research from the National Reading Panel (2000) underscores the significance of comprehending the purpose behind learning letter sounds, which is essential for achieving accuracy and fluency in reading and writing.

Systematic phonics instruction teaches students how letters in written words correspond to the sounds they represent (Ehri, 2003). This method involves teaching letter-sound connections in a clear sequence, helping easier learning of reading and spelling. By breaking down words into sounds, students develop crucial skills for reading and spelling. Given the complexity of English spelling, systematic phonics is especially important for helping students navigate the language and become skilled readers.

During the planning of phonics instruction, the following questions are considered.

- What is the main purpose of this lesson? - State goal and purpose (Today, we will be learning...)
- What new phoneme-grapheme correspondence or letter pattern will be taught?
- What guided practice will students engage in?
- What extended practice will students engage in?
- What dictation sounds, words and sentences will students practice?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during phonics.

- Elkonin boxes
- Word Chains
- Decoding
- Word Sorts
- Timed reading of learned words

- Dictation
- Grapheme mapping/Heart Words
- Trace and Say

Fluency. Reading fluency refers to the accurate and automatic decoding of words and the proper use of expression to achieve comprehension (Rasinski, 2004). Fluent readers decode words accurately and automatically, without (or with minimal) use of their limited attention for word decoding, so those resources are available for use in comprehension.

Using expression in reading, often referred to as prosody, is another important aspect of fluency (Rasinski, 2004). Prosody, including elements like tone and phrasing, acts as an essential link between automatic word recognition and comprehension. This connection occurs through the integration of appropriate volume, emphasis, and other expressive components during oral reading, allowing readers to interpret and derive meaning from the text.

Fluency, just like the other components of reading, needs to be explicitly taught and monitored (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, 2022). According to Foorman et al. (2016), teachers can support students in their developing fluency in various ways:

- Allow students to practice oral reading, making sure to provide feedback on skills such as reading accurately and expression.
- Model strategies and scaffold instruction to help students read accurately and have efficient word identification.
- Teach students to self-monitor their understanding of the text and to self-correct when comprehension breaks down or word-reading errors occur.

During the planning of fluency instruction, the following questions are considered.

- What is the main purpose of this task?
- What texts are appropriate for students?
- How will students provide evidence of their fluency?
- How will I monitor student progress in fluency?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during fluency.

- Repeated Reading
- Choral Reading
- Partner Reading
- Independent Reading
- Reader's Theater

Vocabulary. Understanding word meaning is essential for ongoing reading growth (Whipple, 1925). Vocabulary instruction can be categorized as receptive or expressive.

Teacher read-alouds develop the ability to understand or 'receive' language through oral vocabulary. This oral vocabulary instruction must be developmentally appropriate to the reader's age (National Reading Panel Report, 2000). The ISD CLP encourages and provides opportunities for all educators and students to engage in oral vocabulary development through student and teacher classroom discussions.

Expressive vocabulary is the ability for students to use appropriate and precise words to communicate orally or in writing. The ISD CLP plans for purposeful instruction in both oral and print formats that are developmentally appropriate.

The ISD grade and course curriculums provide educators with planned vocabulary words that fall into Tier Two and Tier Three levels, as outlined by Beck et al. (2013).

During the planning of vocabulary instruction, the following questions are considered.

- What is the purpose of this lesson?
- What Tier Two vocabulary words are relevant to the current learning?
- How will students show their understanding of the vocabulary?
- How will students use the word parts (prefixes, suffixes, and Greek or Latin roots) to know what the word means?

