

# CONNECTICUT'S K-12 Literacy Strategy



*Every Connecticut student has the right to read at or above grade level by the end of third grade.*



**CONNECTICUT**  
Education

**Connecticut State Department of Education**

## Contents

Overview .....	1
Approaches and Terms in the Strategy .....	2
Connecticut's K–12 Literacy Strategy .....	5
References and Resources .....	17

The Connecticut State Department of Education is committed to a policy of equal opportunity/affirmative action for all qualified persons. The Connecticut Department of Education does not discriminate in any employment practice, education program, or educational activity on the basis of race; color; religious creed; age; sex; pregnancy; sexual orientation; workplace hazards to reproductive systems, gender identity or expression; marital status; national origin; ancestry; retaliation for previously opposed discrimination or coercion, intellectual disability; genetic information; learning disability; physical disability (including, but not limited to, blindness); mental disability (past/present history thereof); military or veteran status; victims of domestic violence; or criminal record in state employment, unless there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in any of the aforementioned protected classes. Inquiries regarding the Connecticut State Department of Education's nondiscrimination policies should be directed to: Attorney Louis Todisco, Connecticut State Department of Education, by mail at 450 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT 06103-1841; by telephone at 860-713-6594; or by email [louis.todisco@ct.gov](mailto:louis.todisco@ct.gov).

## Overview

Connecticut has a longstanding commitment to reading success and a history of important reading initiatives. Some of these initiatives include the Response to Intervention (RtI), Connecticut's Partnership for Literacy Success, the Connecticut Literacy Model (CTLM), Connecticut's Early Reading Success Initiative, Connecticut's Research-based Universal Screening Reading Assessments for Grades K–3, ReadConn 1.0 and 2.0, and the Science of Reading (SoR) Masterclass.

In June 2021, [An Act Concerning Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items to Implement the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023](#) was passed and included laws to support the reading success of students across Connecticut. This bill established the [Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success \(Center\)](#) within the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE). The activities of the Center are informed by the [Reading Leadership Implementation Council](#) (Council), with members appointed by the Governor of Connecticut, the Connecticut House of Representatives and Senate, the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus of the Connecticut General Assembly, and the Commissioner of Education.

One of the Center's legislated activities is to develop a reading strategy (Strategy) to guide Connecticut school districts in providing comprehensive literacy support and instruction to all students.

Thus, in 2023, the Center developed a K–3 Strategy with guidance from the first appointed Council. In response to stakeholder feedback, the second appointed Council assisted in expanding the Strategy to include updated critical conditions and evidence-aligned district and school leadership actions related to supporting readers in grades kindergarten through twelve (K–12).

The Council felt it was imperative to include adolescents (grades 4–12) in the revised Strategy, as research has identified adolescents as having unique and complex literacy needs as compared to younger students. For example, adolescent readers are actively using background knowledge and experience to contextualize what they are reading and using strategies as they monitor their own comprehension. They need critical thinking skills comprised of analysis, evaluation, and synthesis as they think about and question text. Adolescents regularly engage in discipline-specific reading and need specialized skills and strategies to tackle complex text in each subject area. They rely on their phonological skills to sound out complex and technical words and use syllabication as a strategy to understand and pronounce a complex or technical term they are decoding. Also, adolescents need to have strong morphology skills to decipher unknown words.



## Approaches and Terms in the Strategy

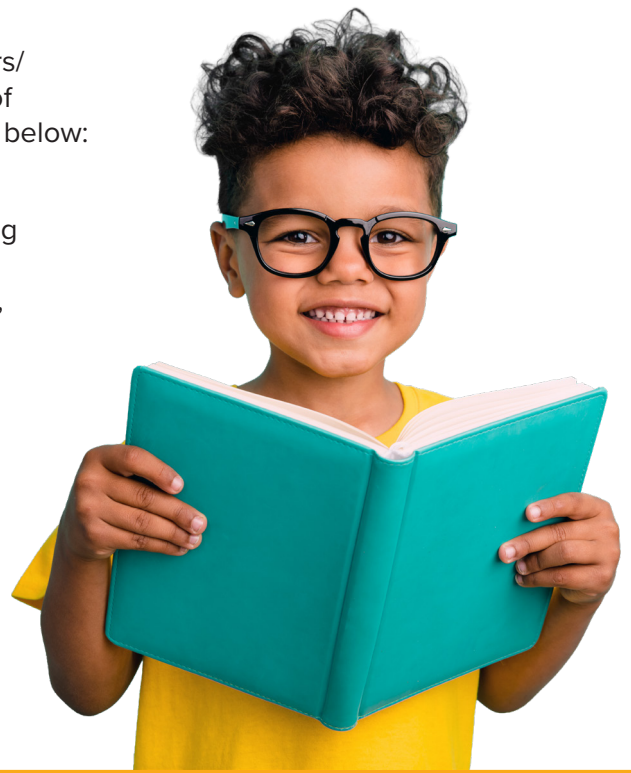
The Strategy draws from important developments and initiatives in the field of K–12 reading research and practice that are informed by rigorous research and grounded in scientific evidence about how learning occurs. These practices reflect alignment with established theories and empirical studies that demonstrate their effectiveness in improving student outcomes. While every evidence-aligned routine and strategy may not have direct experimental validation in every context, they adhere to principles and methods widely supported by research and professional consensus, ensuring their potential to be effective in meeting varied learning needs. Examples of three evidence-aligned approaches included in the Strategy are:

