



Guidelines for Developing an Effective District Literacy Action Plan

Version 1.1

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
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Version 1.1
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Introduction

At the 2009 Commissioner's Summit on Curriculum and Instruction, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Chester made it clear that he considers literacy to be core to preparing students to meet the challenges of college, career, and citizenship in the 21st century. Commissioner Chester recognizes that significant improvement in the literacy outcomes for Massachusetts students will only occur if there is sustained purposeful district-level support to ensure that this happens.

Literacy is far more than basic reading. Literacy involves being able to read, write, speak and think at high levels as specific contexts demand. In today's world, literacy requires being able to read, critique, produce and learn from increasingly complex print and electronic texts that juxtapose graphics, media, and sound to create multifaceted messages about all aspects of our world. The new basic literacy skills include being able to read, analyze and produce graphs, charts, pictures, maps, images and words in fiction and nonfiction texts from a young age.

Why does improving literacy and learning need to be a districtwide initiative? Don't individual teachers and school-based efforts have the greatest direct impact on student literacy and learning? Absolutely. However, districts can and must play a key role in supporting school-based efforts and ensuring that there is a systemwide emphasis on improving literacy K–12. Districts provide critical infrastructure support, leadership, and prioritization underscored by resource allocation. Without district support it is unlikely that successful school-based efforts can be sustained or that all district schools will explicitly set and work towards literacy improvement as an urgent improvement goal.

When there is a strong District Literacy Action Plan in place it is much more likely that appropriate action will be taken to improve student achievement. This is particularly the case when the district plan has measurable goals, clear action steps, supports in place and explicit expectations that schools will develop literacy improvement plans that address each of the areas outlined in the district plan.

Commissioner Chester has asked the Office of Literacy at the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MA ESE) to provide districts with a district literacy action planning process and tools to support this work. The Office of Literacy has contracted with Public Consulting Group's Center for Resource Management to collaboratively develop a set of tools and approaches with state education personnel. This will ensure that the materials are aligned with the Massachusetts 11 Conditions for School Effectiveness, Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and other guidelines provided by the MA ESE to support a process for continuous school and district improvement.

What IS a Strategic District Literacy Action Plan?

This question naturally inspires four more questions: What is strategic literacy improvement planning?; What is the purpose of a district literacy action plan?; What is the connection between the district literacy action plan and school literacy action plans?; and What are the components of a strategic district literacy action plan?

What is Strategic Literacy Improvement Planning?

Strategic planning determines where the district is going over the next year or more, how it is going to get there and how it will know if it got there or not.

Strategic plans are systemic in nature. The focus of a strategic plan is usually on the entire organization—that is, strategic planning looks at how various levels of the inspire function relative to the identified improvement goals and where change is needed. A strategic plan also examines how those holding diverse roles and responsibilities will contribute to making progress toward the identified goals.

Successful districts put in place systems and processes for supporting change and continuous improvement.

There is emerging literature about the common characteristics of districts that successfully mobilize to improve student achievement. These characteristics stay constant regardless of size of district or student need. Successful districts put in place systems and processes for supporting change and continuous improvement.

These systems and processes are comprehensive and strategic and include an intense focus on instruction; thoughtful, ongoing teacher professional development; the role of vision and communication in moving a whole district into continuous improvement; clarity and accountability related to staff roles and structures; and how data informed decision-making helps these districts initiate and keep their change efforts on track.¹

We know that literacy is central to academic success in all content areas. As multiple recent policy reports, research studies and investments make clear,² being able to confidently and competently read, write and critically think about text, in print, electronic and visual formats (graphs, charts, maps, etc.) is essential for success in the 21st century as a college student,

¹ Three examples: (1) Shannon, G. S., & Bylsma, P. (2004). *Characteristics of improved school districts: Themes from Research*. Olympia, WA: Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Retrieved November 29, 2009 from <http://www.k12.wa.us/research/pubdocs/DistrictImprovementReport.pdf>. (2) WestEd (2002). *Improving districts: Systems that support learning*. San Francisco: WestEd. (3) North Carolina State Board of Education/Department of Public Instruction. (2000). *The role of district level staff in closing the gap*. Retrieved November 29, 2009 from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/racg/resources/reports/role/>

² Three examples: (1) Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). *Time to act: An agenda for advancing adolescent literacy for college and career success*. (Final Report from Carnegie Corporation of New York's Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy). New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York. Retrieved November 29, 2009 from http://www.carnegie.org/literacy/ta/pdf/ta_Main.pdf. (2) ACT. (2006). *Reading between the lines: What the ACT reveals about college readiness in reading*. (Report). Iowa City, IA: Author. (3) Berman, I., & Biancarosa, G. (2005). *Reading to achieve: A governor's guide to adolescent literacy*. Washington, DC: National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices. Available at <http://www.nga.org/portal/site/nga/menuitem.9123e83a1f6786440ddcbeeb501010a0/?vgnextoid=8f09ab8f0caf6010VgnVCM1000001a01010aRCRD>

upon entering the workplace and to be able to participate as a citizen. Since a focus on improving literacy has been used successfully in many districts across the country as a lever for significant overall gains in student achievement, a strategic District Literacy Action Plan is one powerful way for a district to reach stated improvement goals.

Often district leaders know what outcomes need to be prioritized and have a sense of what steps need to be taken to achieve them. However, the collaborative development of a strategic District Literacy Action Plan can create buy-in, enable district and school leaders to “get on the same page,” clarify where resources need to be provided or reallocated, and provide a framework for courageous conversations where leaders collectively decide that they will summon the will to address pressing problems.

What is the Purpose of a District Literacy Action Plan?

The purpose of a District Literacy Action Plan is to provide a roadmap that articulates literacy improvement goals and describes the steps that will be taken to achieve them. A comprehensive District Literacy Action Plan addresses key areas representing four interconnected best practices in the area of literacy development.

1. Systemic Use of Data

Systemic use of data throughout the district to provide students with appropriate instruction, monitor program effectiveness, track student progress, allocate resources, build on successes, and trouble-shoot where necessary. A robust district literacy assessment framework includes formative data e.g., screening (identification) data to identify students in need of extra help, interim (benchmark) data to monitor student progress and program effectiveness; ongoing (classroom) data to inform instruction, when necessary, diagnostic data to further explore student needs, and summative (outcomes) data to determine if the program is working.

A district that has a culture of data informed decision-making is able to sustain a commitment to continuous improvement.

2. Standards-Based Curriculum

A standards-based curriculum ensures that all students get access to rigorous and sequential instruction targeted toward preparing them to be career and college ready. The key is making sure that the curriculum on paper is the one that is offered in practice (an ongoing review process); that expectations of students are appropriately scaffolded by teacher instruction (teacher professional development); and that assessments are aligned with standards and used by teachers to inform instruction as well as to provide feedback on the efficacy of the curriculum (policy alignment, assessment literacy and a culture of data use).

When there is an aligned districtwide system of standards-based curriculum and assessment supported by excellent instruction, students benefit from equal access to high expectations, a planned sequence of instruction that prepares students to meet the rigors of their post-secondary options, and careful monitoring along the way of their progress and success.

3. Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

The goal of a tiered system of instruction and intervention is to provide excellent proactive literacy instruction so that students make adequate ongoing progress as readers, writers and thinkers in grades K–12 and to ensure that extra targeted assistance is available to students when and where needed. A tiered system of literacy instruction provides regular use of reading assessment (screening) to identify those who need help—or who could benefit from extra challenge—and then provides guidance to teachers as to what might be helpful. The vast majority of students' needs are expected to be met through a strong core reading program, excellent instruction related to reading, writing, speaking/presenting and critical thinking, and differentiated instruction within the classroom (Tier 1). Additional tiers of support are defined by area of need and grade level and may include additional time, additional intensity, small teacher-student ratios, uses of specific materials or strategies, and uses of technology based programs. Teachers are expected and supported to use data to better understand student needs (diagnostic assessment) and to track student progress (response to intervention). The district provides staff with professional development appropriate to the types of reading, writing and oral language issues (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary) likely to be seen at different grade levels (K–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12), evidence-based approaches that should be used at each tier of support, and how to use the types of data available as part of the District Literacy Assessment Framework (see #1–Systemic Use of Data).

The goal of a districtwide tiered system of literacy instruction is to support all students to continue making appropriate gains as readers, writers, speakers/presenters and thinkers throughout their K–12 educational experience so that students do not have to languish or fail before getting targeted assistance.

4. Family and Community Involvement

Family and community involvement has been shown time and again to be a key ingredient to developing successful readers, writers, and learners. When students get ongoing messages that literacy is important in and out of school and that poor literacy levels affect everyone in the community, they are much more likely to understand why they should pay attention to their own development as readers and writers and thinkers. In early grades, at-home modeling and family involvement with learning in and out of school is critical. As students move up through the grades, family involvement becomes more about emphasizing the importance of education and creating a home learning environment that support success. It becomes important for students to understand the economic consequences of poor literacy outcomes and for schools and communities to provide frequent opportunities to participate in literacy-rich activities and to see how literacy matters outside of school. Improving literacy becomes a unifying issue that schools, families, community organizations and businesses can all work on together.

Districts can play a powerful role by communicating what they expect of students and how families can help, by providing multiple and flexible ways to involve parents and enlist them as allies, and by making strong connections with community

organizations and businesses that reinforce literacy improvement as an important goal.

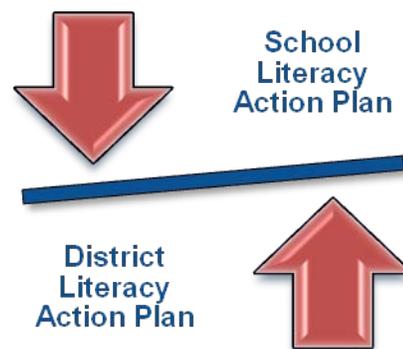
A strategic District Literacy Action Plan also describes key supports that the district will put into place to ensure that the goal of improving literacy is met. These include **district structures**, **professional development**, **resource allocation**, and **policies and procedures**. Ongoing review of these supports is necessary to guarantee that adequate infrastructure for successful implementation of the plan is in place and that decisions being made in any of these areas are not, in fact, directly impeding or actively undermining progress toward the goals outlined in the plan.

A District Literacy Action Plan is simultaneously a communication document, a vision statement, a call to action, and an implementation plan which can be monitored. As such, a District Literacy Action Plan can galvanize a collective focus on improving student literacy and learning. Because a strategic District Literacy Action Plan addresses all levels of the district, implementing an effective plan can have the potential to have tremendous impact on student achievement.

What is the Connection Between the District Literacy Action Plan and School Literacy Action Plans?

It is important to understand how District Literacy Action Plans and School Literacy Action Plans are connected and should work together synergistically to improve student literacy outcomes.

1. **When the district takes the lead:** The purpose of a District Literacy Action Plan is to set and enact a system-wide plan for improving literacy and learning throughout the district. The district plan articulates and publicizes measurable improvement goals, describes the infrastructure and supports that the district will provide, and sets expectations for schools to develop and implement school literacy action plans that address district priorities. Then the district puts in place a process for plan evaluation and revision to guide a continuous improvement process. Note: If individual schools already have school-based literacy action plans, the district plan should take note of these, use these to inform development of the district plan and ensure that the district plan actively supports the work of the school-based literacy improvement initiatives already underway.
2. **When multiple school-based efforts across the district are actively underway:** The purpose of the District Literacy Action Plan is to effectively and efficiently provide active support for successful school-based literacy improvement efforts already underway. The district plan should ensure that ongoing school-based literacy initiatives get the required resources to continue improving student literacy and learning and increase school capacity to deliver quality literacy instruction to all students. The district plan should describe how it will improve district structures, professional development, resource allocation and policies and procedures to support school-based efforts and should articulate districtwide goals and



expectations that school-based educators can use when revising and updating school-based plans. The goal of the district plan is not to insist that all school-based efforts look identical but that school-based efforts be aligned with district priorities and that district supports reinforce existing school initiatives. Additionally, the district plan can galvanize efforts in schools where a focus on literacy has not yet begun in earnest.

Districts should support school-based literacy leadership teams to develop and implement school literacy action plans that address key goals and priorities outlined in the District Literacy Action Plan. The school-based plans should describe how they will measure progress and how they will utilize district based supports (e.g., screening, outcomes, and interim/benchmark assessments, teacher professional development, instructional coaches) to improve literacy and learning within the literacy program (pre-K through 3rd grade) and across the content areas (grades 4–12).

What Are the Components of a Strategic District Literacy Action Plan?

A solid District Literacy Action Plan answers the questions outlined below. The District Literacy Action Planning Template found later in this Guidelines document (see Stage 3) supports a district team to develop a strategic District Literacy Action Plan with these eight critical components.

1. **CONTEXT** How does this plan connect to other planning documents and other district initiatives?
2. **CURRENT STATE OF LITERACY IN THE DISTRICT** Why is it important to focus on improving student literacy in our district?
3. **VISION STATEMENT** What would literacy and learning look like in our district if a literacy improvement initiative were successful?
4. **IMPROVEMENT GOALS** What is our overall measurable literacy improvement goal? What are measurable goals in each of four areas: systematic use of data, standards-based curriculum, system of tiered instruction and intervention, and family and community involvement?
5. **ACTION STEPS** What actions will be taken in the next year to support progress toward each goal (by whom, when, using what resources as well as how success will be measured)?
6. **PROGRESS MONITORING** How will we know that progress is being made? How will we share that information?
7. **EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOLS** What does the district expect schools to do relative to the district plan?
8. **TEAM INFORMATION AND PROCESS** Who created the plan? What process was used to create the plan?

Supporting Massachusetts school districts to develop a strategic District Literacy Action Plan is the focus of this Guidelines Document.

Massachusetts' 11 Conditions for School Effectiveness

The district literacy action planning process recommended in this document is strongly aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 11 Conditions for School Effectiveness.

Effective school leadership: The district takes action to attract, develop, and retain a school leadership team that ensures staff understanding of and commitment to the school's mission and strategies, supports teacher leadership and a collaborative learning culture, focuses time and resources on instructional improvement and student learning through effective use of data for improvement planning and management, and uses supervision and evaluation practices that assist teacher development.

Effective district systems of support: The district has systems and processes for anticipating and addressing school staffing, instructional, and operational needs in timely, efficient, and effective ways.

Coordinated use of resources and adequate budget authority: District and school plans are coordinated to provide integrated use of internal and external resources (human, financial, community and other) to achieve the school's mission.

Aligned curriculum: The district ensures that the taught curricula: a) are aligned to state curriculum frameworks and to the MCAS performance level descriptions; and b) are also aligned vertically (between grades) and horizontally (across classrooms at the same grade level and across sections of the same course).

Effective instruction: The district ensures that instruction reflects high expectations, focuses on clear objectives, and includes: a) a range of techniques, technologies, and supplemental materials aligned with students' developmental levels; b) instructional practices and activities that build a respectful climate and enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own learning; and c) use of class time that maximizes student learning.

Assessment and tiered instruction: The district provides support and oversight for a tiered instruction system in which school staff use formative (frequent and informal) and benchmark (periodic and standards-based) assessments in English language arts and mathematics to guide instruction and determine individual remedial and enrichment requirements. Benchmark assessments are given 4–8 times per year.

Principal's staffing authority: The district ensures that the principal has the authority, guidance, and assistance needed to make staffing decisions based on the school's improvement plan and student needs.

Professional development and structures for collaboration: Professional development includes: a) both job-embedded and individually pursued learning that enhances a teacher's knowledge and skills; and b) structures for collaboration that enable teachers to have regular,

frequent department and/or grade-level common planning and meeting time that is used to improve implementation of the curriculum and instructional practice.

Adequate learning time and additional academic support: For students not yet achieving grade level, the district ensures that the school provides a) at least 90 minutes per day of instruction and individualized support in English language arts and in mathematics; and b) supplemental instruction (for example: homework assistance, tutoring, Saturday school, summer school).

Students' social, emotional, and health needs: The district supports the school to address the social, emotional, and health needs of its students in systemic ways, including coordinated student support services, universal breakfast (if eligible), and consistent schoolwide attendance and discipline practices and effective classroom management that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for their own behavior and learning.

Family-school relationships: The district ensures that the school takes action to establish regular, two-way communications with families about students' academic and social/emotional development and promote widespread family participation in school events and activities.