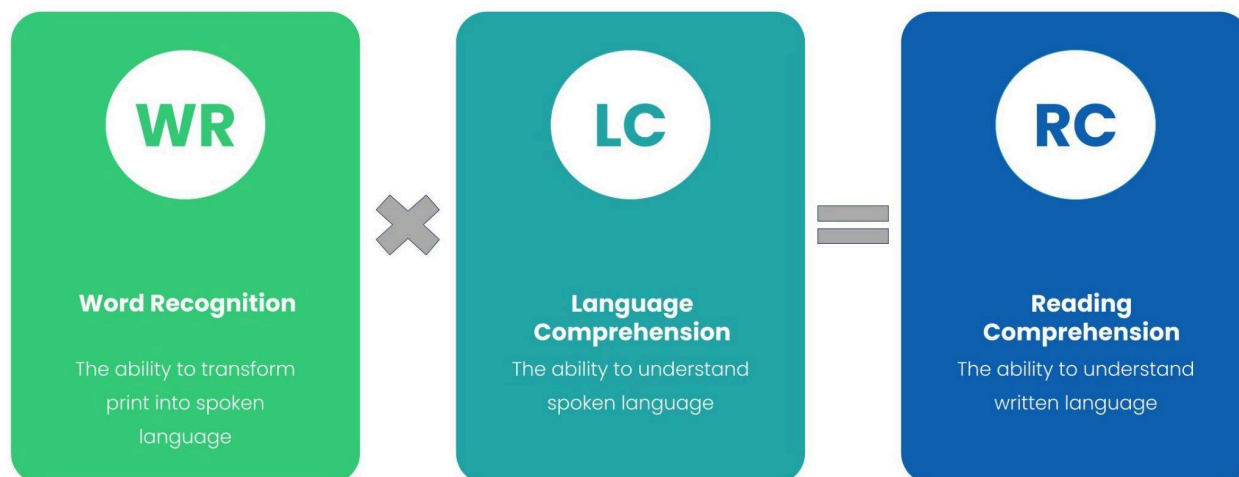
Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during vocabulary instruction.

- Frayer Model
- Synonyms/Antonyms
- Analogies
- Use the word in context
- Prefix.Suffix/Greek and Latin Roots

Comprehension. The main purpose of reading is to comprehend and construct meaning from text (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary, 2022). Gough and Tunmer (1986) shared a framework known as the Simple View of Reading to help students become skilled readers. The framework presents that reading comprehension is the product of two main components: word recognition and language comprehension (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

Gough and Tunmer's (1986) Simple View of Reading



Reading comprehension strategies are incorporated into the ISD curriculum based on recommendations from the National Reading Panel (2000). These strategies, such as using graphic organizers, understanding story structures, and asking and answering questions, are built into weekly instruction.

During the planning of comprehension instruction, the following questions are considered.

- What is the main purpose of this lesson?
- What comprehension strategy is the focus of the lesson?
- What texts will be used in this lesson?

- What evidence will we have to indicate student understanding?

Teachers often consider items from the following list of instructional practices to support learning during comprehension instruction.

- Mini Lesson
- Teacher Read aloud
- Teacher Think aloud
- Graphic Organizers
- Independent Reading
- Debrief

Secondary Literacy: 6th to 12th Grade Students

Transitioning from foundational to advanced literacy skills is vital for students as they progress to higher grade levels. With skills and concepts growing more intricate, students' proficiency levels can often vary significantly. Therefore, it is imperative for teachers to maintain intentional instruction in reading and writing to navigate this heightened complexity effectively. Secondary schools focus on the elements of literacy detailed in the upper half of Scarborough's Reading Rope while offering targeted interventions to those students needing additional support with the lower half of the rope. The strong focus on comprehension and increased complexity of skills is detailed in the following section.

Comprehension. Students should read daily (both independently and with explicit guidance from their teacher) in order to continue to build comprehension skills. It is critical for students to continue building background knowledge, vocabulary, and knowledge of syntax and semantics. Students should read diverse genres, including both informational and narrative texts that cover a wide range of topics and content.

With each text, teachers should plan to:

- Establish the purpose for reading
- Identify the text genre and structure
- Prepare to build background knowledge
- Select vocabulary to teach explicitly
- Identify and teach challenging syntax and semantics
- Ask questions that require varying depths of knowledge
- Develop activities that require summary, analysis, and synthesis of material

Motivation plays a critical role in literacy acquisition. Teachers must recognize that “[the] dispositions toward reading, or what we call *will*, must be taught with the same intention and vigor as the skills of reading comprehension” (Fisher et al., 2016, p 67).