- **Structured Literacy instruction approach:** Structured literacy follows an explicit, systematic, diagnostic, and sequential method. It is highly effective in teaching all students to read and is essential for students at risk for and with dyslexia and students who have difficulty learning to read. This instructional methodology, supported by scientific, evidence-based research, also known as the “science of reading,” aligns with how students best learn to read and write. It integrates listening, speaking, reading and writing and emphasizes the structure of language across the speech sound system (phonology); the writing system (orthography); the structure of sentences (syntax); the meaningful parts of words (morphology); the relationship among words (semantics); and the organization of spoken and written discourse (IDA 2019, 6; Hanover 2022; Moats 2022).
- **Accelerated instructional approaches:** Scientifically based, evidence-aligned accelerated instructional approaches include the use of student data to guide instruction; the use of grade-level materials; scaffolding student learning; and the incorporation of tutoring programs, out-of-school time programs, and summer learning and enrichment.
- **Multigenerational approach:** The multigenerational approach provides a framework for shared literacy outcomes while building whole family well-being and acknowledging families’ histories and experiences. This collective approach includes working with children and families “to create a society where every family passes a legacy of prosperity and well-being from one generation to the next” (Ascend at the Aspen Institute, 2022).

To assist the reader, the CSDE definition of English Learners/ Multilingual learners (ELs/MLs) and the working definition of Specific Learning Disability (SLD)/Dyslexia and are defined below:

- **English Learners/Multilingual Learners (ELs/MLs)**

ELs/MLs are a diverse, highly mobile, and expanding student population representing a wide array of languages, cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic statuses. ELs/MLs are not a monolithic group. Rather, this population of students includes children born in the United States who speak a language other than English at home, recent immigrants to the country, and any students in the process of acquiring English proficiency. ELs/MLs may be students who enter U.S. schools with a strong academic background in their native language, students with limited or interrupted formal education (SLIFE), long-term ELs/MLs



who have been identified as ELs/MLs for more than five years, late arrival ELs/MLs who have begun their schooling in the United States at the secondary level, adult education program participants, dually identified students who also receive special education services, and others. English Learner (as defined by the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, United States Department of Education) means an individual:

1. who is aged 3 through 21;
2. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
3. (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English; (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual:
  - the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
  - the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
  - the opportunity to participate fully in society. (ESSA Section 8101(20)).

- **Specific Learning Disability (SLD)/Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) as a specific learning disability (SLD). Dyslexia affects reading, specifically decoding and accurate and/or fluent word recognition and spelling. Dyslexia is neurobiological in origin and is unexpected and/or inconsistent with a student's other abilities often despite the provision of appropriate instruction. Dyslexia usually results from a significant deficit in phonological processing (i.e., a persistent difficulty in the awareness of and ability to manipulate the individual sounds of spoken language). Typically, students with SLD/Dyslexia have strengths in areas such as reasoning, critical thinking, concept formation, problem solving, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and social communication (e.g., conversation). Early identification and appropriate instruction targeting the underlying phonological, word reading, and spelling processing deficits that characterize dyslexia may minimize its educational impact. Dyslexia is not primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disability, an intellectual disability, emotional disability, a lack of appropriate instruction, cultural factors, environmental or economic disadvantage, or limited English proficiency. Early identification of the characteristics of dyslexia is critical, leading to focused, scientifically based, evidence-aligned multi-modal interventions and accommodations that lead to self-awareness, self-empowerment, and school and life success. Without targeted, systematic, and explicit instruction and interventions along with accommodations (e.g., accessible educational materials in content area subjects), students with dyslexia may have:

- reduced reading experiences that may affect the growth of vocabulary and background knowledge;
- difficulty with written expression; and/or
- difficulty learning a second language.

Students with dyslexia may show additional behavioral and/or emotional reactions to their difficulty with learning to read. Effective, research-based interventions for phonemic awareness and/or phonics may bring some students with dyslexia to grade expectations in those areas, but the students may experience lingering difficulties in reading fluency, spelling, and/or written expression, which may require intervention.

Additionally, the Strategy is grounded in multiple federal and state laws that protect students' rights to an inclusive education. For example, the IDEA requires districts to provide special education services to children ages three through twenty-two. These legal foundations are embedded within the Strategy to ensure that all students, including students with SLD/Dyslexia and English learner/Multilingual learners (EL/MLs), are included in responsive, evidence-aligned programs, instruction, and assessments based on the science of reading.

Although not exhaustive, the resources and information provided in the Strategy create a road map for the Center and Connecticut stakeholders to improve practices and methods within a comprehensive, multi-tiered educational learning system that is responsive, scientifically based, evidence-aligned literacy practices, strategies, and structures. The Strategy will continue to expand and adapt to respond to new research, stakeholder dialogue, and the evolving needs of Connecticut students.



## Connecticut's K–12 Literacy Strategy

The purpose of the Strategy is to ensure that all students, including students with SLD/Dyslexia and English learners/Multilingual learners (EL/MLs), have universal access to responsive, evidence-aligned programs, instruction, and assessments based on the science of reading. This intentional focus on every student requires coherent, comprehensive leadership and high-quality instructional support designed to meet the learning and diverse language needs of all students, regardless of age, grade, or school district. As a result, all K–12 students are provided evidence-aligned literacy instruction and intervention, which leads to measurable improvement in student reading achievement across every grade.

The Strategy is designed to assist educational leaders in the provision of comprehensive literacy supports and instruction for all students. By leading the strategic implementation of the following conditions and actions, district and building leaders can create and sustain the systems and structures necessary for all students to become proficient, confident, and capable readers.