Figure 1 displays the crosswalk components of a district literacy action plan, the eight district literacy action plan elements, and the 11 Massachusetts' conditions for school effectiveness.

Crosswalk: District Literacy Action Plan Elements and 11 Massachusetts' Conditions for School Effectiveness

Components of District Literacy Action Plan								
MA ESE's 11 Conditions for School Effectiveness	Systemic Data Use	Standards-based Curriculum	Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention	Family & Community Involvement	District Structures	Professional Development	Allocation of Resources	Policies and Procedures
1. Effective school leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. Effective district systems of support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Coordinated use of resources							✓	
4. Aligned curriculum		✓						
5. Effective instruction	✓		✓			✓		
6. Assessment and tiered instruction	✓	✓	✓	✓				
7. Principal's staffing authority					✓		✓	✓
8. Professional development and structures for collaboration			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
9. Adequate learning time and additional academic support			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
10. Students' social, emotional, and health needs			✓	✓			✓	
11. Family-school relationships				✓				

Figure 1. Crosswalk: District Literacy Action Plan Elements and 11 Massachusetts' Conditions for School Effectiveness

A Three-Stage Process for Developing a District Literacy Action Plan

Massachusetts school districts can use the following three-stage process for district literacy action planning modified from the process outlined in the *Taking the Lead on Adolescent Literacy: Action Steps for Schoolwide Success* (Corwin, 2010). Built into the process are all of the components of the *Taking Action Literacy Leadership Model* (Irvin, Meltzer & Dukes, 2006).³ An overview of the three stages is followed by detailed suggestions and templates to help the district develop the District Literacy Action Plan.

You will notice that the district will have a plan developed after Stage 3 is completed. However, to ensure that the plan will have an effect on student literacy and learning and sustain a focus on continuous improvement requires that the plan be implemented, monitored, reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis (see the sections later in this Guidelines document for ideas about implementation).

Notice that with only minor adjustments, the same three-stage process can be used for revising/updating an existing District Literacy Action Plan. If your district already has a literacy action plan, follow the suggestions in italics in each of the stages to use the process to revise/update the existing plan.

Three-Stage Process for Developing an Effective District Literacy Action Plan

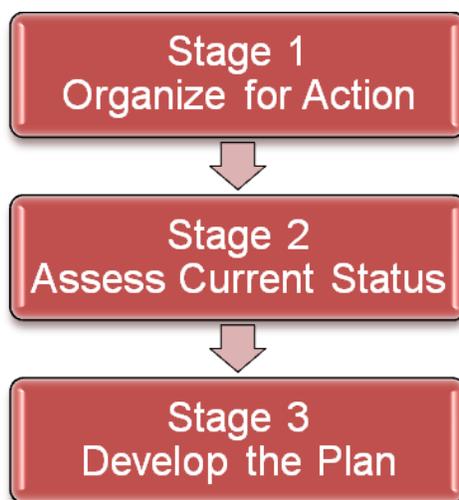


Figure 2. Three-Stage Process for Developing an Effective District Literacy Action Plan

³ For a brief explanation of the *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model, please see Appendix D in this Guidelines document. For a more in-depth explanation of all of the components of the *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model, educators may want to reference *Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy: An Implementation Guide for School Leaders* (ASCD, 2007).

About Stage 1: Organize for Action

Before beginning the assessment of current status (Stage 2) or actual plan development (Stage 3).

- **Make the case for a focus on literacy improvement.** The district literacy coordinator, curriculum coordinator, assistant superintendent, director of assessment or superintendent prepares a summary of district data that indicates that a literacy improvement plan is needed.

This summary should be available to team members as well as to all district and school-based administrators and the school board. This case-making needs to be data-based and to be done publicly by district leaders indicating to all stakeholders that literacy improvement is a district priority.

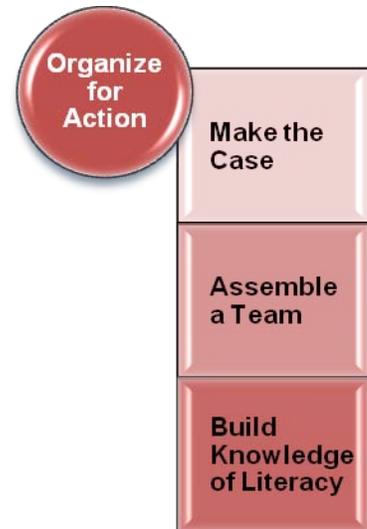
- **Assemble a representative team.** The district assembles a cross functional district literacy team to develop the plan. The team should include district and K–12 school-based administrators, lead teachers representing grades K–5 and the core content areas in grades 6–12, literacy coaches and/or reading specialists, and representatives from the following: ESL teachers, special education, library/media specialists, guidance, the union, and parents.

This is important because inclusion of diverse perspectives often contributes to development of a stronger plan than when the plan is developed by only a small group.

Remember, widespread buy-in and advocacy of the plans goals and action steps will be necessary for improved outcomes and this will be far easier to achieve with wider representation on the development team.

- **Build the team’s knowledge about literacy.** Before beginning the planning process, the district literacy team should start by assessing its own capacity and determining how team members will learn more about literacy development and the research and practice literature associated with improving student literacy and learning K–12.

This is important because it is likely that many on the team bring strong opinions, experience, and/or understanding of pieces of the literacy instructional puzzle but there may not be a common or comprehensive understanding of K–12 literacy development as a *group*.

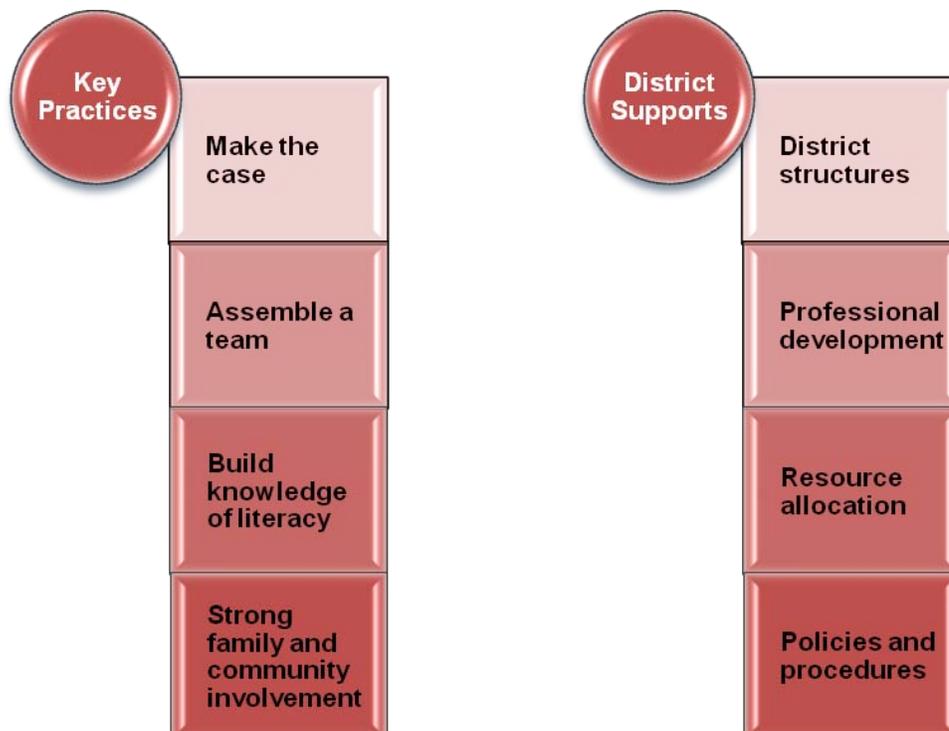


There are specific suggestions related to each of these beginning in the next section.

If you are revising/updating your plan, it is still wise to publicly take stock and summarize the current status of student performance as readers, writers and thinkers. It may be helpful to ensure that the right people are on the district literacy team and to invite others to join where there might be gaps in representation (e.g., upper grades, ELL teachers, principals, or parents).

You may also want to think about asking existing team members about topics where additional understanding is needed in order to make good decisions.

About Stage 2: Assess Current Status



Complete the Massachusetts District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol. The purpose of the Massachusetts District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol is to provide a structured process that the district literacy team can use to discuss and assess current practices and infrastructure and to answer questions about current status related to district supports for literacy improvement.

The benefits of using the protocol include getting district literacy team members on the same page, removing the action planning process from the purview of any one district team member, ensuring that key elements are considered by everyone before goals are set and action plans are developed, and providing a baseline assessment of current district practice prior to embarking on a literacy improvement initiative.

Schedule a series of meetings or a planning retreat to complete and discuss the Massachusetts District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol.

The protocol contains opportunities to discuss findings as well as to record group consensus about each section. The protocol begins in the Stage 2 section and is also available as an interactive Word template on the CD that accompanies this Guidelines document. After the team has completed the protocol, the team will be ready to begin developing a strategic District Literacy Action Plan.

Because the protocol has best practices embedded throughout, districts can also use the protocol when revising/updating an existing District Literacy Action Plan. In some cases, a district team may want to review and discuss only the sections of the protocol related to where action is needed.

About Stage 3: Develop the Plan

Complete the Massachusetts District Literacy Action Planning Template. To develop a strategic literacy action plan, the district literacy team develops a collaborative response to all of the parts of the Massachusetts District Literacy Action Planning Template using the recommended process for completing each section. The template has eight sections.

Section 1: The connection between literacy improvement and the district improvement or strategic plan

Section 2: Rationale for why a focus on literacy improvement is needed including a summary of the data that supports the need for a District Literacy Action Plan

Section 3: A vision of literacy teaching and learning in our district

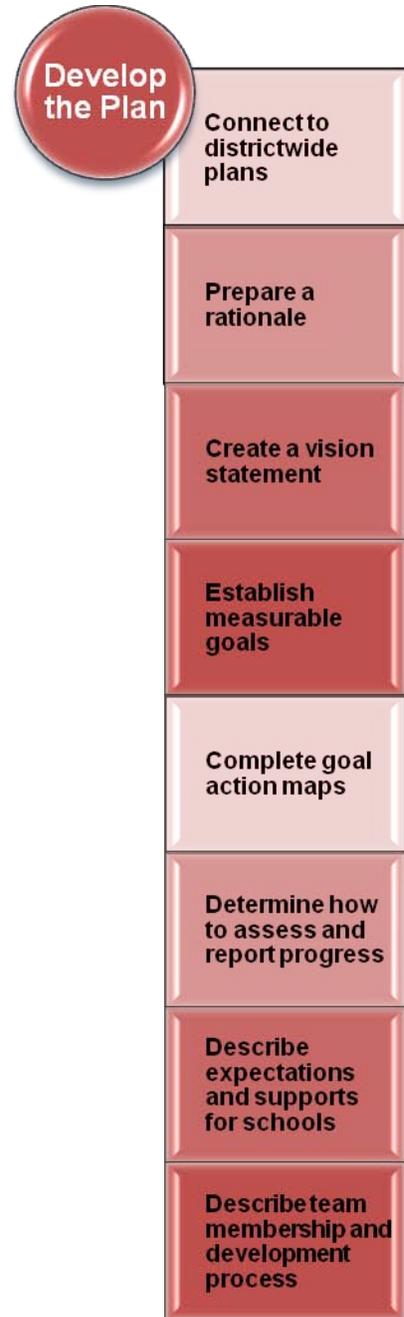
Section 4: Measurable goals for improvement based on the self- assessment and data about current student performance

Section 5: A set of action steps related to each goal that details what will occur, timeline, lead persons responsible, resources needed, implementation notes and how success will be measured

Section 6: Description of how progress toward goals will be measured

Section 7: Description of expectations and supports for schools in relation to the plan

Section 8: Description of membership of the district literacy team and process and timeline used to develop the plan



While the heart of the plan is Sections 4 and 5, together the eight sections support the completed plan to fulfill its role as a communication document, a vision statement, a call to action, and an implementation plan which can be monitored. The district team might complete the template over several sessions or schedule a planning retreat and develop the plan during a two- or three-day period.

The Massachusetts District Literacy Action Planning Template begins in the Stage 3 section and is also available as an interactive Word template on the CD that accompanies this Guidelines document.

Districts that need to revise/update their literacy plan can also use the Template to guide a review process. Using the Template in this way allows the team to reflect on how the existing plan can or should be updated to be more effective.

Once all eight sections have been completed, the district will have a new or revised District Literacy Action Plan that is based on student needs, communicates the need to focus on literacy improvement, targets key areas, builds on district capacity, and clearly articulates the actions that the district is prepared to take to improve student literacy and learning.

In the next three sections of the Guidelines document you will find directions and suggestions for completing Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the district literacy action planning process.



Stage 1: Organize for Action

Someone in the district has to get the ball rolling. It is helpful if, from the first, a few district administrators are invested in developing and implementing a District Literacy Action Plan and can work collaboratively to get things off the ground. The following are some tips and suggestions relative to the three steps of Stage 1 of the district literacy action planning process.

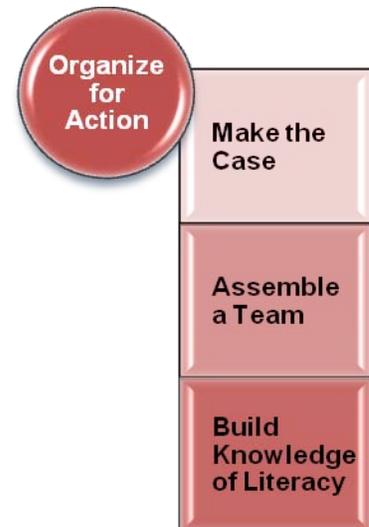
Make the Case for a Focus on Literacy Improvement

It is essential that if the directive to improve literacy does not come from the superintendent, that the superintendent explicitly endorses the intention to develop a District Literacy Action Plan and launch a district wide literacy improvement effort. The superintendent, along with other district administrators, need to be able to speak publicly to the need for a focus on improving literacy and need to be able to present the data to stakeholders.

To make the case, it is helpful to take some time to examine the data and juxtapose the district's data with information about the types of literacy needed in the 21st century to be successful in college, as a citizen and in the workplace.⁴ The chart in Figure 3 has some examples for how to make the case in your district, depending on what the data say.

Present the data graphically and connect the data to implications for students and for the district. In other words, help people see what the data means and what will happen if "business as usual" continues.

In some cases, you may want to further investigate before presenting the data widely to stakeholders. For example, you may want to see if the district averages represent the basic state of affairs throughout the district or are there some schools who do far better than others? If so, why is this the case? What will the district do to close the gaps in achievement between schools? Or, are there specific subgroups who do more poorly on reading assessments across the board? What is the responsibility of the district if this is the case? Perhaps high school graduation rates look pretty good until one looks at the differences between students from wealthier versus poorer households. Or it may be that when students are tracked, it turns out that far fewer than expected complete college within five years and many drop out after freshmen year. These are all literacy issues that can be targeted by a strong District Literacy Action Plan.