As noted by the authors of *Comprehension*, “This aspect concerns motivation and engagement. We all know people who can read but don’t. They have developed the skills necessary to read yet not the will to do so. There is a lot of evidence for the value of attending to the will of reading as well as evidence about how to develop this aspect” (Fisher et al., 2016, p 18).

Vocabulary. Secondary schools utilize a tiered approach to vocabulary instruction as described by Beck et al. (2013). Teachers design instruction based on the following understanding of each tier. Curriculum writing groups develop tiered vocabulary lists for each unit of instruction.

Definition of Tiers. Teachers differentiate their instruction and employ a variety of strategies aimed at enhancing vocabulary acquisition. Below, as defined by Beck et al. (2013), is a definition of each tier, followed by examples of strategies teachers might use to support vocabulary instruction in each tier.

Tier One Vocabulary. These words are used in everyday language. English Learner students might benefit from direct instruction of these words but typically rarely require instructional attention (i.e., big, clock, talk, baby).

Tier Two Vocabulary. Words in this tier occur in text but rarely orally. Students will not encounter these terms enough for teachers to assume they understand the meaning or can derive it from context. A good anchor text will include many Tier Two words. Teachers prioritize these words by focusing on the words most important for understanding a text (e.g., nimble, scrawny, dexterity).

- Refer to and develop pre-reading word lists for mentor texts
- Introduce these throughout the unit as they appear in texts
- Options for explicit instruction:
 - word study-etymology, phonetic and morphological breakdown
 - meaningful sentence crafting
 - examine affixes and roots
 - word web
 - classification of terms
 - create metaphors or analogies
 - all or parts of Marzano's 6-step Process

Tier Three Vocabulary. These highly infrequent words are critical to understanding subject-matter knowledge. They are necessary for understanding academic content (e.g., schema, figurative language, symbolism).

- Refer to curriculum lists.
- Introduce discipline-specific terms throughout the unit.
- Some terms will be included in the unit's common assessment.
 - Use Marzano's (2020) six-step Process worksheets with Tier Three vocabulary
 - Rely on incidental and review strategies to address the blue review section of the Tier Three Vocabulary document.

Table 1

Marzano's (2020) Six-Step Process

1. Description	The teacher provides a description, explanation, or example of the term.
----------------	--

2. Restate	Linguistic definition-students restate the description, explanation, or example in their own words.
3. Drawing	Nonlinguistic definition-students construct a picture, pictograph, symbolic representation, or act out the term.
4. Activities	Extend understanding of the word by engaging students with vocabulary words.
5. Discussion	Periodically ask students to discuss the terms with one another.
6. Games	Involve students in games that enable them to play with the words and reinforce word knowledge.

Diverse and Complex Texts

Students should be exposed to texts that cover a range of readers. Texts should be evaluated both quantitatively and qualitatively to ensure student needs are met. Exposure to diverse texts in terms of cultural representation, perspectives, genres, and formats enriches students' learning experiences. This contributes positively to their motivation to learn and their disposition toward learning in general.

Readers are more motivated to read material that is relevant to them personally. There is great value in texts that affirm students' identities, cultures, and languages while also exposing them to new perspectives and experiences. When choosing texts to study as a whole group as well as providing choice texts, teachers should take this into account. "The need for culturally sustaining literary and informational texts cannot be overstated" (Fisher et al., 2016, p 95). In addition, teachers should strive to provide diversity in types of texts—print, digital, and multimedia.

Secondary curriculum and teachers provide students the opportunity to grapple with challenging and complex texts. To ensure that texts appropriately challenge students while meeting their instructional needs, teachers should evaluate them quantitatively and qualitatively. Both quantitative measures, such as readability, and qualitative measures, such as levels of meaning and purpose, structure, language conventionality and clarity, and knowledge demands, should be considered as teachers choose texts to study with and alongside students. By considering both quantitative and qualitative measures, teachers can gain a comprehensive understanding of a text's complexity and its potential impact on student learning.