### Critical Conditions and Specific Actions Prioritized in Connecticut's K–12 Literacy Strategy

The Strategy specifically emphasizes the following six evidence-aligned literacy conditions across the K–12 continuum:

- coherent, sustainable literacy leadership systems and structures;
- explicit and systematic literacy instruction grounded in research;
- on-going sensible literacy assessment practices that support data-driven decision making;
- personalized intervention tailored to individual student literacy needs as identified through assessment;
- transformational, continuous coaching and professional learning; and
- authentic, asset-based family-school partnerships.

Acknowledging the diverse instructional needs of elementary students and adolescents, the Strategy offers specific actions under each critical condition designed to target grades kindergarten through third (K–3) and grades fourth through twelfth (4–12). Specific actions are equally critical and presented without implying priority.



### **Specific Actions for Coherent, Sustainable Literacy Leadership Systems and Structures**

Coherent literacy leadership systems ensure that all decisions, practices, and supports from the district office to the classroom are aligned around a shared vision for high-quality literacy instruction. Sustainable systems are those that can be maintained over time through consistent practices, clear roles, and ongoing professional learning, even as personnel or priorities shift.

If district and school leaders implement the following actions to build and sustain coherent and sustainable leadership systems and structures, then they establish shared accountability across all grade levels, ensure alignment of resources and practices, and create the conditions necessary for lasting literacy improvement so that all students succeed.

#### **Grades K–12 District Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Create and participate in a district literacy leadership team composed of superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of curriculum and instruction, principals, special education director, director of multilingual learners, etc., whose focus is building and supporting evidence-based literacy systems and processes across K–12 to establish conditions and practices necessary for all students to read proficiently and master grade level standards.
- Create a highly visible, integrated district literacy vision that transcends grade levels and content areas and is embedded in district and school literacy plans, district policies, strategic plans, portrait of the graduate, etc.
- Guide creation and implementation of a district literacy plan to coordinate literacy initiatives across the district aligned to the district literacy vision so all students through grade twelve have access to rigorous grade-level instruction.
- Foster a culture where all students are seen as capable literacy learners who take ownership of their growth, and where instruction honors and integrates their identities, experiences, perspectives, and strengths.
- Commit to a system of organizational literacy supports to successfully sustain the evidence-aligned literacy learning environment, including districtwide and schoolwide master schedules; implementation data reviews; resource allocation analyses; and embedded recalibration processes to ensure system cohesion.
- Ensure school-based literacy leadership teams meet regularly by grade, content, and discipline as well as jointly to review literacy goals, analyze data and feedback, and prioritize an evidence-aligned literacy learning environment.
- Establish transformational professional learning and coaching conditions, content, and processes to support educators' deep understanding of evidence-aligned literacy practices.
- Establish vertical and horizontal teams that analyze formative, summative, and progress monitoring data, standardized across all grade levels, to regularly analyze student performance, identify trends, and inform instructional practices that support literacy growth
- Construct feedback loops among the district, schools, families, and community to gather information from stakeholders regarding implementation of evidence-aligned literacy practices.
- Support school-based administrators with the supervision, coordination, and training needed for effective coaching, instructional observations, and intervention.

**Grades K–3 School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Participate and contribute to the work of the district literacy leadership team.
- Establish school-based literacy teams (i.e., principal, literacy coach, lead teacher, special educators, multilingual educators, etc.) with the purpose of supporting and actualizing literacy systems, practices, and processes initiated by the district.
- Develop and implement a school-based literacy plan that is aligned to the district literacy plan, informed by school-specific student data with measurable literacy goals and benchmarks and updated as goals and benchmarks are achieved.
- Build student confidence and motivation by supporting literacy classroom instruction that includes student feedback, student discussions, and students sharing their thinking.
- Prioritize K–3 literacy, including, but not limited to:
  - investing in high-quality, evidence-aligned assessments, interventions, technological tools, and instructional materials;
  - evaluating and adjusting student and educator schedules, school space, and staff roles and responsibilities to ensure access to appropriate resources that meet the needs of students;
  - protecting time for monthly district-level and grade-level literacy planning and implementation meetings; and
  - prioritizing embedded literacy professional learning and instructional coaching.
- Foster a culture where all students are seen as capable literacy learners who take ownership of their growth, and where instruction honors and integrates their identities, experiences, perspectives, and strengths.
- Cultivate a trusting, collaborative climate focused on organizational literacy learning and continuous literacy improvement.
- Include multigenerational approaches appropriate for families with K–3 students when building authentic family engagement opportunities.

**Grades 4–12 School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Participate and contribute to the work of the district literacy leadership team.
- Establish a school-based literacy team (i.e., principal, literacy coach, teachers and department chairs from all content areas, special educators, multilingual educators, etc.) with the purpose of supporting and actualizing the systems, practices, and processes initiated by the district.
- Develop and implement an iterative school-based adolescent literacy plan that is based on the district literacy plan, informed by school-specific student data with measurable literacy goals and benchmarks.
- Liaise with department chairs to analyze data gathered from student assessments and support department chairs with the provision of coaching and professional learning supports.
- Increase student reading motivation and self-efficacy by supporting classroom literacy strategies that address student autonomy, belonging, and competence (e.g., authentic student discussion, finding evidence in the text to support ideas, collaborative student discussions).

- Prioritize 4–12 literacy, including, but not limited to:
  - investing in age-appropriate, high-quality, evidence-aligned assessments and interventions that promote student self-efficacy;
  - evaluating and adjusting student and educator schedules, school space, and staff roles and responsibilities to ensure access to appropriate resources that meet the needs of adolescent students;
  - protecting time for monthly district-level and grade-level planning meetings focused on student literacy; and
  - prioritizing literacy professional learning and supporting 4–12 literacy instructional coaching across all content areas.
- Foster a culture where all students are seen as capable literacy learners who take ownership of their growth, and where instruction honors and integrates their identities, experiences, perspectives, and strengths.
- Cultivate a trusting, collaborative climate focused on organizational learning and continuous literacy improvement.