⁴ Three examples: (1) Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy. (2010). (2) ACT. (2006). (3) National Commission on Writing (2004, September) *Writing A ticket to work or a ticket out? A survey of business leaders*. College Board. Accessed November 29, 2009 from http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf

Making Your Case with the Data

Possible Literacy Issue Based on the Aggregated Data	Questions to Probe the Data Further	Suggestion for Displaying the Data and Making the Case
Third grade MCAS reading scores indicate district average is below the state average.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are 80% or more scoring at the proficient level? • Have prior classes kept their achievement constant or does analysis of past cohorts indicate predictable dips? • Is performance steady across socio-economic lines? • Do newer teachers who did not participate in district based reading professional development have different results? 	Display total results then display charts that answer these other questions. Always connect the data to implications or questions the data raise about the district's program, equity of access to high expectations and adequate support, or issues of whether more support is needed at the higher grade levels. Announce that the literacy improvement initiative will incorporate a Tiered System of Interventions beginning with a focus on Tier I Core Instruction.
6 th grade nonfiction reading and science scores taper off similarly and this has been a trend for the past three years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the ratio of fiction to nonfiction reading in the ELA curriculum for 5th and 6th grade? • How much of the dip in reading scores is also reflected in the science scores? • What kinds of scientific reading and writing are students required to do in 6th grade? • Are all students equally impacted or are there achievement gaps? • What will the district need to do to address the problem? 	Show trend lines. Point out that students did not make a year's worth of gains in 6 th grade. Show using a trend line how, if students make a year's worth of gains each year, they will still not catch up. Use the data from the <i>Reading Between the Lines</i> ⁵ report to show the overlap between reading and science. Cite the district's STEM initiative and show how critical a focus on literacy improvement will be to the success of the STEM initiative.
District writing prompts show student writing is not improving and MCAS writing prompts are below the state average.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the issue topic development or conventions or both? • Do different types of prompts (expository, narrative, persuasive) generate different results? • How much practice are students getting with writing to prompts that relate to the content being studied? 	Show the district writing prompt results at different grade levels. Show how scores for topic development compares with conventions. Show the MCAS results juxtaposed over the district results. Share data from <i>Writing: A ticket to work or a ticket out?</i> ⁶ Announce that the district literacy initiative will include a major focus on writing.
SAT critical reading scores indicate that passing marks on the 10 th grade MCAS do not always translate to high marks on the SAT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much reading are students doing at the higher grades? • What kinds of items on the MCAS tend to be missed by 10th graders? • Are these items that require critical thinking? Or require the sophisticated use of text? • How could teacher professional development be provided in order to ensure that students are getting instruction on how to do critical reading of complex text? 	Display SAT Critical Reading and MCAS score trends for 10 th grade ELA on the chart. Point out that this is skewed since not all students take the SAT. Explain what the two tests assess in terms of reading. Juxtapose the data with the <i>Reading Between the Lines</i> ⁷ data. Announce that the District Literacy Improvement Initiative will include a focus on content literacy in all middle and high schools.

⁵ ACT. (2006).

⁶ National Commission on Writing (2004, September).

⁷ ACT. (2006).

Source: *Making Your Case With the Data*. 2009 Public Consulting Group. Used with permission.

Figure 3. Making Your Case with the Data

Assemble a Representative Team

The size of a district literacy action planning team will vary in relation to the size of the district and the number and different roles of stakeholders necessary for the development and implementation of a successful plan. When you assemble a cross-functional district literacy team to develop and oversee implementation of the District Literacy Action Plan, make sure that you do not make the following common mistakes.

COMMON MISTAKE #1. Overloading the team with special education teachers, reading specialists, literacy coaches and/or elementary teachers.

WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM? You need wider representation and buy-in. While it is tempting to load your team with “experts,” literacy is a K–12 issue that involves a wider range of teachers and administrators than represented in this list and a plan developed by a team mostly of people in these roles will not have the credibility needed, and may miss critical issues that need to be addressed.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD. Establish a team with district and K–12 school-based administrators, lead teachers representing grades K–5 and the core content areas in grades 6–12, literacy coaches and/or reading specialists, and representatives from the following: ESL teachers, special education, library/media specialists, guidance, the union, and parents. You may also choose to have some student representatives on the team. It is often helpful to have student voice but recognize that the views of a few students may not be typical or adequate to get a comprehensive “student” viewpoint.

COMMON MISTAKE #2. Failure to establish team norms, develop a schedule of meetings, communicate clear expectations of team members, and have meeting agendas.

WHY THIS IS A PROBLEM? Busy people are willing to serve when meetings are well organized, expectations are clear and business gets done during the meetings. But when meetings are disorganized and there is foggy about the purpose of the group or how decisions will be made or what is expected, frustration can sap the energy of team members who will either stop participating or will be unable to move things forward.

WHAT TO DO INSTEAD. Appoint a team leader to serve as the point person for the team. For each meeting, identify a note-taker and a meeting facilitator. Have these three work together to develop the agenda for the next meeting. Use some time at the first meeting to establish some team norms. These might include an expectation that meetings will begin and end on time, that agendas will be emailed two days before the next meeting, that refreshments will be provided by the district, that meeting notes will be sent out by email within a week of the meeting, that cell phones are expected to be off during the meeting, and that people will have the opportunity to comment on an issue before anyone gets to comment a second time. Set a meeting schedule in advance so team members can plan accordingly.

Build the Team's Knowledge About Literacy

In order to conduct an accurate assessment of current practice (the focus of Stage 2) and to develop a quality District Literacy Action Plan (the focus of Stage 3) it is important that all team members have a good grasp of the issues—including the research and practical implications—associated with literacy instruction in grades K–12. While it is likely that many on the team bring strong opinions, experience and/or understanding of pieces of the literacy instructional puzzle, the team may not have a common or comprehensive understanding of K–12 literacy development as a *group*.

When you ask team members to introduce themselves you can ask what aspects of literacy they feel they have some expertise in and what they have specific questions about. This will give the group some sense of itself and what type of in-house expertise is present as well as where there might be gaps in knowledge about literacy.

Another way to begin to build the team's collective understanding about literacy is to have the team review and discuss the terms in the Glossary in Appendix A. You may ask team members to review the terms and code them: I know this term and can provide examples of this (!), I have heard of this term (<), or I do not know this term in this context (?). Then you can ask pairs of team members to discuss their codes and then the group as a whole to discuss the terms.

There are resources listed in Appendix B that are keyed to the four Key Practices as well as general policy reports and research summaries related to why a focus on improving student literacy and learning can be used as an effective lever for school and district improvement. The team may choose one or more of these to read and study together or pairs may read different articles and make a summary report back to the team.

You may want to use the ***Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Practices and Supports*** on the next two pages. You can ask team members to rank their understanding of the following topics and record how many team members chose each rating on a chart. It is helpful to use initials and to use the chart both to plan for how the team will increase its knowledge and understanding of key issues as well as to help team members know who will be able to provide additional insight into specific areas.

Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Practices and Supports

Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Practices

Rating Guide

- 1 = I do not know about this
- 2 = I have some knowledge about this
- 3 = I have solid experience with this
- 4 = I know a lot about this and can help others to understand this

Topic	Rating for Grades K–3				Rating for Grades 4–12			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
<p>Practice 1: Systemic Use of Data</p> <p>The components of a district literacy assessment framework; using data to understand students’ abilities as readers and writers; types of reading assessment; using data to inform instruction; using data to monitor progress.</p>								
<p>Practice 2: Standards-based Curriculum</p> <p>Standards-based ELA curriculum at different grade levels; appropriate integration of ELA standards into instruction in other content areas; how to implement a curriculum review process; aligning curriculum and assessment.</p>								
<p>Practice 3: Tiered System of Literacy Instruction and Intervention</p> <p>Implications of a tiered system of literacy instruction; literacy development in grades K–12; appropriate core instruction in reading, writing and critical thinking; research about reading and writing interventions as they connect to specific areas of need.</p>								
<p>Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement</p> <p>Issues related to family and community involvement – what the research says, options for how districts can improve family and community involvement; core components of effective family literacy programs.</p>								

Figure 4. Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Practices

Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Supports

Rating Guide

1 = I do not know about this

2 = I have some knowledge about this

3 = I have solid experience with this

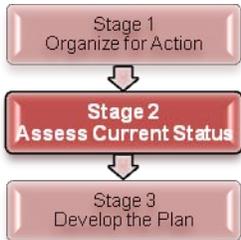
4 = I know a lot about this and can help others to understand this

Topic	Rating for Grades K-3				Rating for Grades 4-12			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Support 1: District Supports The types of supports that need to be in place districtwide to support literacy and learning K–12.								
Support 2: Professional Development What the research says about effective professional development for K–3 teachers, intervention teachers, specialists and content area teachers of students in grades 4–12.								
Support 3: Resource Allocation Time, space, materials, personnel, technology and intervention programs needed to adequately support improved literacy and learning.								
Support 4: Policies and Procedures The policies and procedures that would be helpful to have in place to support a focus on improving literacy and learning at the district and school levels.								

Figure 5. Team Knowledge Assessment of Key Supports

After completing the two charts, based on the ratings, the team can make a plan for knowledge sharing and development. The team can decide if it would be helpful to bring in an outside consultant with specific expertise to help the team understand the options and issues related to one or more of the key practices or supports.

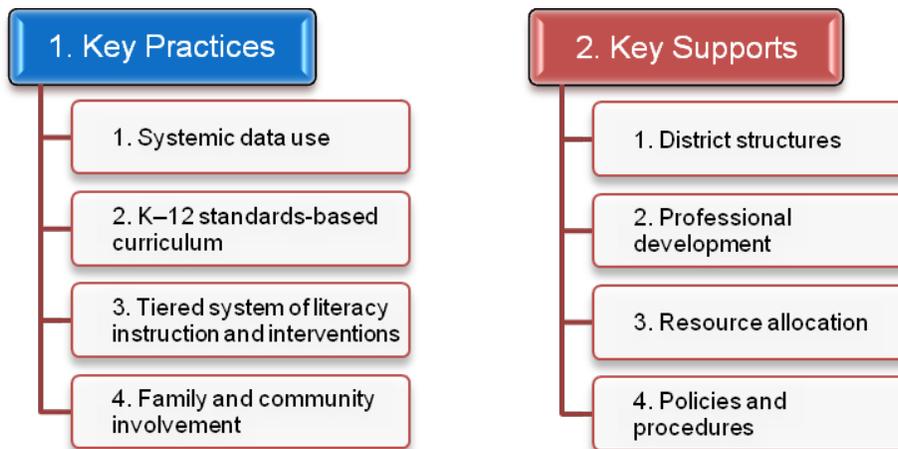
- Where do we have the greatest collective understanding?
- Where do we need to develop our understanding?
- How will we do this?



Stage 2: Assess Current Status

The Massachusetts District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol is a tool to help a district literacy team document, understand, and reflect upon district efforts relative to critical components of an effective district literacy initiative. There are two parts of the District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol.

Practices and Supports of the Two Key Parts of the District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol



Part 1–Key Practices. Part 1 is an assessment of current district practice relative to four key practices. Using the protocol, the district literacy team will complete an analysis of the district’s literacy improvement efforts through the lens of the following:

- Practice 1** *Systemic Use of Data:* Data are used throughout the district to improve literacy and learning.
- Practice 2** *Standards-based Curriculum:* A K–12 standards-based curriculum explicitly supports ongoing literacy development.
- Practice 3** *Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention:* There is a tiered system of literacy instruction and interventions in place throughout the district.
- Practice 4** *Family and Community Involvement:* There is strong family and community involvement with and commitment to improving students’ literacy.

For each key practice, the district literacy team will use the protocol to think about how the practice is currently implemented in the district, discuss their answers, and develop a set of summary statements to refer to when developing the District Literacy Action Plan.

Part 2–Key Supports. In Part 2, the district literacy team will use the Protocol to examine and discuss the current status of four types of key supports that reinforce literacy improvement as an explicit district priority.

Support 1 *District Structures*

Support 2 *Professional Development*

Support 3 *Resource Allocation*

Support 4 *Policies and Procedures*

Upon completion of the District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol, a district literacy team will have:

- Reviewed district status in the critical areas of a successful district-wide literacy initiative,
- Discussed and prioritized factors that the team feels are critical to improving literacy instruction throughout the district, and
- Identified key elements to be included in its district-wide literacy action plan.

1. Key Practices

Part 1: Key District Practices in Place to Support Literacy

Practice 1: Systemic Data Use

Data are used throughout the district to improve literacy and learning.

Rationale for inclusion. Use of data to make instructional decisions, placement decisions, and decisions about resource allocation is consistently associated with improved student outcomes and allows districts to monitor the success of their system-wide literacy improvement initiatives.

A good district literacy assessment framework includes multiple types of assessment used purposefully at different levels of the system to answer questions about students' learning needs, program quality, and professional development needs. As always, the issue is selection of quality assessments that answer specific questions and provide various stakeholders with the information they need to improve teaching and learning. All of the assessments should be aligned to standards. Assuming the curriculum is aligned to standards, the literacy assessment framework should enable the district to support and track student progress towards meeting the standards.

Although quality core literacy instruction looks different at grades K-3 and 4-12 and, therefore, the types and content of assessments will vary, there are a number of basic functions that a solid district literacy assessment framework needs to be able to do. These can be accomplished through a purposeful combined system of **formative** and **summative** assessments intended to measure students' abilities as readers, writers, and speakers/listeners.

Using a number of **formative assessments**, a district should be able to identify students in need of further assistance (screening assessments), track literacy development (through interim or benchmark assessments, through short cycle or course assessments, through classroom based curriculum assessments and, when measuring response to intervention, through more frequent progress monitoring) and to further diagnose the needs of those students who may be falling behind to determine how to target instruction and intervention most effectively (diagnostic assessment).

A district literacy framework should also include **summative/outcomes assessment**, which provides information on program effectiveness and determines if students are making adequate yearly progress. While the same assessment can sometimes be used for multiple purposes, **it is very important for districts and schools to understand the purposes for which it is appropriate to use a given assessment. Districts also need to ensure that educators administering the assessment follow established guidelines and procedures and understand how to interpret the related reports.** Otherwise well-intentioned data use may result in inaccurate student placement, faulty diagnosis, poor matches between instruction and student needs, and unwarranted conclusions about individual or cohort student progress.

Use the following definitions as you complete the six steps of the Protocol related to Practice 1: Systemic Data Use.

Formative assessments Assessments that provide teachers with constant feedback on student learning for the primary purpose of better understanding and addressing students' needs as readers, writers and speakers/listeners. Types of formative assessments include:

Interim (benchmark) assessments These assessments can be designed and used for several purposes – to guide instruction, to identify students needing additional help, to predict student performance on outcomes assessments, to assure that program expectations across schools at particular grade levels are consistent, to provide insights into program quality, and to support professional decision-making and curriculum selection and development. Interim assessments typically have external scoring referents and/or district determined grade level benchmarks so that grade level or peer performance can be compared. Examples of interim reading assessments include: DIBELS, AIMSWEB, DRA, DRP, NWEA.

Curriculum related (short cycle, course, classroom) assessments, which can include curriculum associated tests or tasks and teacher made assessments but also include common assessments that have been internally developed to measure understanding of the district curriculum or robust performance assessments scored by rubric.

Diagnostic assessments These assessments help educators specifically pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses. This type of assessment helps teachers to know what gaps in student learning need to be addressed. Examples include individually administered diagnostic reading tests like the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading or the QRI. Sometimes interim assessments like the DRA or NWEA MAP tests or the GRADE also provide some diagnostic information through the reporting of subtest scores, which can be used for deeper analysis.

Summative (outcomes) assessment Used for district accountability for NCLB; these assessments can be criterion-referenced and standards-based (example: MCAS) or be norm referenced standardized tests (example: Iowa Test of Basic Skills; Stanford 9).

Completion of the six steps related to Practice 1 will support the district team to create and discuss an in-depth review of current practices related to literacy assessment in the district.

- Step 1:** Summary of District Reading Assessments: Identify the assessments used throughout the district to assess students' reading.
- Step 2:** Reading Assessment Overview: Complete a more in-depth look at each of the assessments identified in Step 1.
- Step 3:** Literacy Assessment Beyond Reading: Catalog literacy assessment in the areas of writing; language development and usage; and speaking, listening and presenting.
- Step 4:** Review and Summarize: Review the current types of literacy assessment in the district and determine gaps and redundancy.
- Step 5:** District Literacy Data Use Rubric: Rate the current status of data use against quality indicators representing best practices in the literature.
- Step 6:** Systemic Data Use: Strengths and Challenges Summary: Document the key strengths and challenges related to the use of assessments and assessment data that the literacy team has identified for the district.