Writing for Content & Composition

In secondary education, writing instruction is pivotal in cultivating students' ability to effectively communicate for diverse purposes and audiences. Secondary writing as laid out by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020) instruction encompasses three key categories: approaching writing as a researcher, as a reader, and as a writer.

- *Approaching writing as a researcher* entails teaching students the skills necessary for conducting thorough research, evaluating sources, and effectively integrating evidence into their writing.
- *Approaching writing as a reader* focuses on nurturing critical reading skills, understanding various writing styles, and empowering students to develop their unique voices as writers.
- *Approaching writing as a writer* emphasizes fostering creativity, honing writing skills across genres, and encouraging self-expression.

Throughout these categories, writing serves multiple purposes, including understanding and retaining content, processing complex concepts, communicating persuasively, and engaging in creative expression (Hochman & Wexler, 2017). For instance, students might write summaries, argumentative essays, or creative narratives to achieve these goals.

Central to this approach is the integration of model pieces and a focus on the writer's craft (Gallagher & Kittle, 2018; Hochman & Wexler, 2017). By studying exemplary texts, students can identify effective writing techniques, analyze different writing styles, and apply these insights to their own writing projects. This not only enhances their understanding of the writing process but also fosters greater engagement and proficiency.

Secondary writing instruction plays a vital role in developing students' critical thinking, communication, and lifelong learning skills. By embracing these principles and practices, educators can empower students to become confident and proficient writers across various contexts.

Disciplinary Literacy

Students engage in reading and writing across all content areas. Each content area requires discipline-specific reading and writing skills, which is often referred to as disciplinary literacy. Disciplinary literacy is widely understood as the confluence of content knowledge, experiences, and skills merged with the ability to read, write, listen, speak, think critically, and perform in a meaningful way within the context of a given field.

Our partners, AVID, define and approach disciplinary literacy in the following way: An emphasis on the shared ways of reading, writing, speaking, and thinking within a particular content area or academic field. Disciplinary literacy practices are cultural constructions that are not learned simply by observation. It is AVID's philosophy that educators need to make explicit the discipline-specific literacy practices of their content area in order for students to know how to read, write, speak, and think like mathematicians, historians, scientists, and any other content expert (Allen, 2019, p 315).

All teachers are not necessarily reading and writing teachers, but they should intentionally guide their students to comprehend and think critically about the material unique to their discipline. In *Developing Readers in the Academic Disciplines*, Doug Buehl states,

Reading through a disciplinary lens involves immersion into the discourse of a discipline. Students gain experience with reading, writing, hearing, and speaking the talk of academic discourse and gradually adjust their thinking to correspond to the way scientists, historians, mathematicians, fiction authors, and other disciplinary experts think when engaged in reading and learning in their respective disciplines (Buehl, 2017, p 74).

Assessment

In the ISD, teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments that factor into a child's grade. Students who are not meeting proficiency on the intended standard or learning goal will have the opportunity to relearn and reassess until they gain a solid understanding of the grade level standard.

Families receive quarterly progress reports to monitor student growth. Proficiency scores are not and cannot be related to a traditional grade. When reviewing a child's proficiency scores on a report, the primary goal is to provide insight into how well a child meets specific content standards. At the elementary level, students proficiency is shared based on the following grading scale:

- M = Meets
 - Consistently meets the requirement of proficient work
 - Independently demonstrates an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding
- A= Approaching
 - Meets some requirements for proficient work
 - Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding
- E= Emerging
 - With support, beginning to meet some of the requirements for proficient work
 - Demonstrates little knowledge of understanding
- B= Below Expectation
 - Unable to meet requirements for proficient work, even with support
 - Demonstrates little or no knowledge and understanding

District-wide, common unit assessments are built and administered to align with the Missouri Learning Standards, State Item Specifications, and the Performance Level Descriptors. [The ISD Comprehensive Assessment Plan](#) outlines all assessments and the purpose for each.