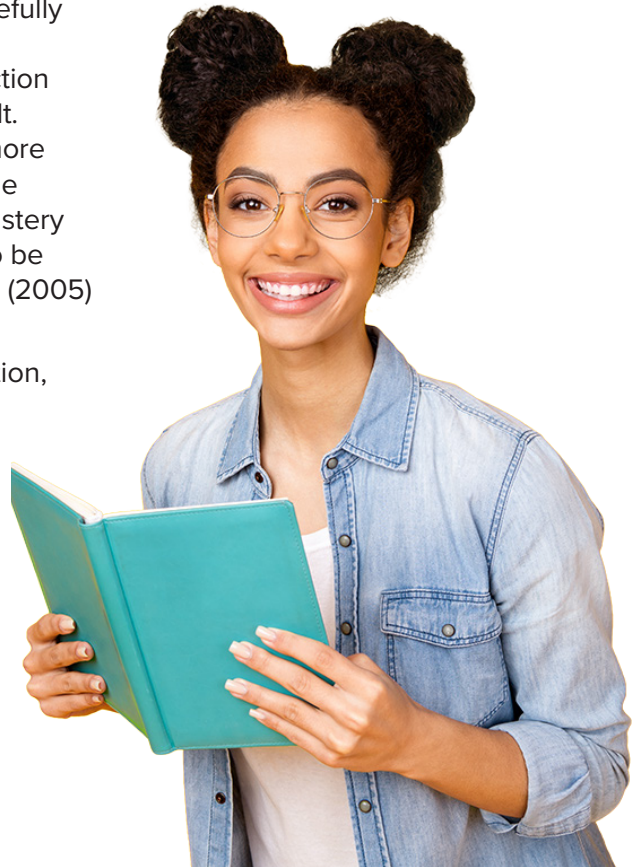
### **Actions to Support Explicit and Systematic Literacy Instruction Grounded in Research**

When instruction is explicit, it provides clarity and a rationale about what is being learned. It includes teaching skills in small steps with explanations, demonstrations, and independent and supportive practice with actionable feedback. Explicit instruction is clear and makes no assumptions about what students may know or not know (Vanderbilt University, n.d.). Explicit instruction makes tasks more accessible to students by breaking them down into smaller parts.

When instruction is systematic, it is highly structured and carefully sequenced. It takes a building block approach, meaning that skills instruction moves from simple to more complex. Instruction is chunked and tasks are designed from easy to more difficult. Temporary supports slowly disappear as students become more adept. Complex tasks and skills are broken down into multiple steps so that each chunk of the learning can be taught to mastery (Vaughn, Wanzek, Murray, & Roberts, 2012). For instruction to be systematic, it should progress over time. Mesmer and Griffith (2005) call this “scope and sequence.”

- The scope refers to the content. For phonics instruction, it would include the content and the range of letter-sound correspondences to be taught.
- The sequence refers to the order of teaching, such as letter-sound correspondences which are taught first in phonics instruction.

If district and school leaders implement the following actions, then they will promote consistent instructional practices grounded in the science of reading, so that all students will have access to high-quality literacy learning and engage with high-quality, grade-level materials to build strong content knowledge across a wide range of subject matter.



**Grades K-3 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Prioritize implementation of high-quality, rigorous English Language Arts (ELA) curricula aligned to the [Connecticut Core Standards](#) and guided by the [CSDE English Language Arts Model Curricula and Aligned Core Resources](#) to meet each year's grade specific standards; retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades; and work steadily toward meeting the more general expectations described by the [Connecticut Core Standards](#).
- Support all students in reading purposefully and listening attentively so that they increase their vocabulary, knowledge, and ability to communicate effectively through writing and speaking.
- Communicate a shared vision of coordinated comprehensive core literacy instruction to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening development for all students.
- Support teachers and literacy coaches in the skillful implementation and ongoing use of [Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs](#) so that they are delivered with consistency, fidelity, and impact.
- Conduct [literacy classroom walkthroughs](#) designed to support teams of educators as they observe and assess implementation of [Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs](#) and effective literacy practices across classrooms.
- Monitor and support explicit, systematic, and sequential literacy instruction for all K-3 students that is responsive to assessment data and addresses word recognition skills, language comprehension, and oral language.
- Support K–3 educators with implementation of explicit, systematic, and sequential literacy instruction, small group instruction, and interventions.
- Engage in instructional conversations that emphasize oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and early comprehension skills.
- Support K–3 educators with implementation of text-centered instruction, which includes building knowledge through grade-level text and regular practice making sense of complex text for all learners.

**Grades 4–12 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Prioritize implementation of high-quality, rigorous English Language Arts (ELA) curricula aligned to the [Connecticut Core Standards](#) through the utilization of the [CSDE English Language Arts Model Curricula and Aligned Core Resources](#) to meet each year's grade specific standards, retain or further develop skills and understandings mastered in preceding grades, and work steadily toward meeting the more general expectations described by the [Connecticut Core Standards](#).
- Support all students across all content areas in reading purposefully and listening attentively so that they increase their vocabulary, knowledge, and discipline-specific expertise through writing and speaking.
- Communicate a shared vision for literacy across disciplines, ensuring all content areas use evidence-aligned strategies to support reading, writing, speaking, and listening development for all students.
- Expand focus to include advanced comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, building of background knowledge, writing to learn, study skills, and integrating disciplinary literacy concepts within core subjects.