Step 1: Summary of District Reading Assessments

Complete the SUMMARY OF DISTRICT READING ASSESSMENTS Chart. When filled in, the Chart will provide a summary of the reading assessments currently administered throughout the district. Note that the Chart is available as a form on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Summary of District Reading Assessments

Type/Use of Assessment	Administered at these grade levels	How often and when administered?
Name of Assessment: Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Interim <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic <input type="checkbox"/> Summative	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> K <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 Consistent across district? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
Name of Assessment: Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Interim <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic <input type="checkbox"/> Summative	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> K <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 Consistent across district? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
Name of Assessment: Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Interim <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic <input type="checkbox"/> Summative	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> K <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 Consistent across district? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
Name of Assessment: Check all that apply: <input type="checkbox"/> Interim <input type="checkbox"/> Diagnostic	<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-K <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 9 <input type="checkbox"/> K <input type="checkbox"/> 5 <input type="checkbox"/> 10 <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 6 <input type="checkbox"/> 11 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 7 <input type="checkbox"/> 12 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 8 Consistent across district? <input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	

Type/Use of Assessment	Administered at these grade levels	How often and when administered?
<input type="checkbox"/> Summative		

Figure 6. Summary of District Reading Assessments

Step 2: Reading Assessment Overview

Complete a READING ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW chart for each reading assessment administered as part of the district literacy assessment framework. Note that the READING ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW CHART is available as a form on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Reading Assessment Overview		
Name of Reading Assessment		
Administration (Paper or online)		
How quickly do teachers receive the data?		
What areas of reading does it measure?	<input type="checkbox"/> phonemic awareness <input type="checkbox"/> phonics/decoding <input type="checkbox"/> fluency <input type="checkbox"/> vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of fiction <input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of nonfiction <input type="checkbox"/> identify/recall <input type="checkbox"/> infer/analyze <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate/apply
Who uses the data? For what purpose?		
Does the team think this is a useful assessment? Why or why not?		

Reading Assessment Overview		
Name of Reading Assessment		
Administration (Paper or online)		
How quickly do teachers receive the data?		
What areas of reading does it measure?	<input type="checkbox"/> phonemic awareness <input type="checkbox"/> phonics/decoding <input type="checkbox"/> fluency <input type="checkbox"/> vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of fiction <input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of nonfiction <input type="checkbox"/> identify/recall <input type="checkbox"/> infer/analyze <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate/apply

Who uses the data? For what purpose?		
Does the team think this is a useful assessment? Why or why not?		

Reading Assessment Overview		
Name of Reading Assessment		
Administration (Paper or online)		
How quickly do teachers receive the data?		
What areas of reading does it measure?	<input type="checkbox"/> phonemic awareness <input type="checkbox"/> phonics/decoding <input type="checkbox"/> fluency <input type="checkbox"/> vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of fiction <input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of nonfiction <input type="checkbox"/> identify/recall <input type="checkbox"/> infer/analyze <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate/apply
Who uses the data? For what purpose?		
Does the team think this is a useful assessment? Why or why not?		

Reading Assessment Overview		
Name of Reading Assessment		
Administration (Paper or online)		
How quickly do teachers receive the data?		
What areas of reading does it measure?	<input type="checkbox"/> phonemic awareness <input type="checkbox"/> phonics/decoding <input type="checkbox"/> fluency <input type="checkbox"/> vocabulary	<input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of fiction <input type="checkbox"/> comprehension of nonfiction <input type="checkbox"/> identify/recall <input type="checkbox"/> infer/analyze <input type="checkbox"/> evaluate/apply
Who uses the data? For what purpose?		

Does the team think this is a useful assessment? Why or why not?	
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Figure 7. Reading Assessment Overview (four tables)

Step 3: Literacy Assessment Beyond Reading

In the area of literacy, assessments also need to address aspects of literacy beyond reading. Complete the LITERACY ASSESSMENT INVENTORY charts below for each area where the district administers an assessment. When filled in, the charts will provide an inventory of district literacy assessments for areas other than reading. The charts are each available as a form on the accompanying CD-ROM.

Writing: topic development (ideas, organization, argumentation); conventions (mechanics, sentence structure); style (voice, genre)

Literacy Assessment Inventory – Writing				
Name of assessment				
Who takes the assessment?				
When is the assessment given?				
What does the score tell you about students as writers?				
Who uses the data and how do they use it?				

Figure 8. Literacy Assessment Inventory – Writing

Language Development and Language Usage: for ELLs and for native English speakers having difficulty with speech and language.

Literacy Assessment Inventory – Language Development and Language Usage				
Name of assessment				
Who takes the assessment?				
When is the assessment given?				

What does the score tell you about students as speakers?				
Who uses the data and how do they use it?				

Figure 9. Literacy Assessment Inventory – Language Development and Language Usage

Listening/Presenting: assessments that require students to be assessed on the quality of listening/presenting.

Literacy Assessment Inventory – Listening/Presenting				
Name of assessment				
Who takes the assessment?				
When is the assessment given?				
What does the score tell you about students as listeners or presenters?				
Who uses the data and how do they use it?				

Figure 10. Literacy Assessment Inventory – Listening/Presenting

Step 4: Review and Summarize

After reviewing the Summary of District Reading Assessments, the Reading Assessment Overview, and the Literacy Assessment Charts, discuss and record the team’s observations in the box below.

- 1. Where does the team see gaps? Redundancies?
- 2. What does the team think about
 - a. How literacy assessments are being used throughout the district?
 - b. The quality of the literacy assessments being used?
 - c. Teacher professional development needed to help teachers use data more productively?

Summary of Team Observations

Figure 11. District Literacy Assessments – Summary of Team Observations

Step 5: District Literacy Data Use Rubric

Review each of the elements in the rubric below. Identify the stage at which you consider the district to be operating at in grades K–3. Put a check in the box beside K-3 and 4-12 that identifies the stage of implementation: Beginning, Transitional, Consistent, or Exemplary.

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<p>Assessment framework: The district does not have a literacy assessment framework.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Assessment framework: The district has a weak literacy assessment framework.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Assessment framework: The district has a literacy assessment framework, but the data are not examined or used by many teachers.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Assessment framework: The district has a literacy assessment framework and data are routinely used by most teachers to guide instruction and intervention.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Interim/benchmark assessment: The district does not require that schools administer interim/benchmark reading assessments in addition to MCAS ELA assessments.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Interim/benchmark assessment: The district requires that schools administer interim/benchmark reading assessments to struggling readers in addition to MCAS ELA assessments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Interim/benchmark assessment: The district requires that schools administer interim/benchmark reading assessments to all students in addition to MCAS ELA assessments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Interim/benchmark assessment: The district assures that schools administer interim/benchmark reading and writing assessments to all students in addition to MCAS ELA assessments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Data access: The district does not provide data to schools.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data access: The district provides data to schools but there is considerable lag time.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data access: The district provides quality data to schools in a timely manner.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data access: The district provides timely, quality data in user friendly formats.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Expectations for use of data: The district does not explicitly expect data use to drive decision making about student placement.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Expectations for use of data: The district expects data use to drive decision making about student placement.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Expectations for use of data: The district expects data use to drive decisions about student placement and classroom instruction.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Expectations for use of data: Throughout the district, data is used to drive decisions about student placement and instruction.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Data analysis: The district does not analyze data about student performance as readers and writers in grades K–12.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data analysis: The district analyzes data about student performance as readers in grades K–8.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data analysis: The district analyzes data about program effectiveness and student growth as readers and writers in grades K–12.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Data analysis: The district analyzes and shares data about program effectiveness and student growth as readers and writers in grades K–12.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<p>Improvement goals: The district does not set measurable literacy improvement goals.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Improvement goals: The district sets data-based literacy improvement goals but does not use data to measure progress.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Improvement goals: The district sets data-based literacy improvement goals and uses data to report on general progress.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Improvement goals: The district sets data-based literacy improvement goals and uses data to measure progress.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>

Figure 12. District Literacy Data Use Rubric

Practice 2: Standards-based Curriculum

A K–12 standards-based curriculum explicitly supports ongoing literacy development

Rationale for inclusion: A standards-based curriculum carefully and purposefully articulates literacy support and development, helps to align and calibrate instruction, provides equitable access to rigorous content, and support proficiency and readiness to meet the literacy demands of college and career.

The Protocol includes two steps related to Practice 2:

Step 1: Standards-based Curriculum Rubric

Step 2: Standards-based Curriculum – Strengths and Challenges Summary

Step 1: Standards-Based Curriculum Rubric

Review each of the elements in the rubric below. Identify the stage at which you consider your district to be operating at grades K–3. Put a check in the box beside K–3 that identifies the stage of implementation: Beginning, Transitional, Consistent, or Exemplary. Then do the same for grades 4–12.

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<p>Curriculum Alignment The district curriculum does not include a scope and sequence for literacy development that aligns with state content standards.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Alignment The district curriculum includes a scope and sequence for literacy development in grades K-3 but the curriculum is not well aligned with state content standards.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Alignment The district curriculum includes a scope and sequence for literacy development 3 that aligns with state content standards.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Alignment The district curriculum includes a scope and sequence for literacy development along with identified benchmarks that align with state content standards.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Curriculum Documents Few curriculum documents/course descriptions include the development of specified literacy habits and skills, types of text, and amounts of reading and writing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Documents Some curriculum documents/course descriptions include the development of specified literacy habits and skills, types of text, and amounts of reading and writing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Documents Most curriculum documents/course descriptions include the development of specified literacy habits and skills, types of text, and amounts of reading and writing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Documents All curriculum documents/course descriptions include the development of specified literacy habits and skills, types of text, and amounts of reading and writing.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Literacy Development Literacy development does not build by grade level in the content areas.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Literacy Development In some content areas, literacy development builds by grade level.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Literacy Development In most content areas, literacy development builds by grade level.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Literacy Development In all content areas, literacy development builds by grade level.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<p>Communication Standards Inclusion of the ELA communication standards is not evident in content area classes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication Standards Inclusion of the ELA communication standards is evident in some content area classes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication Standards Inclusion of the ELA communication standards is evident in many content area classes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication Standards Inclusion of the ELA communication standards is evident in all content area classes.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Rigorous Content Only a few students have access to rigorous course content and strong literacy support.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Rigorous Content Only some students have access to rigorous course content and strong literacy support.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Rigorous Content Most students have access to rigorous course content and strong literacy support.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Rigorous Content All students have access to rigorous course content and strong literacy support.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Use of Standards Standards are not used for district-based planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Use of Standards Standards are sometimes used for district-based planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Use of Standards Standards are typically used for district-based planning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Use of Standards Standards are used as a blueprint for district-based decision-making regarding the allocation of resources.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Curriculum Review The district does not have a process for curriculum review and alignment.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Review The district conducts an ELA curriculum review every 5–10 years mainly for the purpose of selecting core materials.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Review The district conducts regularly scheduled ELA curriculum reviews every 2–5 years, but standards alignment is not a priority.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Curriculum Review The district actively engages staff at all levels in a regularly occurring standards-based ELA curriculum review and alignment process.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>

Figure 14. Standards-Based Curriculum Rubric

Step 2: Standards-based Curriculum -- Strengths and Challenges Summary

Discuss team members' individual ratings and determine a consensus rating that reflects actual district practice at this time. Record a summary of district strengths and district challenges related to current implementation of a standards-based literacy curriculum at this time.

Standards-based Curriculum -- Strengths and Challenges Summary	
Summary of district strengths related to a standards-based curriculum that supports literacy development	
Summary of district challenges related to a standards-based curriculum that supports literacy development	

Figure 15. Standards-based Curriculum – Strengths and Challenges Summary

Practice 3: Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

There is a tiered system of literacy instruction and interventions in place throughout the district.

Rationale for inclusion: A tiered system of literacy instruction and interventions optimally supports ongoing student success by providing excellent core literacy instruction and providing just in time assistance as needed.

The Protocol has six steps for the team to complete relative to assessing current implementation of Practice 3. The first three steps relate to Core Instruction (Tier 1) while the last three pertain specifically to Tiered Intervention (Tiers 2 and 3).

Step 1: Core Instruction – District expectations, policies and resource allocation

Step 2: Core Instruction – School-based elements

Step 3: Core Instruction – Strengths and Challenges Summary

Step 4: Tiered Intervention – District expectations, policies and resource allocation

Step 5: Tiered Intervention – School-based elements

Step 6: Tiered Intervention – Strengths and Challenges Summary

Core Instruction

Core instruction equals excellent literacy instruction in grades K–12 for all students. The goal is for the core instructional program to meet the needs of 80% or more of the students, as demonstrated by their meeting grade level benchmarks for reading, writing, and speaking/presenting. In grades K-5 the core program refers primarily to Language Arts Instruction but includes literacy development through other content areas. In grades 6-12, the core program refers to content area reading and writing and, therefore, a strong content area literacy focus.

Step 1 Core Instruction – District expectations, policies, and resource allocation

Review each of the elements in the rubric below. Identify the stage which you feel represents current district practice K-12.

Core Instruction: District Expectations, Policies, and Resource Allocation (K-12)	Needs to be developed/ implemented	Not in place but in development	In place but needs improvement	In place and working well
Clear district expectation All students can become confident and competent readers, writers, and thinkers given appropriate instruction and opportunity for guided practice.				
Clear district expectation Students deserve to understand their status as readers, writers and learners, and have the opportunity to set goals and discuss their successes and challenges as a learner with teachers and parents.				
Clear district expectation Students in grades K-12 will have choices about what they read, write, or investigate on a regular basis.				
Policy Content area reading and writing instruction and vocabulary development are a strong focus in almost all K-12 classes.				
Policy K-12 teachers will use flexible grouping to meet the literacy needs of students.				
Policy Standards-based grading practices that support the redoing, revising and making up of literacy-related work are in place K-12.				
Resource Rubrics and models are routinely used K-12 to communicate expectations for quality writing and presenting.				
Resource There is adequate technology throughout the district so that students can use technology whenever they are asked to do research, write, and present.				

Core Instruction: District Expectations, Policies, and Resource Allocation (K-12)	Needs to be developed/ implemented	Not in place but in development	In place but needs improvement	In place and working well
Resource In addition to textbooks K-12 teachers have access to a variety of print and electronic texts to provide content information.				

Figure 16. Core Instruction – District Expectations, Policies and Resource Allocation

Step 2 Core Instruction – school-based elements

Read through and individually rate the extent of current practice for grades K–3 and for grades 4–12.

Core Instruction: School-based Elements	Grades K–3				Grades 4–12			
	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26-50% of schools	Solid practice in 51-75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26-50% of schools	Solid practice in 51-75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools
Instructional strategies: Teachers select, teach, model and use instructional strategies to strengthen content learning while supporting literacy development.								
Classroom routines: Teachers consistently use classroom routines to involve students actively in reading, writing, and learning.								
Strategies for challenging text: Teachers routinely provide students with specific strategies they can use if they experience difficulty with an assignment.								
Modeling and guided practice: Teachers consistently provide modeling and guided practice opportunities to help students meet high expectations.								
Specific feedback: Teachers provide specific feedback and coaching to students about their performance as readers, writers and presenters.								

Core Instruction: School-based Elements	Grades K–3				Grades 4–12			
	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26-50% of schools	Solid practice in 51-75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26-50% of schools	Solid practice in 51-75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools
Meaningful assignments: Reading and writing assignments typically have a purpose that is meaningful to students and/or acknowledge an audience beyond the teacher.								
Higher order thinking: Assignments require higher order critical thinking about content.								
Collaborative learning: Students frequently have the opportunity to read, write, and investigate in pairs or small groups.								
Reading levels and interests: Teachers routinely use instructional materials that are aligned with varying reading levels and/or student interests.								
Opportunities to present: Students have multiple opportunities in most classes to present what they have learned.								
Critical synthesis: Students are regularly asked to draw conclusions based on the synthesis of information from multiple sources.								

Figure 17. Core Instruction – School-based Elements

Tiered Interventions

Tiered interventions provide supplemental and intensive “just in time” interventions as needed to help students stay on track in their growth as readers, writers, and thinkers.

Step 4 Tiered Intervention – District expectations, policies and resource allocation

Read through and individually rate each item at the level which you believe represents current district practice K–12.

Tiered Intervention: District Expectations, Policies and Resource Allocation (K–12)	Needs to be developed/ implemented	Not in place but in development	In place but needs improvement	In place and working well
Policy: Student assignment to literacy interventions is matched to targeted need (phonemic awareness, phonics/decoding, fluency, vocabulary/language development, comprehension, writing, speaking)				
Policy: There are established district-wide placement and exit criteria for each Tier of Intervention				
Policy: Qualified personnel provide all intervention support.				
Policy: ELL and SPED teachers must have a reading background.				
Policy: Policy and procedures related to tiered instruction comply with state regulations to determine SPED eligibility				
Resource: A certified reading specialist is available to consult with classroom teachers and interventionists at each school.				
Resource: Adequate materials and technology are available as necessary to support quality delivery of supplemental and intensive literacy interventions at all schools.				