MTSS

The ISD utilizes a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) similar to Wexler's (2017) work to support student success. The following components provide a systematic plan to guide decision-making across all buildings.

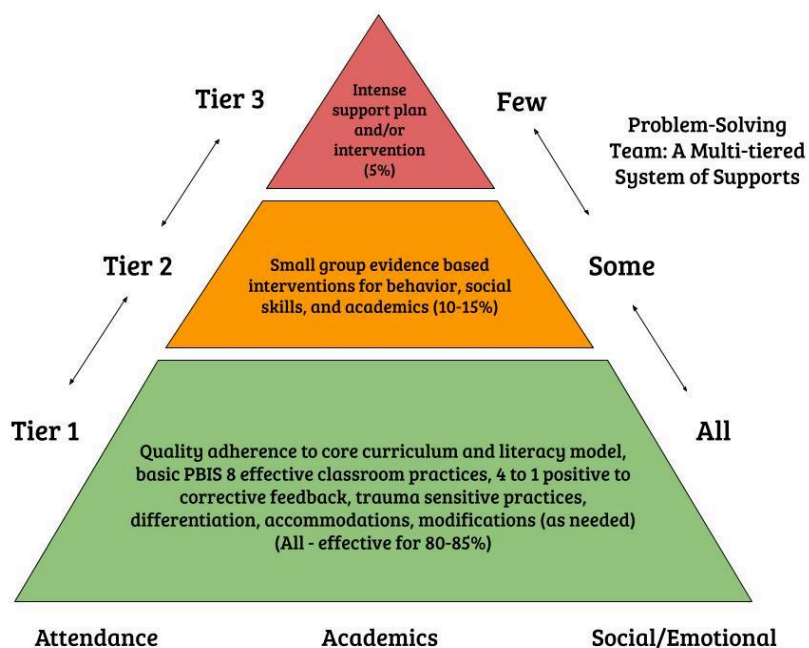
- Students are screened with a literacy assessment to identify students who are at risk for reading difficulties.
- Students who meet grade-level screening expectations are placed into Tier One instruction.
- Students performing below the grade-level screening expectations are placed into Tier Two or Tier Three levels of intervention that provide additional appropriate reading strategies and intensity of instruction.

- Data collection is a continual process to monitor student reading growth.
- Educators collaborate in a Problem-Solving Team (PST) meeting to address individual student needs and progress.
- Buildings engage parents in the MTSS process to gain valuable insight into student strengths and areas of need from the home setting.

Figure 5 illustrates the ISD MTSS model of support. All students receive Tier One instruction, and depending on their support needs, they may need Tier Two or Tier Three support.

Figure 5

Independence School District Multi-Tier Systems of Support Model



Reading Success Plans

The 2023 General Assembly passed legislation (Senate Bill 681, 2022) requiring students who are one grade level or more below reading expectations to have a Reading Success Plan (RSP) in place. Families and educators collaboratively craft this plan to ensure coherence and effectiveness. Families will receive quarterly updates on their child's progress.

Family Partnership

Families are welcome to engage and partner with curriculum, assessment, and instruction. The ISD posts a curriculum website for families on each school webpage. This website includes curriculum resources, sample progress reports, and pacing guides. Elementary offers monthly Family Choice Boards that align home support with district grade-level curriculum. Additionally, the ISD partners with the Missouri Department of Conservation to ensure that each student from PreK to 5th grade receives a copy of XPlor magazine on a quarterly basis, enriching their educational experience further.

Families are invited to student conferences in the fall and spring to discuss literacy progress. Many elementary schools offer book fairs to families in order to strengthen literacy in the home. Title I family nights provide educators and families a setting to build excitement, encouragement, and tools to increase the reading partnership.

Schools and families are also encouraged to communicate through Seesaw in the elementary schools. School social media accounts are utilized to share the day-to-day learning and events for parents who are not able to physically frequent the school building.