- Conduct classroom [literacy walkthroughs](#) designed to support teams of educators as they collaborate to develop effective literacy practices across diverse classrooms.
- Monitor and support explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction for all students that is responsive to assessment data and aligned to content-area demands to ensure transfer across disciplines.
- Strengthen grades 6–12 disciplinary literacy and analysis skills by embedding literacy strategies specific to content areas, teaching analysis, synthesis, and critical evaluation of complex texts and supporting vocabulary acquisition in academic and technical subjects to prepare all students for college and career literacy demands.
- Integrate advanced research, technical writing and independent critical reading skills and strategies in grades 7–12.
- Monitor and support explicit, systematic, and sequential instruction for all students that is informed by assessment data and aligned to content-area demands to ensure transfer across disciplines.
- Integrate disciplinary literacy practices into all subjects to emphasize reading, writing, vocabulary development, and the development of essential background knowledge.

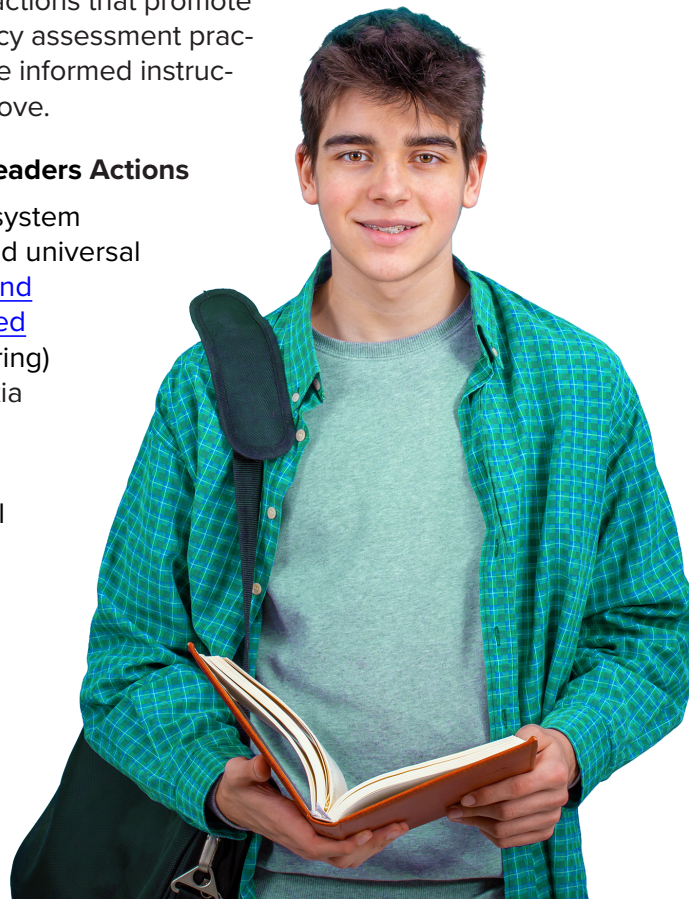
### **Actions to Support On-going Sensible Literacy Assessment Practices that Support Data-driven Decision Making**

Sensible literacy assessment practices are purposeful, balanced, and aligned to instructional goals. They prioritize assessments that provide meaningful, actionable information about student learning. Data-driven decision-making means using evidence from multiple sources of data to inform instruction, identify student needs, and measure progress over time.

If district and school leaders implement the following actions that promote ongoing, purposeful, and instructionally relevant literacy assessment practices, then educators strengthen their capacity to make informed instructional decisions so that outcomes for all students improve.

### **Grades K–3 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Establish a coherent, purposeful assessment system including formative, summative, diagnostic, and universal screening tools that includes the [scheduling and administration](#) of the [K–3 Connecticut-approved universal reading assessments](#) (fall, winter, spring) to help identify students at risk for SLD/Dyslexia or other reading-related learning challenges.
- Use and interpret data from multiple sources to inform decision-making of core instructional priorities, identifying students needing intervention, while monitoring student progress over time.
- Support teachers with [sensible assessment practices](#) that include utilizing assessment information and longitudinal data that are already accessible to make instructional decisions and craft relevant lessons.



- Promote the use of formative and summative assessments to guide daily instruction and measure student growth and performance against grade-level literacy standards.
- Coordinate a strategic, balanced assessment schedule that integrates assessment data with other student-specific information to monitor progress toward literacy goals and tailor instructional support.
- Update report cards and assessment frameworks regularly.

