

Literacy for ME 2.0: A Statewide Literacy Development Plan

Literacy, as defined by the Maine Department of Education, is the ability to construct and convey meaning for a variety of purposes through an array of contextual forms and symbols, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Literacy is the gateway to life-long learning and academic success. Access to high quality literacy instruction is foundational to ensuring educational equity. Yet, literacy instruction is not the exclusive domain of a single grade level, course, subject area, or even the entire public education system. Everyone in a child's life has a role to play in building literacy skills. Literacy development begins at birth and involves the efforts of families, organizations, caregivers and more. Early on, children engage in conversations and discover the power of language. As they grow, children acquire knowledge and vocabulary through books and stories while building foundational skills that support literacy development. The power of literacy as a tool for communicating and exploring the world is experienced by students throughout their educational careers. During the pre-k to grade 12 years, literacy growth also occurs outside of schools where children and adolescents must navigate and make sense of a diverse media landscape and rapidly expanding bodies of knowledge.

While strong literacy abilities are pivotal to learning, they are also a bedrock for a highly skilled workforce, robust economy, and **culturally responsive society**. The value of a highly literate citizenry cannot be underestimated. Strong literacy skills lead to opportunities in all aspects of life. While persistent efforts to develop and strengthen literacy skills have, and continue, to occur across Maine, gaps still exist. Identifying and addressing these gaps will lead to more positive outcomes for Maine's citizens and communities.

A statewide literacy plan provides a structure for promoting a reliable system of supports that include professional learning for educators, outreach to families and caregivers, identification of **intervention** needs and responses, partnerships with individuals and community-based organizations, and enhanced workplace literacy efforts to assure continued development for and throughout adulthood. A comprehensive literacy plan across a system, whether it be a single school, entire school system, or the broader community, identifies the central role literacy development plays in ensuring equitable educational opportunities by supporting deep knowledge within and across disciplines as well as the transfer of learning from the instructional context to completely new contexts.

Historical Synopsis of *Literacy for ME* and Introduction to *Literacy for ME 2.0*

The Maine Department of Education (DOE) is fully committed to ensuring that Maine's children, through **equitable** and **inclusive** educational experiences, are well-equipped for post-secondary education, careers, and civic life by the time they graduate from high school. More than in any other age, today's world demands highly developed literacy skills which include speaking, listening, reading, writing, and viewing. These essential literacy skills must be applied in a variety of contexts including many new and previously unknown manners. To be successful in these endeavors, Maine's learners must fluently demonstrate **critical literacy** abilities to meet the expectations of an information saturated world. *Literacy for ME*, Maine's statewide literacy plan, bridges the many different influences that build essential literacy skills and helps to create the conditions for transferring those skills to any situation throughout life.

Literacy for ME 2.0 continues work begun in September of 2012, when Maine DOE launched the *Literacy for ME* initiative. Between 2012 and the present time, the *Literacy for ME* initiative has provided vision for achieving the goals of improving literacy education efforts and for increasing the **literate** abilities of Maine's children and adults through a collaborative approach that combines the expertise and dedicated efforts of Maine educators, state agencies, and community-based organizations. The initiative includes a comprehensive state literacy plan with recommendations for strengthening literacy education efforts across the birth-adult spectrum and which also provides guidance to schools and communities for the development of local level community literacy teams and plans. Some of the key accomplishments realized through implementation of *Literacy for ME* include:

- Ongoing provision of technical assistance and professional learning to strengthen literacy education across the birth-adult span has been provided by the Maine DOE, in partnership with a wide-range of organizations.
- Heightened awareness of the vital importance literacy plays in the lives of Maine's citizens through annual public awareness campaigns (e.g. Read to ME and Read to Ride).
- Formation of over 40 community-based literacy teams composed of membership from school units and community organizations (e.g. libraries, early childhood providers, literacy tutors, businesses, etc.) leading to grass root efforts to capitalize on the strengths within communities to address identified literacy challenges.
- Development of **web-based, open-source** literacy resources for use by educators, families/caregivers, and community-based literacy teams, including a regularly updated source of Maine literacy data, *By the Numbers*.
- Updated **English language arts standards** (2020) to provide a more streamlined yet ambitious set of goals for students' literacy development reflective of the abilities necessary for success in a global economy that relies heavily on **digital communication** methods.
- Advisory service by Maine DOE's State Literacy Team composed of members with expertise in literacy education across the birth-adult continuum and who represent school systems, community-based literacy organizations, higher-education, and state agencies, to inform implementation efforts.