Figure 19. Tiered Intervention – District expectations, Policies and Resource Allocation

Step 5 Tiered Intervention – School-based elements

Read through and individually rate the level of the district’s current practice for grades K–3 and for grades 4–12.

Tiered Intervention: School-based Elements	Grades K–3				Grades 4–12			
	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26 to 50% of schools	Solid practice in 51 to 75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools	Solid practice in fewer than 25% of schools	Solid practice in 26 to 50% of schools	Solid practice in 51 to 75% of schools	Solid practice in more than 75% of schools
Multiple Interventions: Supplemental and Intensive Interventions to address a variety of targeted literacy needs are in place.								
Systematic progress monitoring: Appropriate progress monitoring tools are used to assess response to intervention.								
Process for moving students among tiers and interventions: A defined process is followed for moving students among tiers and interventions.								
Scheduling: Scheduling supports the appropriate allocation of time for activities related to implementing a tiered system of instruction and intervention (e.g.: time for screening, data analysis, progress monitoring, and intervention planning).								
Fidelity of implementation: Interventions are implemented with fidelity with regard to use of time, materials, assessment, and technology.								

Figure 20. Tiered Intervention – School-based Elements

Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement

There is strong family and community involvement with and commitment to improving students' literacy.

Rationale for inclusion: Higher levels of family and community support and involvement with the education of students has consistently been correlated with improved student outcomes.

The Protocol has two steps related to Practice 4:

Step 1: Family and Community Involvement Rubric

Step 2: Family and Community Involvement – Strengths and Challenges Summary

Step 1: Family and Community Involvement Rubric

Directions Review each of the elements in the rubric that follows. Identify the stage at which you consider your district to be operating at grades K–3. Put a check in the box beside K–3 that identifies the stage of implementation: Beginning, Transitional, Consistent, or Exemplary. Do the same for grades 4–12.

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<p>Family and community participation Family members and community leaders generally do not serve on committees, volunteer, or participate in district-based literacy events.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Family and community participation Family members and community leaders seldom serve on committees or volunteer, and rarely participate in district literacy events.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Family and community participation Family members and community leaders sometimes serve on committees or volunteer, and often participate in district-based literacy events.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Family and community participation Family members and community leaders regularly serve on committees or volunteer, and always participate in district-based literacy events.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Communication about literacy initiative The district does not inform families and community members about the progress and next steps of the literacy initiative.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication about literacy initiative The district occasionally informs families and community members about the progress and next steps of the literacy initiative.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication about literacy initiative The district annually informs families and community members about the progress and next steps of the literacy initiative.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>	<p>Communication about literacy initiative The district actively solicits ongoing input from families and community members about the progress and next steps of the literacy initiative.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12</p>
<p>Communication with non English-speaking community Communication with non-English speaking family members seldom includes native language outreach about literacy activities (newsletters, videotapes, and websites).</p>	<p>Communication with non English-speaking community Communication with non-English speaking family members includes occasional native language outreach about literacy activities (newsletters, videotapes, and websites).</p>	<p>Communication with non English-speaking community Communication with non-English speaking family members includes regular native language outreach about literacy activities (newsletters, videotapes, and websites).</p>	<p>Communication with non English-speaking community Communication with non-English speaking family members includes multiple forms of native language outreach about literacy activities (newsletters, videotapes, and websites).</p>

Beginning implementation	Transitional implementation	Consistent implementation	Exemplary implementation
<input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	<input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	<input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	<input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12
Family literacy assistance Few schools provide families with information about their children as readers and writers(e.g. diagnostic results) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy assistance Some schools provide families with information about their children as readers and writers(e.g. diagnostic results) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy assistance Many schools provide families with information about their children as readers and writers(e.g. diagnostic results) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy assistance All schools provide families with information about their children as readers and writers(e.g. diagnostic results) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12
Family literacy strategies Few schools provide families with information about how they can support their children's success as readers and writers (e.g., strategies) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy strategies <u>Some</u> schools provide families with information about how they can support their children's success as readers and writers (e.g., strategies) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy strategies <u>Many</u> schools provide families with information about how they can support their children's success as readers and writers (e.g., strategies) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy strategies <u>All</u> schools provide families with information about how they can support their children's success as readers and writers (e.g., strategies) <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12
Information about literacy resources Few schools provide families with information about resources (e. g. tutoring services, booklists) to help their child improve as readers and writers. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Information about literacy resources <u>Some</u> schools provide families with information about resources (e. g. tutoring services, booklists) to help their child improve as readers and writers. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Information about literacy resources <u>Many</u> schools provide families with information about resources (e. g. tutoring services, booklists) to help their child improve as readers and writers. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Information about literacy resources <u>All</u> schools provide families with information about resources (e. g. tutoring services, booklists) to help their child improve as readers and writers. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12
Family literacy programming The district does not provide family literacy programming <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy programming The district provides occasional family literacy programming. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy programming The district consistently provides family literacy programming but it is not well attended. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12	Family literacy programming The district consistently provides family literacy programming that is well attended and well received. <input type="checkbox"/> K-3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4-12

Figure 22. Family and Community Involvement Rubric

2. Key Supports

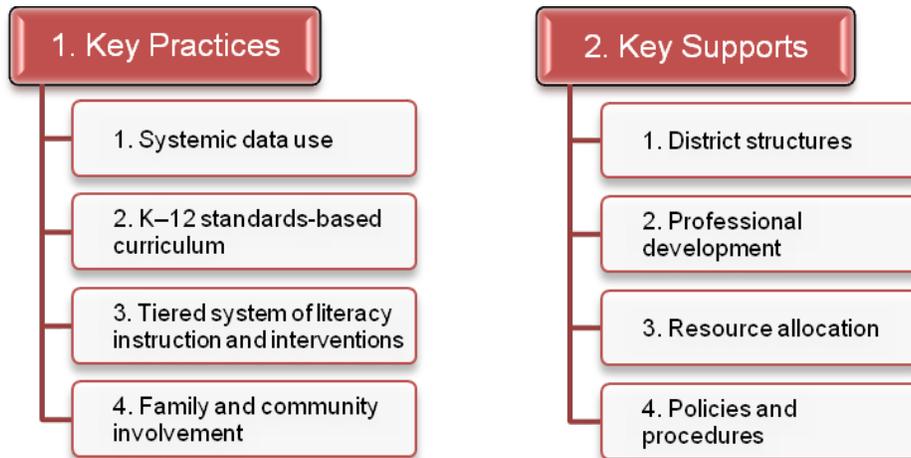
Part 2: Key District Supports to Reinforce Literacy Improvement as an Explicit Priority

In Part 2 of the self-assessment protocol, the district literacy team will explore the status of the district through the lens of four key supports:

- Support 1** *District Structures*
- Support 2** *Professional Development*
- Support 3** *Resource Allocation*
- Support 4** *Policies and Procedures*

Upon completion of a review of district supports to reinforce literacy improvement, district literacy teams will have discussed district practices in the critical areas of support for a successful district-wide literacy initiative, discussed and prioritized factors that the team feels are important to improving literacy instruction throughout the district, and identified key elements to be included in its district-wide literacy action plan.

Practices and Supports of the Two Key Parts of the District Literacy Self-Assessment Protocol



Support 1: District Structures

Rationale for inclusion: If an important district goal is to improve literacy, then there needs to be extensive evidence that this is a priority to all stakeholders.

The Protocol has two steps relative to Support 1: District Structures

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about district supports

Step 2: Develop a team summary

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about district supports

Key Question	Notes
1. Strategic Plan Does the district's strategic or improvement plan include a focus on literacy improvement? How will the District Literacy Plan connect to the district strategic or improvement plan?	
2. Current Initiatives What are the current district-wide initiatives that focus on improving literacy K-3? 4-12? Is the purpose of each initiative clear? Is there evidence that each initiative is effective?? Does the district support the initiatives?	
3. Communication Does the district website, publications, communication with parents and teacher professional development articulate/reinforce a focus on literacy improvement as a priority?	
4. Instructional Leadership Is there a district-level administrator charged with the responsibility of improving literacy throughout the district?	
5. Support to Improve Instruction Is there adequate coaching support provided to teachers? Are there sufficient numbers of qualified intervention teachers?	
6. District Literacy Team Is there a district literacy team that includes district and school-based educators, parents, and community members that meets regularly to review and monitor progress toward literacy improvement goals?	

Figure 24. District Structures – Questions About District Supports

Step 2: Develop a team summary

Have the full team discuss what needs to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve literacy and learning. Record key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan in the space provided.

District Supports – Team Summary
What structures need to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve literacy and learning?
Key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan:

Figure 25. District supports – Team Summary

Support 2: Professional Development

Rationale for inclusion: If an important district goal is to improve literacy, teachers, interventionists, and school and district leaders need to continually increase their capacity to support student literacy and learning.

The Protocol has two steps relative to Support 2: Professional Development

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about professional development

Step 2: Develop a team summary

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about professional development

Be sure to consider items from the perspective of grades K–3 and then 4–12.

Key Questions	Notes	
	Grades K-3	Grades 4-12
1. Professional development for instructional leaders Does the district provide <u>ongoing</u> literacy leadership professional development for district administrators, literacy coaches, and teacher leaders?		
2. Professional development for classroom teachers Does the district expect that all classroom teachers will participate in <u>ongoing</u> literacy professional development?		
3. Professional development for interventionists and specialists Does the district provide <u>ongoing</u> literacy training and professional development to intervention teachers, special education teachers, reading specialists, and ELL teachers?		
4. Professional development for new teachers Does the district provide new teachers with <u>sufficient</u> support and mentoring to implement the integration of literacy and content learning?		

Figure 26. Professional Development – Review and Respond to Key Questions

Step 2: Develop a team summary

Have the full team discuss what needs to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve literacy and learning. Record key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan in the space provided.

Professional Development – Team Summary
What types of professional development need to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve student literacy and learning?
Key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan.

Figure 27. Professional Development – Team Summary

Support 3: Resource Allocation

Rationale for inclusion: If an important district goal is to improve literacy, fiscal support needs to be specifically allocated toward the literacy improvement initiative and the district needs to be vigilant about seeking additional resources (time, money, materials, technology, personnel) that may be needed.

The Protocol has two steps relative to Support 3: Resource Allocation

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about resource allocation

Step 2: Develop a team summary

Step 1: Individually respond to questions about resource allocation

Questions	Notes
1. Personnel Does the district provide adequate personnel (e.g. administrator(s) charged with literacy improvement, literacy coaches, reading specialists)?	
2. Resources Does the district provide adequate resources (e.g. books and materials, site licenses, technology, reading and writing assessments, interventions) to support literacy improvement in all grades?	
3. Technology infrastructure Does the district provide adequate technology infrastructure to administer, score and access data about students in a timely and user friendly vehicles? Is there adequate technology infrastructure to support a tiered system of literacy instruction?	
4. Assessment for learning Does the district provide adequate screening, interim/ benchmark, diagnostic, progress monitoring and summative assessments?	
5. Time Is there adequate time for teachers to meet and collaboratively plan to address student needs? Is there adequate time for teachers to examine collaboratively student data? Is there adequate time in the schedule for all students to get access to appropriate levels of additional support as needed?	
6. Seeking of additional funds Does the district regularly seek and obtain additional grant and foundation monies and community funding to support literacy improvement?	

Figure 28. Resource Allocation – Review and Respond to Key Questions

Support 4: Policies and Procedures

Rationale for inclusion: If an important district goal is to improve literacy, policies and procedures that explicitly support the literacy improvement initiative must be in place.

Step 1: Review and respond to the following Key Questions

Questions	Notes
1. Scheduling Does the district support school-based scheduling that ensures that all students have access to rigorous course content and strong literacy support? How is this support evident?	
2. Expectations for Administrators Does the district expect <u>all</u> district administrators to function as strong literacy leaders? How is this expectation reinforced?	
3. Teacher Evaluation Do teacher evaluation processes include the expectation that all teachers <u>consistently</u> integrate literacy support into content area instruction?	
4. Hiring Practices Do hiring practices incorporate a preference for candidates with a strong literacy background for K-3 classroom teaching positions, 4-12 content area teaching positions and leadership positions?	

Figure 30. Policies and Procedures – Review and Respond to Key Questions

Step 2: Summarize and Review

Have the full team discuss what needs to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve literacy and learning. Record key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan in the space provided.

Policies and Procedures – Team Summary
What policies and procedures need to be strengthened to better support the district’s capacity to improve student literacy and learning?
Key points to remember when developing the district literacy action plan.

Figure 31. Policies and Procedures – Summarize and Review

Now that you have completed a thorough review of the district’s current practices related to improving literacy and learning, the team is ready to move to Stage 3 and develop your District Literacy Action Plan.



Stage 3: Develop the Plan

Directions for completion: Follow the recommended process for completing each of the eight (8) sections of the *Massachusetts District Literacy Action Planning Template*. When you have

completed the template, you will have all of the components of a comprehensive District Literacy Action Plan that will be ready to share with stakeholders.



Section 1: Develop a connection statement between literacy improvement and the district improvement or strategic plan

Directions for completing Section 1

1. Ask district administrators to prepare a summary of the district strategic plan and/or district improvement plan and present it to the district literacy team.
2. Brainstorm concrete connections between literacy improvement and these plans. You may want to develop a graphic organizer that you will include in the completed District Literacy Action Plan. The goal is to help stakeholders see how the District Literacy Action Plan is connected to these other plans.
3. Create a set of bullet points to describe the connection.
4. Ask a district administrator to write a short description of the connection using the bullet points developed by the team.
5. Have team members review and suggest edits.

Final statement making connections between literacy improvement and the district improvement or strategic plan

Figure 32. Develop a Connection Statement

Section 2: Prepare a rationale for why a focus on literacy improvement is needed

Directions for completing Section 2

1. Review the summary of data describing current student performance as readers, writers, and thinkers, created as part of Stage 1: Organize for Action.
2. Discuss the summary, updating it if necessary based on the most recent assessment data.
3. Decide if more context is needed—why literacy is so critical, comparisons with state or international data, etc. Decide as a team the most important facts to be shared in the rationale. It is helpful to create a compelling case but not to include so much data that people are overwhelmed.
4. Provide feedback to the district administrator who will prepare the rationale statement. The statement should be finalized after input from team members. Note: Consider putting data into graphical displays. This often helps stakeholders to better understand the need to focus on literacy improvement in the district.

Final rationale statement describing why a focus on literacy improvement is needed

Figure 33. Prepare a Rationale Statement

Section 3: Create a vision statement of literacy teaching and learning in the district

Directions for completing Section 3

A compelling vision statement helps stakeholders come to a common understanding of what the district is trying to achieve. This gets people “on the same page” and can be returned to as a touchstone while the plan is implemented.

To develop a district literacy vision statement, the team may want to brainstorm what students, teachers, and administrators would be doing differently if a literacy improvement initiative were successful.

The vision statement may be general or may identify practices related to improved literacy and learning in K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Use either of the two following options to guide development of the vision statement:

Option 1

1. Each team member writes down some thoughts about what a vision of improved student literacy and learning would look like.
2. Then pairs can talk and identify the ideas that are clearest and that both agree upon. These can be shared with the group and a vision statement can be developed.
3. Then, if the team chooses, pairs can work together to describe examples of what this would look like in K–2, 3–5, 6–8 and 9–12.

Option 2

1. The team brainstorms a general vision of improved student literacy and learning.
2. Then small groups can work on draft vision statements based on the brainstorming and post these on chart paper or a blog. Team members can vote on their favorite and then incorporate elements of other “drafts” into the statement that received the most votes.

Literacy vision statement

Figure 34. Create a Vision Statement

Section 4: Establish measurable goals for improvement based on the self assessment and data about current student performance

Directions for completing Section 4

A. Establish an Overall District Literacy Improvement Goal

1. To establish an Overall District Literacy Improvement Goal, the team should
 - a. Review the summary statements and responses to questions developed in Stage 2 when completing the District Literacy Self Assessment Protocol.
 - b. Review the data on student performance developed in Stage 1.
2. The goal should clearly describe the amount of improvement that will take place over a specific period and how this improvement will be measured.
3. The team should describe how the goal will look for K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. The goal should be achievable given a strong collaborative effort throughout the district.