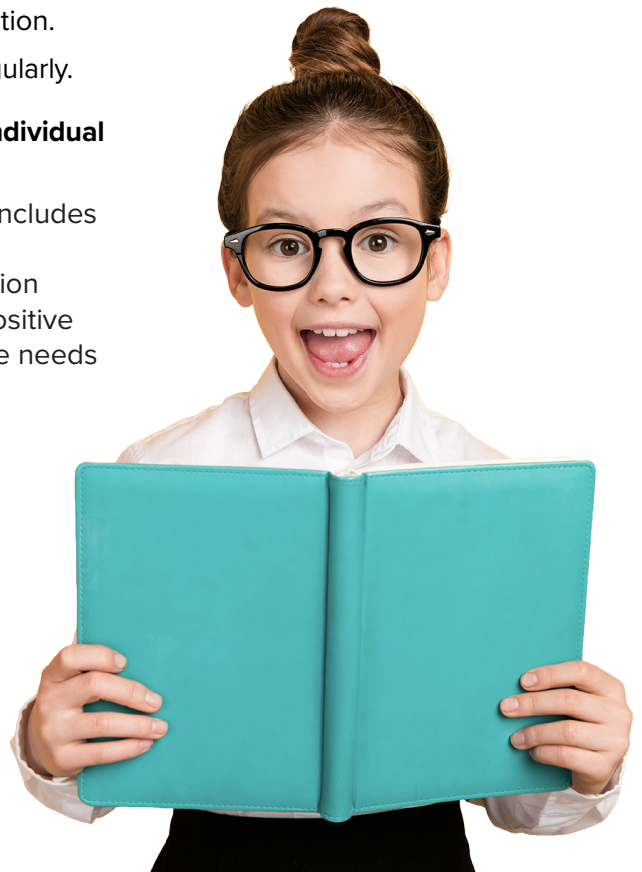
#### **Grades 4–12 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Establish a coherent, purposeful assessment system including formative, summative, diagnostic, and universal screening tools that include the scheduling and administration of assessments to monitor students reading on-grade-level and identify students in need of further, age-appropriate intervention that addresses oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, early comprehension skills and written expression.
- Use and interpret data from multiple sources to inform decision-making of core instructional priorities, identifying students needing intervention, while monitoring student progress over time.
- Support teachers with [sensible assessment practices](#) that include utilizing assessment information and longitudinal data that are already accessible to make instructional decisions and craft multidisciplinary lessons.
- Promote the use of consistent, content-area formative and summative assessments focused on key literacy skills to inform instruction, measure growth toward grade-level standards, and monitor student progress across standards, subjects, and grade levels.
- Coordinate a strategic, balanced assessment schedule that includes literacy-specific assessments across disciplines, ensures regular data analysis, and avoids over-testing or narrowing instruction to test preparation.
- Update report cards and assessment frameworks regularly.

#### **Actions to Support Personalized Intervention Tailored to Individual Student Literacy Needs as Identified through Assessment**

Multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) is a framework that includes a range of scientifically based, evidence-aligned supports, programs, and practices, such as data-based individualization (DBI), scientific research-based interventions (SRBI), and positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) to address the needs of all students based on a systemwide approach. MTSS integrates academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports to maximize student achievement and improve behavior outcomes. Essential components of MTSS include screening, progress monitoring, high-quality instruction and intervention, and data-driven decision making to drive teaching and learning.

If district and school leaders implement the following actions, then they establish and sustain a data-informed, MTSS anchored in the science of reading, so that every student will receive high-quality instruction and targeted interventions based on their individual need.



**Grades K–3 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Design and implement a tiered literacy framework that includes the provision of comprehensive, personalized literacy support that increases in intensity across multiple tiers of instruction (Tier I, Tier II, Tier III) focused on the essential literacy skills young students need to become proficient.
- Employ high quality, research-based, evidence-aligned literacy programming that uses reading materials that build background knowledge and address student needs regarding oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills.
- Ensure delivery of small-group instruction and interventions using evidence-aligned strategies that supplement core instruction for students at risk for, or experiencing, reading difficulties.
- Ensure that the needs and strengths of all students are considered in the planning of both assessment and instruction, including the provision of supports, accommodations, and modifications as required in a student's individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or other intervention/learning plans.
- Expand access to high-intensity tutoring and summer school opportunities for all students experiencing reading difficulties anchored to evidence-aligned intervention programs and materials.
- Develop and maintain a progress monitoring system to inform instructional intervention and ensure accountability using evidence-aligned tools and assessments that are focused on content area literacy skills, short in duration and administered frequently (i.e., biweekly, monthly) to measure growth during a specified period of intervention.
- Model data-informed leadership by using districtwide and schoolwide trends to shape coaching, resource allocation, and instructional priorities.
- Establish a districtwide and schoolwide system for linking assessment results with other student-specific data to support educators and students in co-developing meaningful literacy goals and tracking progress over time.
- Deploy dedicated reading interventionists to lead the development and implementation of targeted intervention plans for students reading below proficiency and to support assessment administration and interpretation.
- Invest in literacy intervention resources and materials that are age-appropriate and engaging for K–3 students.



### **Grades 4–12 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Design and implement a tiered literacy framework that includes the provision of comprehensive, personalized literacy support that increases in intensity across multiple tiers of instruction (Tier I, Tier II, Tier III) focused on the essential literacy skills students need to become proficient across the content areas.
- Employ high quality, research-based, evidence-aligned literacy programming that uses reading materials that build background knowledge and address student needs regarding speaking, listening, morphology, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in age-appropriate ways.
- Ensure delivery of small-group instruction and interventions across content areas supports all students' literacy development (i.e., word solving, vocabulary development, comprehension, etc.) using evidence-aligned strategies that reinforce and support core instruction for learners at risk for, or experiencing, reading difficulties.
- Ensure needs and strengths of all students are considered in the planning of both assessment and instruction, including the provision of supports, accommodations, and modifications as required in a student's individualized education program (IEP), Section 504 plan, or other intervention/learning plan.
- Expand access to high-intensity tutoring, summer school opportunities, and other specialized programming for all students experiencing reading difficulties anchored to evidence-aligned intervention programs and materials.
- Develop and maintain a progress monitoring system to inform instructional intervention across content areas and ensure accountability using evidence-aligned tools and assessments that are focused on content area and disciplinary literacy skills, short in duration, and administered frequently (i.e., biweekly, monthly) to measure growth during a specified period of intervention.
- Establish a districtwide and schoolwide system for linking assessment results with other student-specific data to support educators and students in co-developing meaningful, multidisciplinary literacy goals and tracking progress over time.
- Model data-informed leadership by using districtwide and schoolwide trends to shape coaching, resource allocation, and instructional priorities.
- Deploy dedicated reading interventionists to lead the development and implementation of targeted intervention plans for students reading below proficiency and to support assessment administration and interpretation.
- Invest in literacy intervention resources and materials that are age-appropriate and engaging for striving adolescent readers.