Following 9 years of implementation, the Maine DOE, in collaboration with its State Literacy Team, reviewed key literacy-related data to assess Maine's strengths and challenges. In response to this review, as well as a recognition that implementation of a **strategic plan** requires a regular process of revision to meet newly identified demands, the *Literacy for ME* plan has been updated to reflect current realities and anticipated needs.

Literacy for ME 2.0:

- provides a picture of literacy achievement, literacy education efforts, and identified literacy challenges in Maine at the present time (**State of Literacy in Maine**);
- points to current research regarding key components of literacy education (**Key Literacy Components & State Level Strategies**);
- establishes key state-level recommendations to guide the ongoing efforts of the Maine DOE in supporting literacy education from infancy through adulthood (**Key Literacy Components & State Level Strategies**); and
- offers tools to school and community-based literacy teams for strengthening literacy learning opportunities (**Local Level Matrices**).

The updated literacy plan provides Maine DOE, schools, and communities a framework with essential focus areas across age spans to continue to enhance literacy development in the classroom, in homes, and in the community. Well implemented, *Literacy for ME 2.0* will help assure that each person educated in Maine is prepared to meet the challenges known and unknown as responsible and engaged adults.

The State of Literacy in Maine--2021

Literacy opens doors to the world. Ensuring that all Maine children enter adulthood equipped to be successful in **post-secondary** study, careers, and civic life is the ultimate mission of Maine's educational system and requires **proficiency** with a variety of literacy-oriented abilities. Consistent, **systemic** instruction of literacy must be coupled with diverse experiences and opportunities to apply developmentally appropriate skills in increasingly complex contexts.

Reading and understanding a wide-range of complex texts, developing a well-supported argument in writing or conversation, accessing and evaluating the quality of information obtained through technology-based tools, and interpreting and applying information presented through an oral presentation are only a few of many abilities literate adults rely on regularly in their daily lives. The Maine Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Learning (2007) established the importance of strong literacy skills that enable us to be:

- clear and effective communicators;
- self-directed and lifelong learners;
- creative and practical problem solvers;
- responsible and involved citizens; and
- integrative and informed thinkers.

The detriments of low levels of literacy have been well-documented. In the United States, approximately 1 in 6 (14% or 43 million) adults are considered functionally **illiterate** (World Literacy Foundation, 2018). The disparity between adults with and without functional literacy abilities begins early in life and is highly correlated with economic security and race. Children living in poverty and children of color are far more likely not to read proficiently by third grade and not to graduate from high school (Fiester, 2013). The research of Donald Hernandez has repeatedly demonstrated that, “among children who face a double jeopardy — failure to read proficiently and being poor for at least one year — 26 percent fail to graduate” (Hernandez, 2011). Of even more concern is the recognition that children who enter school behind in Kindergarten are far less likely to catch up by third grade, even with substantial amounts of intervention (Fiester, 2013). This reality clearly points to the need to better address intervention efforts in the years prior to Kindergarten (including two-generation approaches that support parents and children), particularly for families who are economically disadvantaged.

The consequences of low levels of literacy lead to economic and public health challenges. Not only are adults with low levels of literacy four times more likely to report poor health, but they are far more likely to earn annual incomes below the poverty line and to access public assistance (Barbara Bush Foundation, 2020). Approximately 225 billion dollars in lost revenue results from unemployment, low workplace productivity, and crime (World Literacy Foundation, 2018). Literacy skills, essential to the health of our democracy and the quality of our culture, have become even more important with the explosion of modern communication media. Effective communication is critical regardless of the devices we use or the distances over which we communicate. Literacy skills make possible communication related to all disciplines across

all devices and distances. Without a command of literacy skills, it is difficult to access, think about, understand, or explain the vast amount of content available to us.

In response to these realities, *Literacy for ME's* original priorities included ensuring that:

- Children and adults have access to more of the help they need to meet the literacy demands of post-secondary education, careers, and civic life;
- Maine communities have access to a statewide system of support for **evidence-based** literacy learning practices across the birth to adult span;
- State-level literacy education efforts are informed by practices proven effective in local communities;
- Local learning communities have access to guidance for developing and implementing comprehensive local literacy plans; and
- **Cross-agency collaborations** strengthen literacy across the birth to adult span.

In the time since Literacy for ME's launch in 2012, growth in literacy achievement as well as supports that contribute to higher levels of literacy have occurred across age/grade spans in Maine. Despite this forward movement, there remain challenges and plenty of room for additional growth. The chart below summarizes Maine's current realities.