For example, a district's overall literacy improvement goal may be

The District's tiered system of reading instruction will have, on average, only 5% of our students requiring intensive (Tier 3) interventions in grades K-12 after the system is in place for three years.

Team members may want to work in pairs to discuss an appropriate overall literacy improvement goal, or break into small groups to determine what the improvement goal will be by grade-level span. Then as a whole team, discuss the options developed and agree on the final overall district literacy improvement goal.

Overall district literacy improvement goal

Advice on Setting Goals

- ✓ Develop goals that you can meet with collaborative effort and resources.
- ✓ Develop goals that, if met, would make a positive difference for student learning.
- ✓ Develop a limited number of goals (1–3 related to each of the four core practices) that will direct your literacy improvement efforts over the next year.
- ✓ Develop goals that are measurable and towards which the team can track progress.
- ✓ Write the goal statements in clear, specific language that is jargon free and can be understood by everyone throughout the district.

Adapted from Taking the Lead on Adolescent Literacy: Action Steps for Schoolwide Success (Corwin, 2010).

Sample goal statements related to each of the four core practices.

Sample Goal related to Practice 1: Systemic Use of Data

The district will purchase and support administration of appropriate screening assessments in reading for all students in grades pre-K–10 beginning in the 2009–2010 school year.

Sample Goal related to Practice 2: Standards-Based Curriculum

By the end of May, the district will conduct an extensive review of teacher expectations for reading, writing, and critical thinking of students in classes in grades 6–12 and will establish common literacy expectations associated with each content area course regardless of “level.”

Sample Goal related to Practice 3: Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

By January, the district will be ready to implement a Tier 2 set of supports for reading in grades K–5.

Sample Goal related to Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement

The district will establish a family literacy program in all pre-K and kindergarten classrooms throughout the district by the end of the next school year.

Enter your goal statements in the boxes that follow. (Note: you may decide to have only 1–2 goals in a specific area of practice).

Goal(s) related to Practice 1: Systemic Use of Data
1.
2.
3.

Figure 36. Goal(s) Related to Practice 1: Systemic Use of Data

Goal(s) related to Practice 2: Standards-Based Curriculum
1.
2.
3.

Figure 37. Goal(s) Related to Practice 2: Standards-Based Curriculum

Goal(s) related to Practice 3: Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention
1.
2.
3.

Figure 38. Goal(s) Related to Practice 3: Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

Goal(s) related to Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement
1.
2.
3.

Figure 39. Goal(s) Related to Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement

Section 5: Complete a goal action map for each specific literacy goal

Action steps should detail what will occur, a timeline, the lead person(s) responsible, resources needed, implementation notes, and how success will be measured.

Directions for completing Section 5

1. Complete a goal action map for each literacy improvement goal. A goal action map describes the specific action steps the district will take to reach that goal.
 - For each goal that has been identified, complete a goal action map. Assume the district literacy action plan will have 4–6 literacy improvement goals so there will be 4–6 maps that will get completed.
 - There are six blank goal action plan maps included in Section 5—fill out one for each district literacy action goal and delete any extras. You may want to complete one goal action plan map together as a team so that there is a high quality example that incorporates everyone’s thinking. Then the team can break into subgroups to complete the remainder of the goal action maps. If subgroups complete the maps, make sure that there is an opportunity for the entire team to review and provide feedback.
2. Review the goal action maps to make sure they will guide effective action.
 - After the goal action maps are completed, the entire team should review the maps to check the embedded logic of the plan. That is, if the action steps were implemented as described, would the district make progress toward the associated goal?
 - Check that all parts of the map have been filled out and that the content is clear and easily understood by those not involved in the planning process.
 - Check the timelines, lead persons, and implementation steps to make sure that the plan is doable (e.g., that 16 events are not scheduled for the same month or that the same lead person is not responsible for too many parts of the plan).
 - Make sure that clear measures of success are identified for each action step.
3. Revise the goal action maps.
 - Make revisions to the goal action maps based on this review. When the team has completed the revisions, the major part of the District Literacy Action Plan will be complete.

For each goal, the team needs to identify the following six items.

ACTION STEPS. Make sure that each action step directly links to the goal. Make the action step explicit and descriptive, walking a line between being too general and too specific.

TIMELINE. The timeline should include dates for implementation of each action step, as well as when progress will be reviewed. Dates for implementation should be reasonable, but also should express some urgency to ensure that implementation begins soon.

LEAD PERSON(S) For each action step, identify a person or a team of people responsible for ensuring that the action step is completed. Lead people oversee and guide implementation of specific action steps, guaranteeing that a step is not forgotten.

RESOURCES NEEDED. The goal action map should list the specific resources needed to achieve each action step. Many plans have failed because the resources were not adequately identified or allocated to support the scope of the activity.

SPECIFICS OF IMPLEMENTATION. Here is where the team describes the specific tasks and events that are designed to move the plan forward. For example, professional development might be needed in order to make a specific action step successful. It is important to specify if you are referring to professional development from outside sources, support from literacy or instructional coaches, or formal and informal professional development delivered by literacy leadership team members. It is also important to specify when the professional development will occur, who it will involve, and who is in charge of arranging for it.

MEASURE(S) OF SUCCESS. The more specifically the team defines successful implementation or progress toward a goal, the more likely the team will be able to assess results and move ahead with the literacy improvement effort. Defining what success would look like is a critical element of the plan. Measure(s) of success can involve data collection approaches such as informal surveys of faculty practice, faculty responses to professional development, walk-through data, and the results of benchmark assessments.

Adapted from Taking the Lead on Adolescent Literacy: Action Steps for Schoolwide Success (Corwin, 2010).

Goal Action Map

Goal Statement _____

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
→ Action Step			
1. Timeline			
2. Lead Person(s)			
3. Resources Needed			
4. Specifics of Implementation			
5. Measure of Success			
6. Check in/review date			

Figure 40. Goal Action Map

Goal Action Map

Goal Statement _____

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
→ Action Step			
1. Timeline			
2. Lead Person(s)			
3. Resources Needed			
4. Specifics of Implementation			
5. Measure of Success			
6. Check in/review date			

Goal Action Map

Goal Statement _____

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
→ Action Step			
1. Timeline			
2. Lead Person(s)			
3. Resources Needed			
4. Specifics of Implementation			
5. Measure of Success			
6. Check in/review date			

Goal Action Map

Goal Statement _____

	Action Step 1	Action Step 2	Action Step 3
→ Action Step			
1. Timeline			
2. Lead Person(s)			
3. Resources Needed			
4. Specifics of Implementation			
5. Measure of Success			
6. Check in/review date			

Section 6: Determine how progress toward goals will be assessed and reported

Directions for completing Section 6

Summarize how progress toward goals will be measured and reported by answering the questions in the box below.

Summary of how progress will be assessed and reported
What types of data will be collected to report on progress?
How and when will data be collected?
How will data be organized and analyzed?
How often will the district literacy team report on progress toward goals to stakeholders? How will this occur?

Figure 41. Summary of How Progress Will Be Assessed And Reported

Section 7: Describe expectations and supports for schools in relation to the plan

Directions for completing Section 7

1. The team needs to clarify what is expected of districts' schools, as well as the supports that the district will put in place to assist schools to meet those expectations. For example:
 - Will schools be expected to develop school-based literacy action plans that are aligned with the district plan?
 - Will the district bring teams together for an action planning institute?
 - Will schools be expected to create school-based literacy leadership teams? Will the district provide leadership training for team members?
 - Will schools be expected to implement new assessments, new interventions, or new classroom practices?
 - Will there be professional development provided by the district to support quality implementation of these? Will the district provide literacy coaches in all schools?

2. Discuss and then complete statements about the expectations for schools and supports that the district will provide in relation to the District Literacy Action Plan.

Description of expectations and supports
Expectations for Schools in Relation to the District Literacy Action Plan
District Supports for Schools in Relation to the District Literacy Action Plan

Figure 42. Description of Expectations and Supports

Section 8: Describe the team’s membership and process for developing the District Literacy Action Plan

Directions for completing Section 8

List all team members, roles, and contact information. Summarize the process that was used to develop the District Literacy Action Plan and note the time period over which the plan was completed.

District Literacy Team Membership

Name	Title/Role	School (if school based)	Email

Figure 43. District Literacy Team Membership

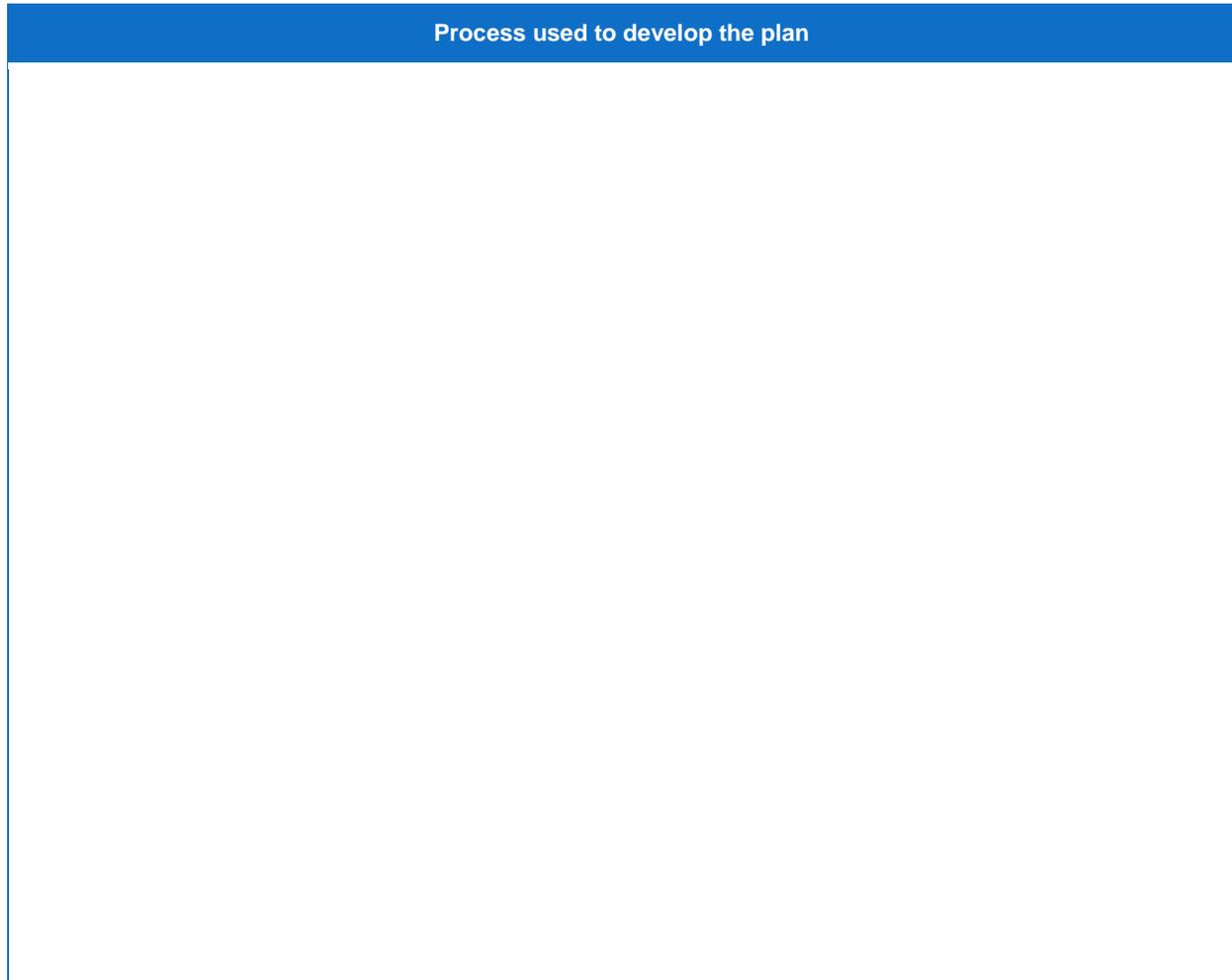


Figure 44. Process Used to Develop the Plan

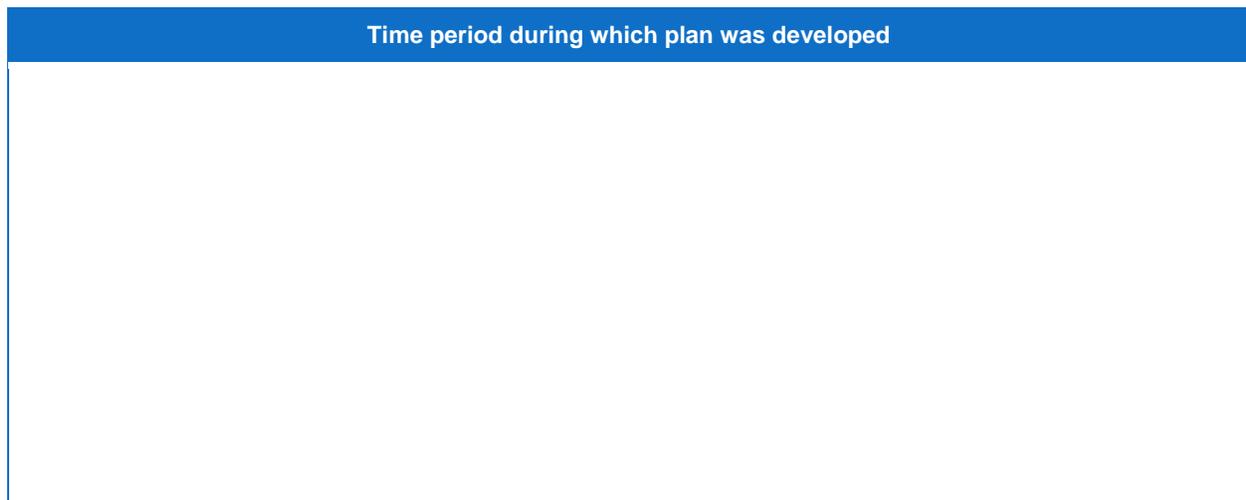


Figure 45. Time Period During Which Plan Was Developed

Making Sure the Plan Does Not Sit on the Shelf

The following are some suggestions for making sure the plan your team developed actually gets used and does not sit on the shelf.

1. **MAKE THE PLAN PUBLIC.** The district should share the District Literacy Action Plan for review and solicit feedback from stakeholders. The district literacy team makes final revisions and then the district publishes the plan in print and/or electronic form. Once the plan is public, it is more likely to generate action.
2. **COMMUNICATE AND REPORT ON PROGRESS.** A literacy improvement initiative is a campaign. Stakeholders need to be reminded in print, on the web, and in person of what the team is working on and how they can be supportive of the work. It is helpful for the district literacy team or district administrators to develop a communication plan and make sure that after major decisions are made that they are communicated in multiple ways to stakeholders. The communication plan should specifically consider how building administrators, teachers, parents, the community at large, the school board, and other district administrators shall be kept informed about progress and activities related to the District Literacy Action Plan.
3. **SUPPORT SCHOOL-BASED LITERACY ACTION PLANNING.** The district needs to support the development or review and revision of school-based literacy action planning to align with the district plan. This might include bringing together school-based literacy leadership teams and leading them through a school-based literacy improvement planning process. Or, it might include providing onsite coaching to school-based literacy leadership teams. Make certain to schedule regular review cycles and reporting processes so that progress that is being made toward district literacy action goals can be shared and promising practices at specific schools can be recognized.
4. **ACTIVELY SOLICIT FAMILY AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.** Districts can work closely with families and the community as allies to improve students' literacy habits and skills in multiple ways. First and foremost, districts can provide families with information about students as readers and writers, inform them of ways to support students at home, and connect them with key resources (e.g., ESL classes, tutoring, online resources). Districts can further solicit family and community support for their literacy improvement initiatives through specific programming (e.g., family literacy programs, student-led conferences, ESL and technology classes for parents, storytelling and movie events connected to specific books and authors); sponsorship by community organizations of literacy-related activities (e.g., community reads, Books and Bagels clubs, poetry jams, debate clubs, sending books and tapes home, tutoring clinics); and support from community business and higher education for the literacy initiative (e.g., guest speakers and guest readers, volunteer tutors, job shadowing that highlights how literacy and technology is an everyday part of the 21st century workplace, Just Read posters featuring local celebrities like the mayor, police chief, superintendent of schools, coach of the football team).
5. **EXPLICITLY CONNECT THE PLAN TO PRE-K AND POST-SECONDARY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT.** The district literacy team should be able to explain how the District Literacy Action Plan connects to pre-school literacy programming and to post-secondary college and career readiness. If these connections are not clear, it might be helpful to hold some forums

with teachers, administrators, parents, and community members about how the literacy improvement focus and the district's literacy curriculum directly connects to pre-kindergarten literacy development and kindergarten readiness assessment. That way, aligned practices can begin in pre-K programs as appropriate to more effectively prepare students for K–12. Also, district curriculum expectations and assessments can be reviewed to ensure that they are adequately preparing students to meet the literacy demands of college and the 21st century workplace, regardless of which of multiple pathways they use to move through their K–12 education.