### **Actions to Support Transformational, Continuous Coaching and Professional Learning**

Transformational coaching and professional learning go beyond one-time training as they create sustained, collaborative opportunities for educators to deepen their knowledge, refine their practice, and shift mindsets about teaching and learning. Transformational professional learning changes what educators know, believe, and do in ways that directly improve literacy outcomes for students. Continuous, on-going coaching ensures that this learning is ongoing, job-embedded, and responsive to classroom realities, allowing educators to apply new strategies, receive feedback, and reflect on impact in real time.

If district and school leaders implement the following actions then they will establish coherent, ongoing professional learning systems grounded in evidence and focused on instructional improvement, so that every educator becomes part of a culture of growth and shared accountability to sustain instructional excellence across classrooms and grade levels so that the diverse needs students are met.

### Grades K–3 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions

- Establish a districtwide professional learning team aligned to identified system priorities, with a clear focus on equity, literacy, and asset-based approaches that recognize and respond to students' contexts.
- Form school-based professional learning teams responsible for implementing district professional learning plans in ways that reflect the unique needs of each school's students, staff, and instructional priorities.
- Create and sustain structures that ensure all staff have equitable access to ongoing, high-quality professional learning and foster a supportive adult learning culture throughout the system.
- Allocate and monitor resources specifically for K–3 literacy professional learning; regularly assess the effectiveness of these investments through student outcome data, instructional observations, staff surveys, and other feedback tools.
- Develop adult learning goals informed by student data, research, and the voices of school and district literacy leadership teams to ensure relevance and alignment with local needs.
- Build educator capacity to deliver age-appropriate K–3 literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading.
- Ensure professional learning is job-embedded and closely aligned to the [Connecticut Approved K–3 Reading Curriculum Models or Programs](#), including the use of high-quality instructional materials that prioritize oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension skills and build students' background knowledge and language comprehension.
- Provide schools with access to K–3 literacy coaches with expertise in tiered instruction, evidence- aligned assessment, and intervention practices.
- Offer professional learning communities focused on meaningful use of assessment data, helping educators develop a shared understanding of how assessment can be used as a tool to support student growth and inform instructional practice.

### Grades 4–12 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions

- Establish a districtwide professional learning team aligned to identified system priorities, with a clear focus on equity, literacy, and asset-based approaches that recognize and respond to students' contexts.



- Form school-based professional learning teams responsible for implementing district professional learning plans in ways that reflect the unique needs of each school's students, staff, and instructional priorities.
- Create and sustain structures that ensure all staff have equitable access to ongoing, high-quality professional learning on college and career readiness literacy integrating discipline literacy skills and strategies that advance and foster a supportive adult learning culture throughout the system.
- Allocate and monitor resources specifically for content-area and cross-discipline literacy professional learning; regularly assess the effectiveness of these investments through student outcome data, instructional observations, staff surveys, and other feedback tools.
- Develop adult learning goals informed by student data, research, and the voices of school and district literacy leadership teams to ensure relevance and alignment with local needs.
- Build educator capacity to deliver age-appropriate, evidence-aligned adolescent literacy instruction rooted in the science of reading.
- Ensure professional learning is job-embedded and aligned to adolescent-focused science of reading research, using high-quality materials that build essential adolescent literacy skills—including vocabulary—and strengthen students' background knowledge.
- Provide schools with access to adolescent literacy coaches and interventionists with expertise in tiered, age appropriate 4–12 instruction, evidence-aligned assessment, and intervention practices.
- Offer professional learning communities focused on the meaningful use of assessment data, helping educators develop a shared understanding of how assessment can be used as a tool to support student growth and inform instructional practices.

### **Actions for Authentic, Asset-based Family-School Partnerships**

Authentic family engagement means building genuine, two-way relationships between schools and families that honor families as partners. It centers on listening to and learning from families' perspectives, recognizing their expertise about their children, and valuing the cultural and linguistic assets they bring to the school community. Asset-based partnerships move beyond traditional involvement to shared decision-making, co-learning, and collaboration that strengthens trust and shared responsibility for student success.

Family well-being encompasses families' sense of belonging, confidence, and connection to the school community, as well as their access to the knowledge and supports needed to help their children thrive academically and emotionally.

If district and school leaders take the following actions, then they will support authentic family engagement by engaging in essential partnerships so that student literacy and overall family well-being advance.

### **Grades K–3 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Engage families as partners and experts in their student's early learning by identifying their goals, concerns, and aspirations related to literacy and well-being.
- Empower families in understanding foundational literacy development by sharing evidence-aligned, developmentally appropriate strategies for language and reading at home.
- Ensure clear, consistent two-way communication channels that are meaningful and are centered on a shared understanding of early literacy milestones, goals, and progress.
- Address the holistic needs of families that influence early learning and engagement to assist in building family well-being.

- Foster trusting relationships through playgroups, workshops, and informal gatherings that connect families to each other and to school staff to build networks of support.
- Invest in age-appropriate literacy resources, such as take-home books, family literacy nights, and early learning kits to support reading at home.
- Coordinate with teachers and interventionists to ensure families receive regular, accessible updates on students' literacy progress and ideas for at-home reinforcement.