State of Literacy in Maine

2012-2021

Age/Grade Span	Positive Signs of Growth	Areas Needing More Growth and Resources
Early Childhood (Birth-Pre-K)	• Percentages of 4-year olds attending public preschool has risen from 10.4% in 2010 to 48% in 2020 (Maine DOE, 2020). • 77% of children under age 6 are read to at least 4 days per week (Maine Children's Alliance, 2019). • 49% of Maine Children ages 0-5 are read to everyday—13% higher than the national average	• Only 35% of Maine's public pre-k programs offer full-day/full week programming (Maine DOE, 2020). • 53% of Black or African American children ages 0-5 in Maine live in poverty as compared to 14.2% of all children ages 0-5 in Maine (Maine Children's Alliance, 2019). • Although a relatively small population, more resources and professional learning are needed to support the

	(Child and Adolescent Health Management Initiative, 2019). • 54% of Maine children are told stories or sung to by family members everyday—6% higher than the national average (Child and Adolescent Health Management Initiative, 2019). • 87% of Pre-K students in Maine’s Preschool Expansion Grant moved out of the high-risk category for literacy by the end of the school year (Sullivan, et al., 2019).	3.9% of Maine children ages 3-5 who are English learners (Maine Department of Education English Learner Dashboard, 2021). • Less than half (43%) of Maine’s children ages 0-5 regularly participated in developmental screenings (Child and Adolescent Health Management Initiative, 2019). • Between 2010 and 2018, the early care and education workforce with a high school diploma or less in Maine’s registry has increased from 1,148 to 4,066—this amounts to 36% of the registry’s workforce (Maine Roads to Quality PDN, 2018).
Age/Grade Span	Positive Signs of Growth	Areas Needing More Growth and Resources
School Age (K-8)	• 92% of Maine public school systems provide full-day kindergarten programs (MDOE Maine Schools data from school year 2020-2021). • 19 public schools (5.85%) have half-day kindergarten programs that educate 5.4% (620) of Maine’s 11,633 kindergartners. (MDOE Maine Schools data and October 1 enrollment school year 2020-2021). • In 2018-19, 55% of Maine students were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy, an increase from 50.7% in 2017-18 (Maine DOE, ESSA Data Dashboard, 2019). • Statewide, 62% of females and 50.1% of males were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy in 2018-	In 2019, the Nation’s Report Card indicated that • Grade 4 students in Maine had an average scale score of 221, lower than the scores for the period 1992- 2013. • Grade 4 students in Maine eligible for free and reduced lunch had an average scaled score of 209, compared to the average Grade 4 scaled score in Maine of 221. • Grade 4 students in Maine who are black have an average scale score of 203, compared to the average Grade 4 scaled score of 222 among Maine’s white students. • Grade 8 students in Maine had an average scale score of 265, lower than the scores for the period 1992- 2013. • Grade 8 students eligible for free and reduced lunch had an average scale score of 255, compared to the average Grade 8 scaled score in Maine of 265. • Grade 8 students in Maine who are black have an average scale score of 236, compared to the average Grade 4 scaled

	19 (Maine DOE, 2019). This is an increase from 56.3% and 45.4% respectively in 2017-18. Digital Literacy as of Spring 2021: • 23,734 cellular devices were distributed in the spring of 2020 to connect students to remote learning technology (<i>Maine DOE, CARES Act No Internet or Device 2021</i>). • 7,450 devices were distributed to students who had WiFi connections but not a dedicated device (<i>Maine DOE, CARES Act No Internet or Device 2021</i>). • During the 2020-2021 school year, Maine DOE developed Maine Online Opportunity for Sustained Education (MOOSE) modules for asynchronous use, providing free digital units of study for any student to use. Within the first six months, the MOOSE modules were accessed by more than 12,000 users (<i>Maine DOE, CARES Act No Internet or Device 2021</i>). • Between 2019 and 2020, Maine DOE added two digital learning specialists to provide training and support to the field.	score of 267 among Maine's white students. (<i>NAEP Reading 2019 Highlights 2019</i>). • Overall, 14.6% of English learners were at or above state expectations for ELA/literacy in 2018-19, a decrease from 15.2% the previous year (Maine Department of Education, English Learner Data Dashboard, 2019). • 18.3 % of Maine students K-12 are chronically absent from school (Maine DOE, 2020). This figure is of concern recognizing that studies have demonstrated that only 17% of students chronically absent in both kindergarten and 1st grade were reading proficiently in third grade, compared to 64% of those with good attendance (Applied Survey Research, 2011).
Age/Grade Span	Positive Signs of Growth	Areas Needing More Growth and Resources
High School and Adult (9-Adult)	• 59% of 11th grade students perform at or above proficiency* in reading (Maine Education Data, ESSA Data Dashboard, 2018) (<i>proficiency determined by standard setting of summative state assessment</i>)	Maine Adult Education Data 2018-2019 (<i>MDOE-ADULT EDUCATION DATA COORDINATOR RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2019</i> , 2019):

