

## K-3 Literacy Initiative Overview

### Opportunity for Schools to Improve K-3 Students' Literacy

Public Act No. 12-116, *An Act Concerning Educational Reform*, was signed into law by Governor Malloy in May of 2012. The law offers statewide improvement in literacy, as well as an intensive reading instruction program for up to five schools per year.

The statewide reforms in P.A. 12-116 include a professional development system to be designed by SDE and a coordinated statewide reading plan by July 1, 2013. Specifically, to improve professional development for teachers in reading, pre-service Special Ed. and reading specialists will be required to take the test in reading before teaching in our state, and teachers K-3 will take practice tests, with results reported by the local Boards of Education to SDE. Incentives will be offered for schools that improve their reading performance trend line. Schools with disproportionate and inappropriate referrals of minority students to Special Education will need to improve reading interventions and assessments.

The specific opportunity for five elementary schools this coming year include an intensive reading intervention strategy for students reading below proficiency, including one external literacy coach per school, four reading interventionists per school, rigorous and improved reading assessment tools, year-long training for principals and teachers, and summer school with specific research based literacy components.

### Why Improve Literacy?

Connecticut has the largest reading gap in the nation. While reading is teachable to 95% of all students, more than one third of poor children enter formal kindergarten classes already behind their peers. Eighty-eight percent of children who leave first grade as poor readers will still be poor readers at the end of third grade. By fourth grade, more than 50% of these children will not meet the standard for reading proficiency. 74% of Hispanic and African American students in Connecticut are not reading at goal by the end of third grade. Children who have reading problems in third grade fall further behind their peers each year if they do not receive support, limiting their chances of academic and future workforce success.

### Requirements for Implementation

The K-3 Literacy Initiative implementation will begin in August 2012 at five participating elementary schools selected from a competitive grant process.

During the 2012-2013 school year, the selected elementary schools will develop and implement the following seven elements with the technical support of an organization with national and state expertise in the science of teaching reading:

1. Focused achievement goals based on student data;
2. Rigorous academics that include challenging ELA, math, science, and social studies courses;
3. Individualized academic intervention or acceleration based on student needs;
4. Frequent data cycles to improve instruction;
5. Targeted teacher development and frequent opportunities for collaboration ;
6. Engaging enrichments for all students;
7. Strong school culture of high expectations; and
8. Strong parent engagement with parents as literacy partners at school and at home.

### **What Will K-3 Literacy Schools Receive?**

If a school is selected to participate in the K-3 Literacy Initiative, an External Literacy Specialist will be assigned to the school to provide embedded professional development in literacy for one year. The school will also receive four Reading Interventionists to provide intensive, individualized, data-driven instruction for all students reading below proficiency.

The External Literacy Specialist will support the principal and other school administrators, the teachers, and the Reading Interventionists to build their knowledge of reading and to oversee K-3 literacy instruction in the school. The initiative will focus on implementing a multi-tiered system of support by following SRBI, CT's Framework for Response to Intervention.

Capacity and sustainability will be built through the partnership between the External Literacy Specialist and an internal literacy specialist who will be selected from within the school or district, based on reading expertise and experience. Each school will also receive a proven technology-based reading assessment tool for teachers to use with all K-3 students that measures all areas of literacy. The assessment tool will be teacher-friendly, efficient and offer teachers information on groupings and interventions.

### **What will K-3 Literacy Schools Gain?**

Each of the five schools will be supported in the development of the following essential literacy components:

- A cohesive literacy team that implements a Response to Intervention process for individualized instruction, resulting in fewer special education referrals;
- A framework that embeds literacy in an integrated way, throughout the day, aligned with the Common Core State Standards;
- A universal screening/progress monitoring assessment tool that is technology-based, teacher-friendly and proven to reduce the achievement gap in reading;
- Site-based professional development for school leaders, teachers, and paraprofessionals with embedded coaching opportunities for teachers and reading interventionists; and
- A model for engaging parents as partners in reading.