Families are integral to the MTSS structure. The PST gathers input from families prior to decision-making. Reading Success Plans are working documents that outline individual student-targeted instruction, monitoring, and communication between school and home focused on reading achievement.

Professional Development

In the ISD, each educator has access to high-quality professional learning in order to cultivate their strengths and address the needs of each student they serve. Additionally, every new teacher entering the district receives training on current district practices based on the science of reading.

Professional development (PD) in literacy instruction, spanning from birth through grade 12, includes the following components:

- Annual literacy-focused professional development is offered throughout the school year during cross-district professional development days led by district instructional coaches.
- Weekly collaboration with grade-level colleagues allows teachers to review literacy data and adjust instruction accordingly. The building principal and coaches provide ongoing support, including regular assistance through planning, co-teaching, modeling lessons, and small group instruction as needed.
- Summer literacy-focused professional development is required of all new teachers joining the Independence School District.
- Feedback is collected each year to support curriculum updates and additional professional development needed.
 - **Classroom Self-Assessment:** Teachers provide feedback on Tier One curriculum and resources. The feedback provided is used to guide curriculum adjustments needed for the upcoming school year.
 - **Building Self-Assessment:** Buildings collect and use feedback to help guide professional development needs for the upcoming school year.
 - **District Self-Assessment:** District leaders collect and use classroom and building feedback to guide professional development needs for the upcoming school year. The annual Professional Development Survey given to all staff is also used to make professional development decisions.

Timeline and Goals

Goals: 2021-2022

- Revise the literacy block, PreK to 5th grade, to align with the science of reading research, models, and practices.
- Develop the training model for understanding how the science of reading and the ISD Literacy Model are implemented.
- Provide training on phonological awareness and phonics practices within Tier One instruction and implementation for K-5 teachers.
 - Heggerty
 - ISD K-5 word study progression and resources
- Provide training on explicit vocabulary instruction PreK to 12
 - Marzano's 6 Steps for Vocabulary Instruction
 - Vocabulary tiers
- Conduct building walkthroughs to focus on the most recent PD: phonological awareness, phonics and small group instruction.
- Ongoing communication with middle and high school administrators about implementation
- Offer LETRS training for teachers and administration.

Summer Goals: 2022

- Review and revise the literacy training model for the summer of 2022 and the 2022-2023 school year professional development plan.
- Plan training for implementation for secondary staff.
- Finalize and implement the ISD induction model for training new staff.
- Finalize and share the building induction expectations for new staff.
 - Guidance will be provided to administrators.

Goals: 2022-2023

- Continue training on phonological awareness and phonics practices within Tier One instruction and the role of small group instruction.
- Provide training on comprehension and fluency instruction and how it all works together.
- Conduct building walkthroughs to focus on the most recent PD: phonological awareness, phonics, small group instruction, comprehension, and fluency.
- Continue the discussion on implementation at middle and high school
- Continue LETRS training for teachers and administration

Goals: 2023-2024

- Provide training to pilot schools on University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations (UFLI) phonics program.
- Continue LETRS training for teachers and administration
- Improve middle and high school writing instruction
- Writing curriculum audit at middle and high school

Goals: 2024-2025

- Provide training to all K-2 teachers, K-5 special education teachers, and English language teachers on the University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations (UFLI) phonics program
 - Provide optional UFLI training to 3-5 teachers, priority substitutes, and literacy coaches for literacy intervention.
- Continue LETRS training for teachers and administration
- Provide opportunities for early education educators to participate in Early Childhood LETRS training offered through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Continue the implementation and revision of student Reading Success Plans as outlined by the State Statute.
- Year 1 of secondary vertical alignment of writing curriculum

Goals: 2025-2026

- Continue professional development for all K-5, staff on the implementation of the University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations (UFLI) phonics program
- Continue LETRS training for teachers and administration
- Continue to provide opportunities for early education educators to participate in Early Childhood LETRS training offered through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.
- Continue the implementation and revision of student Reading Success Plans as outlined by the State Statute.
- Year 2 of secondary vertical alignment of writing curriculum

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