	87.5% of Maine students graduate from high school (Maine DOE, 2020) as compared to the national rate of 85% (Atwell, M., et al, 2020). - Maine Adult Education Data 2018-2019 (<i>MDOE-ADULT EDUCATION DATA COORDINATOR RELEASED: NOVEMBER 2019</i>): 3,538 Adult High School Completion Students were in high school Diploma and HiSET preparation courses 1,212 of 3,538 students received a High School Credential 1,374 College Preparatory Students 4,592 Workforce Preparation Participants 2,776 English Language Acquisition and Civics Education Students 5,360 Adult Basic Education Students 354 High School Credit Recovery Students (High School Students) 13.4% of Maine adults have low literacy (reading proficiently at less than a 6th grade level) as compared to 54% of United States adults (Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, 2019). - The college completion rate for Maine has increased from 60.1% among students who started college in 2009 to 62.9% among students who started in 2013 (New England Secondary Schools Consortium, 2020).	35% of jobs in Maine require a bachelor's degree but only 17% of adults 25 or over have this degree. 8% of the Maine's adult population (99,982) are adults without a high school credential. New England Consortium of Secondary Schools (2020) - College enrollment among Maine students has declined slightly from 61.7% in 2009 to 59.6% in 2019. - A significant disparity exists between the college enrollment of economically disadvantaged students (42%) and non-economically disadvantaged (70.7%). - Persistence among college students (defined as students enrolled for a third semester in their second year) has significantly declined from 90.6% in 2011 to 67% in 2018. - Maine's Department of Economic and Community Development (2019) has laid out a robust economic development strategy, one in which high levels of literacy among Mainers will be an asset for ensuring a skilled and innovative workforce.
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Literacy for ME 2.0: Laying out a Plan to Move Maine Forward

As Maine enters the next decade, strong levels of literacy are increasingly necessary. Keeping in mind Maine's needs, current data related to status of literacy among Maine's population, and current research related to literacy education, *Literacy for ME 2.0* will continue to advance its original priorities but will also place an intentional focus on several key aspects of literacy education, including:

- **Attending to the development of language and foundational literacy skills in the early years.** Ensuring that young children build language and literacy skills from birth through the early elementary years provides a foundation from which to build a lifetime of strong literacy abilities (Castles, A., Rastle, K., & Nation, K., 2018). Language leads learning and is the underpinning for comprehension and expression. Although not ends themselves, explicit and systematic instruction in foundational literacy skills (e.g. phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, etc.) is essential to students' ability to access and understand text in many forms across disciplines as well as their ability to fluently compose text.
- **Promoting the significance of explicit instruction related to written communication.** Not only is writing an essential tool for expressing ideas used across disciplines and workplaces, but it is a vehicle for deepening comprehension, critical thinking, and retention of learning (International Literacy Association, 2020). When seeking to communicate through writing, individuals think more deeply which enhances their understanding of the content. Further, writing and instruction in writing also enhances students' ability to recognize and decode text (International Literacy Association, 2020).
- **Recognizing that literacy education not only unlocks opportunity for learning across disciplines but is enhanced when well-integrated within disciplines.** Inter-disciplinary literacy instruction enables application of literate abilities for purposeful and richer learning, often motivating learners through engagement in disciplines and topics of interest. Additionally, embedding literacy instruction within disciplinary study helps illuminate for learners the literacy structures and strategies utilized within and across disciplines (International Literacy Association, 2017). Outside of school, people do not differentiate reading from listening to gain information or draw a solid line between scientific knowledge and literacy skills. To be knowledgeable and responsible citizens, to engage in the workplace independently and advance strategically, students need strong and flexible literacy skills that activate whenever and wherever needed.
- **Engaging in culturally sustaining literacy education practices.** Between 2009-2019, Maine was one of six states that has seen the largest increase in its African-American child population (Maine Children's Alliance, 2019) as well as significant increases in immigrant populations. The increasing diversity of Maine's population provides opportunity to invest in culturally sustaining **pedagogies** as a pathway towards accepting, supporting, and sustaining pluralistic approaches to learning so that students' diverse cultures, histories, and literacies are strengths rather than deficits (Paris and Alim, 2017). Leveraging literacy instruction to provide students with experiences that act as "mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors" helps them to deepen their knowledge of self while developing the desire to know more about others, appreciate diversity, build empathy, and strive toward cultural **proficiency** (Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990; International Literacy

Association, 2017). Further, shifting perspective around language learning to embrace bilingualism as an asset is also a critical step toward building cultural **proficiency**.