### **What Will K-3 Literacy Schools Need to Do?**

Each school will commit to the following:

- An instructional leader (i.e., the principal or assistant principal) who will monitor teachers' adherence to the assessment plan and use of scientifically based reading instruction in their classrooms. The administrator will attend the leadership for literacy training workshops in August and school-based professional development sessions throughout the year;
- Adherence to a comprehensive assessment plan, including screening, progress-monitoring, and outcome measures for all students;
- The development of a cohesive literacy team with clearly-defined roles and responsibilities who attend regularly-scheduled meetings (i.e., grade-level, cross-grade level, data-team meetings);
- Professional development that is systematic, cumulative, and comprehensive in its scope and sequence and its approach to building teachers' knowledge.
- Job-embedded professional development (PD) pairing an external literacy coach with an internal literacy specialist.
- An uninterrupted daily literacy instruction block (minimum of 120 minutes);
- Literacy instruction that is evidence-based, as determined by selection of methodology that is based on research (i.e., the National Reading Panel Report). The methodology of a core reading program for Tier 1 Instruction and supplemental/intervention programs for Tier 2 and Tier 3 will be firmly grounded in research; and

- Participation in the training of parents, to include providing them with data on the reading skills of their children with information on the planned interventions and clear details of what they can do at home and at school, as partners in literacy.

### **Selection Process**

Five schools will be selected to participate in the K3LI. They will each receive an External Literacy Specialist and four Reading interventionists to provide job-embedded professional development in their school for one year. While all schools in the Alliance Districts will be eligible to apply through an Expression of Interest form, the committee will only select those schools that demonstrate the capacity to succeed in this effort. The committee will use the following selection criteria to evaluate schools based on their expression of interest submission and interviews with key district staff.

### **Timeline**

- **June 19th** Two information sessions at the [State Department of Education](#), 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT; 1-3pm or 6-8pm; Conference room MCR3
- **June 29<sup>th</sup>** Deadline for Expression of Interest
- **July 11<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup>** Interviews and site visits for schools that make initial cut
- **July 27<sup>th</sup>** Final Selection notification

### **If you have questions about the K-3 Literacy Initiative, please contact:**

Harriet Feldlaufer, Bureau Chief of Teaching and Learning, [harriet.feldlaufer@ct.gov](mailto:harriet.feldlaufer@ct.gov)

## Connecticut State Department of Education

### Directions to the Middletown Office

25 Industrial Park Road  
Middletown, CT 06457-1520  
Tel. (800) 822-6832  
Fax (860) 807-2196

#### From **Hartford**

I-91 South, Exit 21. Cross over Route 372 onto Industrial Park Road. Department of Education is the last building on the right (approximately 1 & ½ miles down).

#### From **Waterbury**

I-84 East to Exit 27 (Route 691 East). Travel on Route 691 to Exit 11 (I-91 North). I-91 North to Exit 21. Right onto Route 372 West. Pass under I-91 and take a left onto Industrial Park Road (Mobil Station on right). Department of Education is the last building on the right (approximately 1 & ½ miles down).

#### From **Willimantic**

Route 66 all the way until you cross the Portland Bridge (in Middletown), take your first left and go down the hill to Route 9 North. Take a left onto Route 9 North. Take Exit 19, Route 372 West. Take Left. Follow Route 372 West until just past the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Take a left onto Industrial Park Road (Mobil Station on right). Department of Education is the last building on the right (approximately 1 & ½ miles down).

#### From **New London**

I-95 to Route 9 North. Route 9 North to Exit 19, Route 372 (Berlin/New Britain). take left onto Route 372 West. Follow route 372 West until just past the Crowne Plaza Hotel. Take a left onto Industrial Park Road (Mobil Station on right). Department of Education is the last building on the right (approximately 1 & ½ miles down).

#### From **New Haven**

I-91 North, Exit 21. Right onto 372 West. Pass under I-91 and take a left onto Industrial Park Road (Mobil Station on right). Department of Education is the last building on the right (approximately 1 & ½ miles down).