Now that a district literacy action plan is in place and has been made public, the implementation phase begins. After all, a plan that is not implemented has no chance of having a positive impact on student literacy and learning.

Thoughts on Implementation, Monitoring Progress, and Updating the Plan

The next task is for districts (and schools) to begin implementing the literacy action plan. The team can make sure it is on track by incorporating the following four approaches.

1. **MONTHLY MEETINGS TO MONITOR IMPLEMENTATION.** The district literacy team should meet monthly to monitor implementation and ensure that implementation is proceeding as planned. (School-based literacy leadership teams should do the same for their own buildings). At each meeting, implementation of action steps identified at the last meeting should be discussed. The calendar should be reviewed and team members should check what needs to be undertaken according to the timeline and make a plan for implementation. The benefit of a big team should be a lessened burden on any one member.
2. **COMMUNICATE PROGRESS.** At each monthly meeting, a section of the District Literacy Action Plan should be reviewed and discussed and evidence related to that section of the plan should be examined and summarized. The team then identifies the section of the plan that will be reviewed the following month and any data collection that needs to be done is planned. The district literacy team should publish quarterly updates on the implementation of the plan and data that indicate the plan is having a positive effect on student literacy and learning.
3. **TROUBLESHOOTING IMPLEMENTATION.** One way to troubleshoot is to think of implementation in terms of the key structures that should be in place to support implementation. At each meeting, the team can discuss a key structure and think about evidence that it is or is not working optimally and what can be done to resolve any problems. By examining areas of concern on a rotating basis, district literacy teams can keep tabs on what is actually occurring.
4. **CONDUCT AN ANNUAL REVIEW.** The team can plan for an extended meeting during which the entire plan should be reviewed, progress on the plan should be summarized, and implementation of the plan should be assessed. Outcomes data should be discussed and then the team might choose to repeat some or all of the District Literacy Self Assessment Protocol to identify additional areas where progress has been made and/or needs to be made. This can be followed by the setting of a new overall literacy improvement goal if appropriate or the reaffirmation that, despite progress, the same goal should be kept. New goals related to the key practices and action steps related to the key supports can be developed using the goal action maps and the plan can be revised and updated as makes sense. The team should publish the updated plan along with information about progress that took place.

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Academic Literacy	Types of literacy that students need in order to succeed in school.
Aliterate	Having the ability to read and write adequately, but typically choosing not to read or write.
Alternative Assessment	Form of assessment designed to assess the literacy skills of students through alternative methods such as systematic review of samples of student work or documented observation of students' reading behaviors.
Area of Need	If a student is not performing at or near grade level in a key component of reading, then that area becomes the student's area of need. For example, specific areas of need in reading include fluency, comprehension, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, and phonics.
Assessment Framework	A system of assessments that work together to provide information about student progress, student needs, student response to intervention, and overall program effectiveness.
At Risk	Within the context of a tiered system of instruction and intervention, "at risk" indicates student performance on screening or progress monitoring tests is low enough that intervention is recommended; generally "at risk" means student performance below grade-level expectations.
Authentic Literacy Tasks	Literacy tasks that play into adolescents' needs to do things that are real, often prompting new effort for rehearsal, comprehension, discussion of content, planning, or other literacy skills.
Baseline Score	A student's initial score on a given screening or progress monitoring assessment; the score used for comparison in order to evaluate the extent of progress made.
Benchmark	Established cutoff score or minimal level of expected performance on a given test for a specified grade level. Also refers to a test score or score range which provides a description of student knowledge expected at specific grades, ages, or developmental levels. Sometimes called interim assessment.
Benchmark Test	An assessment that is given at regular and specified intervals throughout the school year, is designed to evaluate students' knowledge and skills relative to a specific set of academic standards, and produces results that can be aggregated (e.g., by course, grade level, school, or LEA) in order to inform teachers and administrators at the student, classroom, school, and LEA levels.
Cognitive Strategies	Strategies that allow students to use higher-order thinking skills.
Comprehension	The construction of meaning for the reader.
Context	Words surrounding a particular word that can assist in determining meaning.

Term	Definition
Core Reading Instruction	Classroom whole group and differentiated small group instruction in the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension). Core reading instruction occurs in both separate reading classes/reading block, as well as during content area classes. It includes explicit instruction and independent reading and writing of informational and literary text.
Criterion-Referenced Assessment	Assessment designed to measure student performance in reference to established performance or content standards related to reading and writing.
Critical Reading	A high-level reading skill that involves evaluation.
Curriculum-Based Assessment (CBA)	Tests based on material from the local instructional curriculum.
Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM)	A quick probe (one to three minutes typically) to measure progress in reading. CBMs are normed by grade level and measure discrete skills (e.g., fluency, phonemic awareness, comprehension).
Cut Score	A score representing grade level or "on target" proficiency within a given test or skill area. This can be the score which separates students in Tier 1 from those identified for intervention instruction in Tiers 2 and 3.
Data	<p><i>Qualitative Data:</i> Qualitative data consist of verbal or graphic descriptions of behavior and experience resulting from processes of observation, interpretation, and analysis. It is often comprehensive, holistic, and expansive.</p> <p><i>Quantitative Data:</i> Quantitative data consist of information represented in the form of numbers that can be analyzed by means of descriptive or inferential statistics. It is often precise and narrow data.</p>
Data Points	Points on a graph that represent student achievement relative to a specific assessment at a specific time.
Decoding	The process of taking in oral or written language (listening and reading) and determining the meaning of individual components of that language.
Diagnostic Assessments	These assessments help educators specifically pinpoint areas of strengths and weaknesses to better understand why a student has scored badly on an interim or outcomes assessment. This type of assessment helps teachers to know what gaps in student learning need to be addressed. Examples include individually administered diagnostic reading tests like the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading or the QRI. Sometimes interim assessments like the DRA or NWEA MAP tests or the GRADE also provide some diagnostic information through the reporting of subtest scores, which can be used for deeper analysis.
Differentiated Instruction	Instruction that is not "whole group" but uses instructional strategies, grouping practices, teaching methods, varied assignments, and varied materials chosen based on student skill levels, interest levels, instructional needs, and learning preferences.
Discrepancy	Difference between actual and target level of performance on a test.

Term	Definition
District Literacy Team	Team that has wide representation from across the district and works on districtwide efforts to improve literacy; generally a district literacy team develops and monitors implementation of the District Literacy Action Plan.
English Language Learners (ELLs)	Students who come to English-speaking schools with different degrees of literacy in their own language, which affects the acquisition of literacy skills in English.
Evidence-Based Practice	Educational practices/instructional strategies supported by relevant research.
Explicit Instruction	Instruction guided by the teacher, who uses various strategies to help students understand what they are reading.
Expository Text	Informational texts such as those found in science, social studies, music, art, and technology classes.
Fidelity of Implementation	Implementation of an intervention, program, or curriculum according to research findings and/or developers' specifications (frequency and length of sessions, methods, materials used, etc.).
Flexible Grouping	When students are grouped and regrouped according to specific goals, activities, and individual needs.
Fluency	The speed of reading and the ability to pause at the right places to understand the meaning of the text accurately.
Formative Assessments	Measures of student performance collected primarily for the purpose of providing information that can be used to improve instruction, monitor progress, or inform instructional decision making.
Goal Action Map	An action plan template that specifically describes the action steps (including lead person, timeline, implementation logistics, and measures of success) that the school or district will take relative to literacy goals in key areas.
Goal	The goal is the achievement target for the student. It should be measurable and have a quantitative target or level of achievement. For example, the goal may be to increase the student's reading comprehension to grade level by a particular date.
Graphic Organizer	Graphic organizers summarize and illustrate concepts and interrelationships among concepts in a text, using diagrams or other pictorial devices. Graphic organizers are often known as maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters. Semantic organizers are graphic organizers that look somewhat like a spider web where lines connect a central concept to a variety of related ideas and events. National Institute for Literacy
Group Plan vs. Individual Plan	Within the context of RtI, the group plan is a document that identifies group members as well as the interventions provided to the group and may include other details (e.g., schedule, progress monitoring data). It is generally less specific than an individual RtI plan, which will include frequency, duration, and group, as well as each student's current performance and target goal, and how the student's performance will be monitored (including frequency). Group plans are common at Tier 1 or 2, while an individual plan is used typically at Tier 2 or 3.

Term	Definition
Guided Practice	Practice of literacy skills, by students, with support and instruction.
Higher Order Critical Thinking	The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action.
Independent Learners	Learners who are able to use cognitive and metacognitive strategies independently as needed to strengthen and deepen literacy and learning.
Independent Practice	Practice of literacy skills by students working on their own.
Intensive Intervention	Interventions that are provided to students to address an identified area of need in addition to differentiated instruction provided as part of the core program. Supplemental intervention is typically provided as small group instruction, incorporates evidence-based practices and includes progress monitoring to determine if the extra support is addressing the literacy needs identified. Often referred to as “Tier 2” supports.
Interim Assessments (benchmark, short-cycle, common course)	These assessments can be designed and used for several purposes—to guide instruction, to identify students needing additional help, to predict student performance on outcomes assessments, to assure that program expectations across schools at particular grade levels are consistent, to provide insights into program quality, and to support professional decision making and curriculum selection and development; typically have external scoring referents so that grade level or peer performance can be compared, but could also include common assessments that have been internally developed to measure understanding of the district curriculum or robust performance assessments scored by rubric. Examples: DIBELS, AIMSWEB, DRA, DRP, Discovery ThinkLink, NWEA
Intervention	An intervention describes the targeted or focused instruction to be provided to enable a student to achieve his or her goal. Intervention examples may include an educational strategy, a purchased reading intervention program, and/or student work with a reading specialist who will utilize a variety of research-based strategies.
Learning Rate	Average progress over a period of time (e.g., one year’s growth in one year’s time).
Leveled Texts	Books or readings that match the reading levels of different students.
Lexile Score	A scientific approach to text leveling based on semantic difficulty and syntactic complexity and set on a scale that ranges from 200L for beginning readers to above 1700L for advanced texts.
Literacy	The “ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute, and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in their community and wider society.” UNESCO

Term	Definition
Literacy Coach	Teacher who works primarily with other teachers and who does not have a student assignment.
Metacognitive Strategies	Strategies that allow students to monitor their comprehension.
Narrative Text	Text that follows a story pattern.
Norm-Referenced Assessment	Assessment designed to measure student performance in reference to a peer group's performance normative curve on the same assessment of reading and writing.
Norms	Average scores for a given group of students, which allow comparisons of different students or groups of students.
Percentile Rank	Score that indicates where a student stands in comparison with others who took the test.
Performance level	Levels of proficiency on a given test or assessment, defined by specified score ranges or cut-off scores, with labels such as <i>Advanced</i> , <i>Basic</i> or <i>Proficient</i> , <i>Below Basic</i> or <i>Needs Improvement</i> , and <i>Failing</i> or <i>Warning</i> level.
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound. It distinguishes one word from another (e.g., man and fan are distinguished by the initial phoneme).
Phonemic Awareness	This is a type of phonological awareness that involves the awareness and manipulation of individual sounds.
Phonics	Way of teaching reading and spelling that stresses sound-symbol relationship, especially in beginning reading instruction.
Phonological Awareness	The auditory awareness of sounds, words, and sentences. The understanding that speech is composed of sentences made up of words. Words are comprised of syllables, and syllables are comprised of phonemes.
Portfolio Assessment	A collection of work or multiple assessment tools that evidence an individual's skills, ideas, interests, and accomplishments in a specific area that can be evaluated using a rubric or other protocol depending on the purpose of the assessment. For example, a writing portfolio might showcase a student's ability to write pieces in a variety of genres.
Postreading Activity	Activity done after reading to summarize, reinforce, and extend new information.
Prereading Activity	Activity done before reading to activate prior knowledge.
Probes	A short test, set of test items that can be repeated and show progress, or item prompts administered by teachers as a performance assessment.
Professional Learning Community (PLC)	Educators who come together to form a supportive group and commit themselves to continuous learning.

Term	Definition
Progress Monitoring	In a tiered system of instruction, it is necessary to monitor if students are responding appropriately to intervention and targeted support. If students make adequate progress in response to an intervention and bring achievement in line with grade-level norms, then they may be ready to move into a lower tier of support. If students are not making appropriate progress, then the intervention needs to be changed in terms of content, approach, intensity, etc. In the area of K–3 reading, progress monitoring for phonemic awareness and decoding and fluency can be done frequently to get a “read” on progress. In the upper grades, progress monitoring for comprehension, language development, or writing may be done at least three times a year and sometimes as frequently as every 4–6 weeks as appropriate to the issue at hand.
Questioning Strategies	Strategies students can use to ask questions of text to improve comprehension.
Reading Level	Independent reading level is the level at which a student can read with 95 percent accuracy; instructional reading level is the level at which a student can read with 75 percent accuracy.
Reading Specialist	Teacher who works in intervention classes with students.
Research-Based Instruction	Curriculum and educational interventions that have been proven to be effective for students based on research.
Response to Intervention (RtI)	RtI, or response to intervention, is an educational approach in which high quality instruction is provided to address an identified area of need for students, goals or targets are set, and the students' response to instruction is measured using frequent progress monitoring to inform any need for changes in instruction.
Rubric	An explicit summary of the criteria for assessing a particular piece of student work or the level of implementation of a program which includes the levels of potential achievement for each criterion.
Scaffolding Instruction	Building a support structure for students so that they can tackle increasingly complex tasks.
Schema	A person's prior knowledge coupled with attitudes, beliefs, and cultural background.
School Literacy Team	Team that is representative of the school community and that works on schoolwide efforts to improve literacy.
Scientifically Based Research	Education related research that meets the following criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzes and presents the impact of effective teaching on achievement of students • Includes study and control groups • Applies a rigorous peer review process • Includes replication studies to validate results
Scope and Sequence	A curriculum plan that contains instructional objectives and skills organized according to successive levels. The scope and sequence is the framework of the curriculum and shows how content is organized.
Screening	Assessment for a large population to identify individuals who may be at risk in a specified area of academic performance, such as reading.

Term	Definition
Screening Data	Data that help determine which students are in need of extra support.
Semantics	Meaning of words or phrases.
Sight Vocabulary	Words that students should know and be able to read automatically.
Standards-Based Curriculum	A curriculum that is “standards-based” indicates specific criteria that delineates what students are expected to learn and be able to perform and usually includes both content standards and performance standards. ASCD: A Lexicon of Learning, www.ascd.org
Summative Assessments	Evaluation of student performance conducted primarily for purposes of external accountability in order to determine the extent to which a program or activity has achieved its intended outcomes at the end of a year or unit of study. Used for district accountability for NCLB and sometimes for screening in grades 4–12; criterion-referenced and standards-based. Example: MCAS
Syntax	Word order or position of a word in a sentence.
Systematic Data Collection	Planning a timeframe for, and following through with, appropriate assessments in order to monitor student progress.
Target Score	Stated goal or minimal level of expected performance over a given amount of time on a given test for a specific student or group of students.
Targetline	Line on a graph that represents expected student growth over time; beginning point = student’s baseline or initial level of performance; end point = goal; also called aimline.
Technology to Support Literacy Development	Includes software or hardware that aids basic reading development (read aloud software, audiobooks, digital storytelling software); that provides practice and feedback (e.g. vocabulary development, fluency or decoding software); that assists with writing and communication (word processing software; grammar or spell check features; blogging; virtual collaboration spaces); online resources to support literacy development (webquests, virtual fieldtrips, author sites, collaborative writing sites); online assessment delivery (taking tests online so scoring and feedback is immediate), or that supports research and presentation (search engines, presentation software).
Text Structure	The way an author organizes a text to communicate the content, such as compare/contrast, sequence, cause/effect, and so forth.
Tier 1	The first level in a tiered model refers to instruction using the core curriculum; within an RtI framework, the level of instruction given universally to all students. Ideally, the core program of instruction is adequate for the needs of the majority of students (e.g., 80–85% of students learn grade level skills when given this core program). Differentiation in the core classroom is typically part of Tier 1.