- **Employing high impact instructional strategies for literacy learning.** [John Hattie's meta analyses](#) (Visible Learning, 2009, Visible Learning for Teachers, 2012) clearly demonstrate evidence of which instructional strategies, when implemented with fidelity, lead to stronger literacy achievement over time. Purposeful, timely, and contextually appropriate use of highly effective literacy instruction practices can lead to more impactful instruction (Fisher, Frey, Hattie, 2016).
- **Shifting the digital literacy emphasis from teaching students to use digital devices to fluidly moving between digital and analog worlds.** Literacy instruction should equip students to produce, communicate, interpret, and socialize with peers, adults, and the broader world (International Literacy Association, 2018). In Maine's updated English Language Arts Standards (2020), **digital literacy** is both explicitly and implicitly represented in the reading, speaking, and listening, writing, and language strands. Resource materials for instruction, inquiry, and projects include printed text, digital text, audio, video, and visual media. The movement between different media is essential to both learning and navigating the wider world that **digital literacy** is no longer treated as a distinct learning activity, but standard practice. Accompanying the need to address **digital literacy** in any literacy development program is the need to also develop digital citizenship which is addressed in the standards with a call to engage in conversation, in person and in digital forums, with integrity and respect, to understand opposing views, and to support thinking with evidence.
- **Utilizing assessment systems that include multiple measures and timely, actionable data to inform decisions about curriculum, programs and instruction.** Tracking the growth of students' literate abilities cannot be reliably accomplished, nor will ongoing instruction be appropriately informed, by overreliance on standardized, **summative measures**. The use of **formative** and **interim** assessments more powerfully impact literacy learning over time by providing actionable information about student progress (International Literacy Association, 2017; Fisher, Frey, Bustamante, & Hattie, 2021) .
- **Attending to motivation and engagement as key aspects of literacy learning.** Learning occurs much more readily when students are engaged in purposeful and motivating experiences. This is no less true for literacy education efforts. Ensuring that literacy education efforts are well-connected to experiences and topics about which students are motivated and engaged leads to improved literacy growth. Motivation and engagement for literacy-based activities is cultivated when students have choice, such as about what and how they are reading and writing, and when they are provided with ample time for reading and writing for pleasure and for purposeful endeavors (International Literacy Association, 2019, Barber & Klauda, 2020).

The *Literacy for ME* state literacy plan is organized around six critical components of literacy education:

- Shared and Strength-based Leadership

- Standards-Aligned, Evidence-Based Instruction
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Instructional Support
- **Balanced Assessment Systems**
- Job-Embedded Professional Learning
- Supportive Family and Community Engagement

Each of these components is described and includes key state level efforts that will enhance their implementation. Matrices are included for use at the local level by school and community partner teams. The matrices provide guidance for developing robust literacy education efforts that address each component and include links to research-based tools to support this ongoing work.

Building children’s literacy is not the responsibility of a single individual, a single subject area, or even the 13 or more years a student spends in public school. It involves the determined efforts of many individuals and organizations, starting with the parents, grandparents, older siblings, and caregivers who engage in rich conversations and spark a love of books. Outside of the home, literacy is the domain of the pediatrician who encourages new parents to read to their children, early educators who provide intentional learning environments that support language and literacy instruction and promote a culture of inquiry, and the community library where children learn that reading can open up a world of possibilities. It is also the PK-12 educators who teach students not only to read literature and a wide array of informational texts, and think critically and write about their understanding, but to navigate and make sense of today’s diverse media landscape and rapidly expanding body of information. Acquiring literacy skills does not end with the completion of high school; it is a process in which the individual continues to be involved right into adulthood, from the community education classes that teach new immigrants to master the English language, to adult education programs that encourage caregivers to plant the seeds of literacy in their children.

Helping all Maine residents develop strong literacy skills is a task that transcends schools and includes everyone in our communities. For Maine to prosper culturally and economically, *Literacy for ME* must be a priority.