#### **Grades 4–12 District and School Level Educational Leaders Actions**

- Engage families as partners and experts in their student's learning by identifying their children's academic and future-readiness goals, especially related to reading and writing across content areas and disciplines.
- Empower families in understanding adolescent literacy development and study skills by connecting them to evidence-aligned strategies for reading comprehension, disciplinary literacy, independent learning, navigating grade-level content texts, and supporting research and writing.
- Ensure clear, consistent two-way communication that is meaningful and centered on literacy expectations, course demands, and progress toward grade-level proficiency and college/career readiness.
- Address the holistic needs of families that influence adolescent learning and engagement to assist in building family well-being.
- Build networks of support that include peer mentors, family liaisons, and school-based literacy teams to sustain engagement throughout middle and high school.
- Invest in tools and resources such as digital platforms, workshops, and multilingual materials to support family involvement in literacy development and academic planning.
- Partner with content area teachers and support staff to regularly share updates on student literacy performance and provide actionable next steps for families regarding college and career readiness support.



## References and Resources

### Accelerated Instructional Approaches

Administration for Children and Families, United States Department of Health and Human Services. (June 15, 2022). Improving access to high-quality resources that equitably support social- emotional development and mental health of young children. Retrieved from [Improving Access to High-Quality Resources That Equitably Support Social-Emotional Development and Mental Health of Young Children \(June 15, 2022\) \(ed.gov\)](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. (n.d.). [Connecticut's Framework for Accelerating Educational Opportunity and Access](#).

United States Department of Education. (2021). ED COVID-19 Handbook: Roadmap to Reopening Safely and Meeting All Students' Needs (Volume 2). Retrieved from [ED COVID-19 Handbook, Volume 2](#).

### Assessment Practices

Connecticut State Department of Education. (Effective July 1, 2023). [Research-based Universal Screening Reading Assessments for Grades K-3](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. (September 1, 2021). [Sensible Assessment Practices in Action](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. (December 2016). [The Types and Purposes of Student Assessment in Education: An FAQ](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. (February 2008). [SRBI Executive Summary.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#).

### Multigenerational Approach or Two-Generational Initiative

Ascend at the Aspen Institute. (2022). [The 2Gen Approach](#).

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood. (2022). [Two-Generational \(2Gen\) Initiative](#).

### Professional Learning

Connecticut State Board of Education. (n.d.). [Connecticut Professional Learning \(ct.gov\)](#). Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning. (2022). [Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, 2022](#).

### Science of Reading

Connecticut State Department of Education. [Connecticut State Department of Education Evidence- Based Practice Guides](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. [SRBI - Scientific Research Based Interventions \(ct.gov\)](#)

Connecticut State Department of Education. [Leveraging Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\) to Enhance Educational Leadership](#).

Connecticut State Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Academic-Office/Reading-Leadership-Implementation-Council/The-Science-of-Reading--A-Literature-Review-April-2022-Update.pdf>.

Grissom, Jason A., Anna J. Egalite, and Constance A. Lindsay. 2021. "How Principals Affect Students and Schools: A Systematic Synthesis of Two Decades of Research." New York: The Wallace Foundation. Available at <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/principalsynthesis>. <https://doi.org/10.59656/EL-SB1065.001>

- Institute of Education Sciences, and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (n.d.). Using the WWC to find ESSA Tiers of Evidence. Retrieved from [WWC | ESSA Tiers Of Evidence \(ed.gov\)](#).
- Institute of Education Sciences, and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2019). Practice Guide: Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade. Retrieved from [WWC | Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade \(ed.gov\)](#).
- Institute of Education Sciences, and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2010). Practice Guide: Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd grade. Retrieved from [WWC | Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade \(ed.gov\)](#).
- Institute of Education Sciences, and National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. (2022). Practice Guide: Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9. Retrieved from [WWC | Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9 \(ed.gov\)](#).
- Mesmer, H. A., & Griffith, P. L. (2005). Everybody's selling it—But just what is explicit, systematic phonics instruction? *The Reading Teacher*, 59(4), pp. 366–376. doi:10.1598/RT.59.4.6
- Moats, Louisa C. (2019) "Of 'Hard Words' and Straw Men: Let's Understand What Reading Science is Really About," EDVIEW360 Blog Series, Voyager Sopris Learning, October 16, 2019, <https://www.voyagersopris.com/blog/edview360/2019/10/16/lets-understand-what-reading-science-is-really-about>.
- University of Connecticut. (2021). Connecticut Partnership for Literacy Success: Our Research. Retrieved from [Our Research | Connecticut Partnership for Literacy Success \(uconn.edu\)](#).
- Vaughn, S., & Fletcher, J. (2021). Explicit Instruction as the Essential Tool for Executing the Science of Reading. *Reading League Journal*, 2(2), 4–11.
- Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., & Roberts, G. (2012). Intensive Interventions for Students Struggling in Reading and Mathematics: A Practice Guide. Center on Instruction. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED531907.pdf>.

### **Structured Literacy and Students with Literacy-Related Disabilities**

- Connecticut State Department of Education. (October 2022). [Connecticut IEP Manual](#).
- Connecticut State Department of Education. (2022). [Specific Learning Disability and SLD/Dyslexia--FAQ \(ct.gov\)](#).
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA), *Effective Reading Instruction for Students with Dyslexia* (Baltimore, MD: Author, 2015).
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA), *Structured Literacy: Effective Instruction for Students with Dyslexia and Related Reading Difficulties* (Baltimore, MD: Author, 2020), <https://dyslexiaida.org/structured-literacy-effective-instruction-for-students-with-dyslexia-and-related-reading-difficulties/>.
- International Dyslexia Association (IDA), *Structured Literacy: An Introductory Guide* (Baltimore, MD: Author, 2019), <https://app.box.com/s/mvuvhel6qaj8tghvu1nl75i0ndnlp0yz>.
- National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). Retrieved from [National Center on Improving Literacy | Your source for improving outcomes for students with literacy-related disabilities, including dyslexia](#).



**CONNECTICUT**  
Education