Term	Definition
Tier 2	The second level in a tiered model of instruction; within an Rtl framework, the level of strategically targeted instruction given to a smaller number of students, chosen in relation to student data from practices documented to be effective with like students under like circumstances. Ideally, Tier 2 is provided to 10–15% of all students (those identified as not progressing satisfactorily using the core curricula provided in Tier 1).
Tier 3	The third level in a tiered model; within an Rtl framework, the most intensive and individualized program of academic or behavioral intervention, directly targeting a specific area of need, and provided to individuals or small groups as a supplement to Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions. Tier 3 intensive interventions are characterized by increased length, frequency and duration of instruction, and progress monitoring, and are meant for students who struggle significantly or who are not responsive to the strategic interventions provided at Tier 2. Ideally no more than 5% of students would need to be served by Tier 3 intensive interventions.
Tiered System of Instruction and Interventions	A data-driven early detection, prevention, and support system that guides the allocation of school and district resources with the aim of providing high quality core educational experiences for all students and targeted interventions to struggling students who experience learning or behavioral challenges.
Trade Books	Books distributed through bookstores, such as those found in a school library, as opposed to textbooks sold to schools.
Trendline	Line on a graph that connects data points; compare against targetline (aimline) to determine responsiveness to intervention.
Universal Screening	Administration of a screening test/assessment to all students within a given grade level or school.
Vision Statement	A statement that describes the ideal learning environment the school is striving to achieve (i.e., the image of the ideal in written form). A vision should articulate a realistic, credible future for the school that is attractive to all parties involved. The vision statement describes how the future will look if the organization achieves its ultimate goals.
Vocabulary Development Strategies	Strategies students can use to learn and remember the many technical terms, key concepts, and academic vocabulary words that they encounter in the study of various disciplines.

Appendix B: Bibliography

In this section of the Guidelines Document, you will find additional resources related to Literacy Action Planning and the roles of school and district leaders in a literacy improvement initiative, as well as Policy Documents and Research Summaries related to the need to focus on literacy as a lever for school and district improvement. You will also find resources related to the four Key Practices in the Massachusetts District Literacy Self Assessment Protocol.

Making the Case: Policy Documents and Research Summaries

- ACT. (2006). *Reading between the lines: What the ACT reveals about college readiness in reading*. (Report). Iowa City, IA.
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Roles of Effective School and District Literacy Leaders

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Practice 3: Tiered System of Instruction and Intervention

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IRIS Center Vanderbilt University and Claremont Graduate University
[http //iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/index.html](http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/index.html)

National Center for Response to Intervention
[http //www.rti4success.org/](http://www.rti4success.org/)

The RtI Action Network: A project of the National Center for Learning Disabilities
[http //www.rtinetwork.org/Learn](http://www.rtinetwork.org/Learn)

Practice 4: Family and Community Involvement

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National Center for Family Literacy
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MA ESE Resources

Learning Walk Implementation Guide (2009). Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education District Data Team Toolkit (2009). Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary.

Tiered Instruction Guidance Document (Forthcoming).

Appendix C: Related Resources

From the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

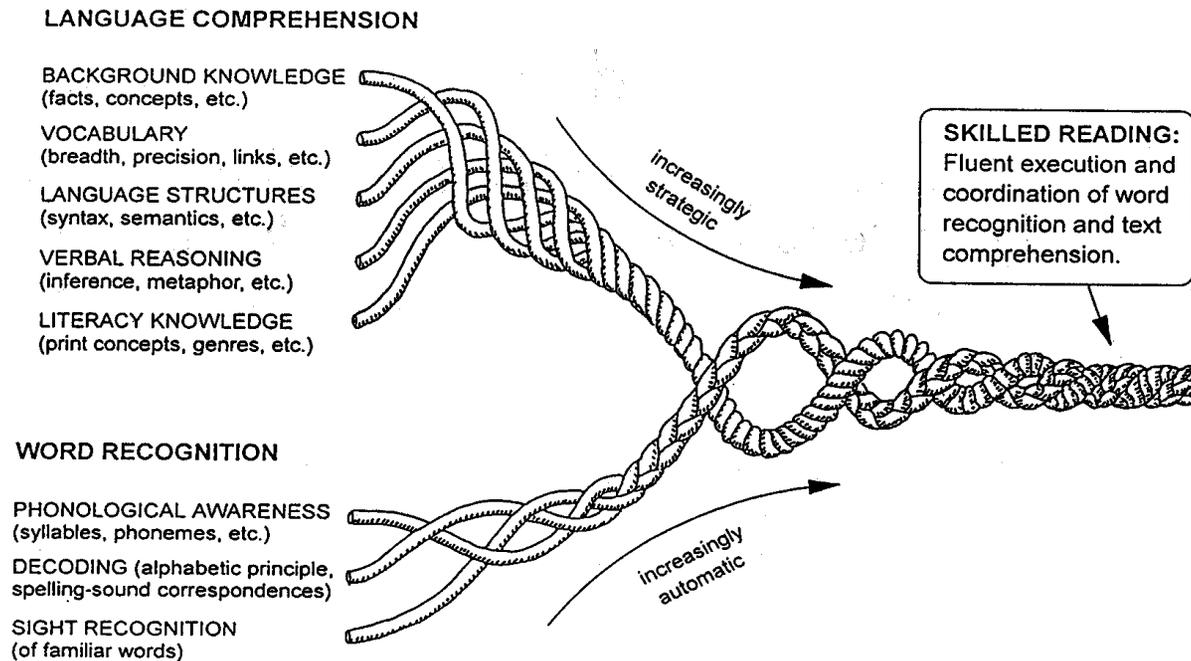
Strands of Early Literacy Development

The Massachusetts Secondary Literacy Framework

Instructional Practices Supported by Research

Skilled Reading

STRANDS OF EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT



(Scarborough, 2002, p.98)

Used with permission of Guilford Press

Scarborough, H. S. (2002). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman and D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (pp. 97-110). New York: Guilford Press.

Massachusetts Secondary Literacy Framework

Middle School: A Comprehensive Schoolwide Reading Plan

Assessment of All Students Reading Ability
(screening & annual review)

Good Readers

Struggling Readers

Individual Diagnostic Assessment
(using multiple tools)

Reading Instruction For All Students

<p>Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop vocabulary • Build background knowledge • Set purpose/goals for reading • Use comprehension strategies • Develop linguistic knowledge • Develop discourse knowledge • Develop fluency • Integrate non-print material with text • Be motivated to read 	<p>Programs/Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular classroom instruction <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Appropriate instructional materials at appropriate levels • Guidance from a well-trained teacher • Differentiated Instruction • On-going support & professional development for teachers providing reading instruction • On-going monitoring of student progress <p>Persons Responsible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content area teachers (ELA, math, science, social studies, etc.) • TBE and ESL Teachers • SPED Teachers • Schoolwide Literacy Coordinator/Coach • Principal
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Intervention Programs for Struggling Readers

<p>Goal</p> <p><i>Acquire competency in areas of deficit, such as:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word level knowledge (phonemic awareness, sound/symbol relationships, word attack of multi-syllabic words) • Fluency • Background knowledge and related vocabulary • Linguistic knowledge • Comprehension strategies 	<p>Programs/Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual and small group • Supplement to regular classroom instruction • Focused on diagnosed individual needs • Multiple intervention programs available <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time • Appropriate instructional materials at appropriate levels • Guidance from a well-trained teacher • Differentiated Instruction • On-going support & professional development for teachers providing reading instruction • On-going monitoring of student progress <p>Persons Responsible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Specialists • Teachers/Tutors trained in specific methods (e.g. Wilson Reading, Soar to Success, etc.) • Title I Teachers • SPED Teachers • ESL Teachers • Schoolwide Literacy Coordinator/Coach • Principal
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Instructional Practices Supported by Research

To help all students improve their understanding of content area reading materials and to better support “struggling” readers, the following research-based practices are recommended:

Use of data to inform instruction

- To address specific skill weaknesses of students (i.e., in word attack, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension)
- To select appropriate reading materials (i.e., readability level)

Direct explicit teaching of strategies

- For word attack, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
- Consistent teaching and reinforcement throughout the school (in every classroom)

Strategies embedded in subject matter content

- Strategies should be taught in conjunction with learning content information (not in “isolation”)
- Because subject matter teachers are the best readers of their content, they should share the strategies *they* use with students

Modeling by a “good” reader

- Teachers should explain and demonstrate the strategies they use when reading (e.g., through “think alouds”)
- Students who are proficient readers can be partnered with non-proficient readers (in pairs or in small groups) to discuss reading assignments

Opportunity for choice

- Students need times when they can select different readings, on different topics, and at different readability levels

Use of multiple texts

- Classrooms must have reading materials available on different topics and at varying readability levels

Collaboration among students

- Students should be given time to discuss what they are reading and work together on reading-related projects

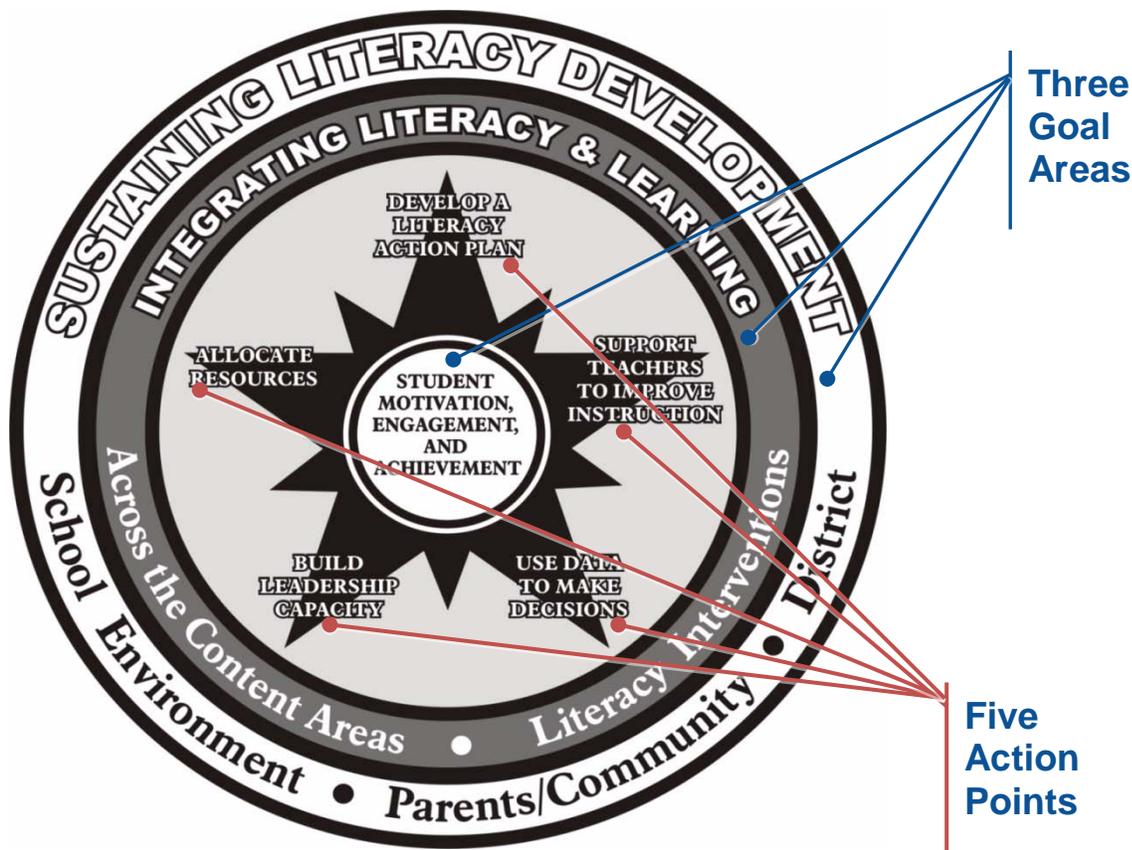
Writing Instruction & Use of Technology

- Writing instruction improves reading comprehension (e.g., grammar, spelling, organization, reinforce reading skills)
- Technology can provide needed support for struggling readers (e.g., instructional reinforcement and opportunities for practice)

Note: This list has been adapted from [Reading Next](#), Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004, for use in the Massachusetts Middle and High School Reading Initiative.

Appendix D: Overview of *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model

We recommend that district leaders review the District Literacy Action Plan to ensure that it addresses the components of the *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model shown in below. The Model describes what districts should be doing to actively support teachers and administrators carrying out literacy development at the school level. The Model has three Goal Areas and five Action Points.



Source: Irvin, J., Meltzer, J. & Dukes, M. S. (2007). *Taking action on adolescent literacy: An implementation guide for school leaders*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervisors and Curriculum Development.

Figure 46. *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model

GOAL AREAS

The Model has three goal areas and associated components that are strongly supported by the literature as key outcomes in successful literacy initiatives

1. Student motivation, engagement, and achievement

The primary goal of any District Literacy Action Plan needs to be to improve student achievement in grades K–12. To do that, a cycle of improving students' confidence and competence as readers, writers, and thinkers needs to be solidly in place and supported by

all teachers at all grade levels. Motivating and engaging students with reading, writing, and critical thinking from early on and, at the same time, providing excellent instruction on how to improve as readers, writers, and thinkers in context, results in improved student achievement.

2. Integrating literacy and learning

- a. Across the content areas: Students are expected to read and write increasingly complex text and to think in increasingly complicated and creative ways as they move up the grades in a strong standards-based curriculum, designed to prepare them for the literacy demands of college, citizenship, and the 21st century workplace. Success requires that teachers of all content areas teach students within the context of their discipline the types of reading, writing, thinking, and presenting required by that content area. Ongoing instruction and modeling, not mere assignment, is needed in grades K–12.
- b. Strategic literacy interventions for struggling learners: Those struggling as readers, writers, and critical thinkers at any grade level need a system of tiered instructional support to provide just in time assistance. Tiered instructional support allows students to gain missing skills, strengthen areas of weakness, and develop the strategies and confidence to successfully tackle grade-level material. When we let students languish and fail to address reading and writing challenges as they emerge, everyone loses.

3. Sustaining literacy development

Sustaining momentum on improvement initiatives, even when there are promising initial outcomes, is not a hallmark of American education. To ensure that a laser-like focus on improving literacy and learning is not just the “flavor of the month,” the research and practice literature suggests that the district needs to have the following solidly in place and that there be specific expectations relative to

- a. Environment, structures, policies, and culture
- b. Family and community involvement
- c. District roles and responsibilities

ACTION POINTS

The Model also has five Action Points based on the research and practice literature that correspond to what school and district leaders can do to improve student literacy and learning. When each of these is incorporated into a District Literacy Action Plan, they work synergistically to help the district reach its literacy improvement goals.

1. Implement a Literacy Action Plan

Districts support school-based literacy action planning and implementation.

2. Support teachers to improve instruction

Districts support teacher professional development and also support building leaders to hold teachers accountable for improving student literacy and learning.

3. Use data

Districts implement a District Literacy Assessment Framework and actively support and model a culture of data use.

4. Build leadership capacity

Districts support teacher and leadership professional development and expect all instructional leaders to focus on improving literacy and learning.

5. Allocate resources

Districts ensure that schools have equitable access to technology, materials, books, personnel, teacher professional development, core, and intervention programs, and other infrastructure supports critical to improving student literacy and learning.

For a more robust description and examples of what each of the components of the Model look like at the school and district level, educators may want to reference *Taking Action on Adolescent Literacy: An Implementation Guide for School Leaders* (ASCD, 2007).

A District Literacy Action Plan that incorporates both the spirit and the substance of the *Taking Action* Literacy Leadership Model can be an effective blueprint for systemically improving student literacy and learning.