Six Critical Components of Literacy Education

Shared and Strength-based Leadership

Shared leadership builds capacity to address literacy education efforts across a system (e.g. early care and education providers, elementary schools, adult education providers) and enhances ownership of the system's common literacy goals. Research has indicated that effective leadership is positively associated with improved student learning outcomes (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Further, effective leadership exhibits key traits—it is collaborative and strengths-based. No literacy leader can act alone and expect any great measure of success (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011). Additionally, when an organization's leadership fails to focus on the strength of its human resources, engagement is significantly diminished (Rath, 2008). Shared and strength-based leaders monitor and ensure equitable practices and collective efficacy within the learning system (Frey, Hattie, Fisher, 2018; International Literacy Association, 2019).

Literacy leadership must incorporate a focus inside the school/organization as well as outside of it (Wallace Foundation, 2010). Those serving in leadership positions must be knowledgeable about the standards, instructional practices, and assessments that illustrate literacy learning outcomes for the specific populations and help to identify learning needs. Yet, this is not enough. Literacy leaders must also be able to translate knowledge into instructional applications, to engage others in a common vision, and to garner support for transformational change (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011). Strong leaders share responsibility for:

- establishing a shared vision for literacy education efforts within the system/organization;
- fostering creativity and collaboration in development of a data driven, comprehensive literacy education plan that identifies key strengths and needs;
- determining which variables (e.g., time, materials, and personnel expertise) the system/organization controls, and how to utilize those variables to fully support teaching and learning;
- addressing literacy learning needs with evidence-based, equitable and culturally responsive approaches;
- demonstrating collaborative commitment to the established vision by setting high expectations, monitoring progress in reaching goals, and recognizing successes.

Finally, effective leadership is not the responsibility of one individual, but is distributed across multiple roles and **stakeholders**. Collective leadership significantly increases the likelihood of improved literacy outcomes (Lewis-Spector & Jay, 2011 and Eckert, 2017). Shared and strength-based literacy leadership promotes cultures of literacy in which professionals actively network across age/grade spans and disciplines to employ up to date, evidence-based literacy learning practices that address the varied needs of learners (Sharp, Raymond & Piper, 2020).

Key State Level Strategies

- ✓ Provide professional learning related to shared leadership for literacy education decision making (e.g. implementation science; collective impact; inclusion of educators, administrators, community partners; practices for supporting reflective practice and growth, etc.).
- ✓ Provide technical assistance for school units /communities as they engage in local literacy plan development.
- ✓ Convene and facilitate a literacy leaders' network.
- ✓ Cultivate shared responsibility for literacy education efforts across positions and disciplines.

Standards-Aligned, Evidence-Based Instructional Programming

Standards-aligned literacy learning should be learner focused, developmentally appropriate, culturally sustaining, and continuously improving. No comprehensive literacy plan would be complete without accounting for the role of rigorous standards and instructional programming aligned to those standards in PK – adult classrooms. Standards define the knowledge and skills literacy learners should know and be able to do (Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, 2018). In a standards-aligned system of learning, standards hold learning as a constant while treating other traditional factors (e.g. time, location, instructional materials) as variables. Standards:

- Set uniform high expectations and present clear learning goals for learners, educators, and families to achieve;
- Inform the development of resources to model quality criteria for meeting progressive developmental benchmarks;
- Provide a basis of equitable and culturally responsive and sustainable opportunities to learn;
- Provide consistent learning targets from which instructional programming can be developed to guide instruction;
- Bridge transitions for students across age/grade levels; and
- Inform assessment content to measure student growth and achievement.

In a comprehensive literacy plan, there should be overlap and agreement among assessment, instruction and intervention, leadership, and standards and curriculum (Center on Standards and Assessment Implementation, 2018). Early language and literacy standards (Infant Toddler MELDS & MELDS) that guide learning from birth to school entry serve to provide a strong foundation for literacy development. Maine's English Language Arts/Literacy standards and the WIDA English Language Development standards emphasize conceptual understandings in literacy development rather than minute task-centered learning that often results in check-list instruction and assessment in kindergarten through graduation from high school. Maine's updated ELA standards embed expectations of **digital literacy** development. **Digital literacy** is so critical to teaching, learning, and assessment that it is not called out as a separate strand but understood to be included in all aligned instruction.

Evidence-based instructional programming draws from literacy standards to design a systemic approach to literacy development, with the students at the center of the experience. Well-developed, evidence-based instructional programming should be designed to support and direct

deliberate instruction of the literacy skills needed to unlock the learning targets in every content area and assure both conceptual and skill development and content learning.

Key State Level Strategies

- ✓ Build clarity in the difference between standards and curriculum, including promotion of strategies for aligning curriculum and instructional programming with standards.
- ✓ Create guidance and provide professional learning to help educators evaluate key components in literacy curricula (e.g. evidence-base, equity lens, culturally sustaining pedagogies, etc.).
- ✓ Provide models (e.g. Pre-K and K for ME) of literacy focused instructional programming that are evidence-based, comprehensive, and which integrate content.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Instruction is at the heart of comprehensive language and literacy development. Explicit, systematic, and engaging, instruction helps children to acquire the variety of literacy knowledge and skills that will enable them to be productive citizens, workers, and family members. A third of US students fail to develop foundational reading skills necessary to succeed academically, and students with disabilities fail to develop these skills at higher rates than their peers without disabilities (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). **Stakeholders** have increasingly turned to the implementation of multi-tiered systems of support for reading (**MTSS-R**) with the goal of addressing this issue. **MTSS-R** is a framework for providing high-quality reading instruction for all students, identifying students needing supplemental or more intensive support, and providing these supports for those who need it (Gersten, et al., 2017).

High-quality literacy instruction must:

- Include systematic, evidence-based, high-impact instruction in foundational literacy, language, listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- Be intentionally connected across all content areas.
- Follow a clear progression of learning standards across all age-spans and developmental levels from birth through adulthood.
- Be decision-based around the diverse needs of individual learners and informed by on-going observation and formative and summative assessment.
- Be engaging and purposeful, taking into account students' interests, strengths and needs while also valuing out-of-school experiences.
- Be inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive.
- Consider the extensive communication needs of an evolving world that calls for expanded and equitable access to multiple forms of media and **digital literacy**.

A Multi-tiered System of Support (**MTSS**) a systemic framework in which all students are supported with high quality classroom literacy instruction (Tier 1) provided by the classroom teacher. If, through monitoring and assessment, students need additional layers of support through Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, these are added based on the practices that must be put in place to make each student successful. Layered interventions are strategic, directive, and consistently monitored to ascertain growth and changing needs of the learners. A strong **MTSS** framework is comprehensive and designed to address the literacy needs of each student in the most inclusive and equitable learning environment. The framework is driven by strong leadership, policies and practices, family and community engagement, staff collaboration, and data-informed decision making.

Key State Level Strategies

- ✓ Provide models of **MTSS** across the birth-grade 12 continuum that reflect developmentally appropriate practices related to literacy instruction.
- ✓ Provide technical assistance and professional learning related to tiers of intervention across the birth-grade 12 continuum, particularly targeting:
 - Foundational literacy development in early childhood and primary years
 - Writing across content areas
 - High impact instructional strategies
 - Strategies for students who are ELs
 - Culturally relevant, responsive, and **sustainable** pedagogy
 - Information literacy
 - Target literacy development aligned to career goals

Balanced Assessment Systems

A critical element of a comprehensive literacy plan is a well-defined assessment system implemented with integrity. Assessment is an ongoing process that involves the use of multiple methods to observe learning, gather information, and make decisions to inform instruction and enhance student learning. A balanced system accounts for multiple measures throughout a student's experience without placing too much value on any one measure or one type of assessment. Assessments take different forms across the birth-adult span and may include not only academically based tools that measure attainment of literacy skills, but also physical and language development measures that help inform children's overall development. Assessments should be conducted in early childhood and school settings by educators but may be performed in other settings by professionals such as physicians, school psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. Assessments need to be reliable, valid, and aligned to literacy and language development targets, learning standards, and curriculum. Academic assessments may be formative, interim, or summative and should be culturally responsive and sustainable. Evidence gathered from multiple measures can be analyzed to:

- Set learning goals for individuals as well as schools/agencies;

- Plan and refine instructional practices to meet learning goals;
- Determine effectiveness of instruction;
- Monitor and document learner growth over time and progress in meeting goals; and
- Set new goals and identify additional instructional practices to support goal achievement.

As part of a well-implemented **MTSS**, balanced literacy assessment systems should exemplify purposeful and timely data collection to inform decision making about individual students and program-wide curriculum. **Universal screening** and ongoing progress monitoring allow effective use of resources to improve student performance. This data, coupled with other formative measures, allows educators to monitor effective classroom instruction and problem-solve literacy challenges to determine and advocate for additional resources for students who require more targeted instruction and/or intervention to reach literacy/ELA benchmarks. It is critical to fully engage families and caregivers with strong and regular communication. Parents and caretakers must also understand the goals for data collection and be supported as they make meaning of the information provided.

Key State Level Strategies

- ✓ Provide professional learning related to the design of comprehensive assessment systems that guide literacy learning and effectively communicate student growth among **stakeholders** and to parents and caregivers.
- ✓ Provide technical assistance and professional learning related to the use of assessment to inform ongoing, intentional instruction.
- ✓ Explore and promote strategies that support school, family, and community understanding and use of assessment data for documenting growth.

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Student learning is dependent on the quality of educators (Task Force on Teacher Leadership, 2001; Hirsch, 2009; National Staff Development Council, 2010), whether those educators are early childhood teachers and practitioners, PK-12 teachers, administrators, or literacy leaders. Ongoing and job-embedded professional learning is crucial to furthering all educators' knowledge of literacy and language development, standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and their application of this knowledge to daily practice. Just as teachers strive to utilize authentic assessment, creation of personal and engaging learning experiences, and culturally responsive and sustainable pedagogies in their daily work with students, educators benefit from the same conditions for their own professional learning (ILA, 2018). Job-embedded professional learning should:

- be school or classroom based and integrated within the work day;
- be grounded in day to day teaching and informed by student data;

- focus on evidence-based content appropriate to the age/grade span and linked to established learning targets and/or identified learning needs;
- enhance instructional practices to improve student learning; and
- be organized as a continuous cycle of improvement (Croft, et al, 2010).

Although educators can engage in job-embedded professional learning on their own (e.g. self-study, self-reflection), formats which encourage social engagement among colleagues often provide richer and more engaging opportunities. Commonly used formats for job-embedded professional learning include teacher inquiry, case studies, coaching/mentoring, data teams, **critical friend groups**, examination of student work, and lesson study.

A comprehensive literacy plan must include intentional, job-embedded, and outcomes-based professional learning. To make the best decisions about the focus of ongoing professional learning that will lead to improved language and literacy outcomes, data about children’s learning should be at the heart of the process. Additionally, leaders should:

- build a culture in which continuous learning is considered an essential aspect of professional practice for multiple **stakeholders**;
- establish structures/opportunities (e.g. collaborative learning time) and secure positions (e.g. coaches, facilitators) that support job-embedded professional learning; and
- promote teacher leadership and ownership for ongoing professional learning.

Key State Level Strategies
✓ Provide guidance related to mentoring teachers (new and continuing) in literacy practices (instruction, assessment, etc.). ✓ Provide direct support, models, and resources for job-embedded, culturally sustaining, and continuous professional learning, including formats such as professional learning communities, coaching, teacher inquiry, etc. ✓ Cultivate partnerships with literacy education related professional learning providers (e.g. higher education; community-based agencies; regional education partnerships, etc.) to better connect schools and communities with professional learning resources.

Supportive Family and Community Engagement

A comprehensive literacy system fosters a commitment to coordinating a shared vision for literacy learning, developed by families, educators, children, and a representative segment of community members. Comprehensive literacy systems result in well-articulated goals that enable children to develop strong language and literacy abilities. Communication and partnerships must be fostered that connect community efforts at all levels along the birth-adult learning continuum to ensure culturally sustaining practices are incorporated in literacy programming. In a 2013

study, researchers found that family involvement is positively linked to children’s outcomes in preschool, kindergarten, and the early elementary grades. A preponderance of research confirms the link between family involvement and children’s literacy skills. In addition, parents with diverse backgrounds can respond to direct guidance and become more engaged with their children through literacy and math activities. When they do, their children increase their reading and **numeracy** skills, on average, more than children whose parents are operating on their own (Van Voorhis, et al, 2013). These findings underscore the need for committed partnerships between families, learning organizations, and the broader community.

Highly engaged citizens are the basis of a prosperous, sustainable, and equitable society. Maine’s future is dependent on their success. Literacy and language development begin in infancy and is the underpinning of all future growth. Engaged families, and communities that recognize caregivers’ status as equal partners in their children’s education and development, along with high-quality early childhood programs, provide the foundation for language and literacy growth during the early childhood years. Weak early language and literacy skills have the potential to negatively impact later academic outcomes. Schools, as part of the literacy learning community, must be prepared to understand language and literacy research across the birth-adult span, to consider the impact of community demographics on literacy development, and to reflect on their existing capacity and resources to help foster relationships with families and community programs. Literacy learning community partners across the birth-adult span must respect and celebrate the multicultural nature of their communities as part of the literacy learning experience.

Leadership efforts must foster commitment for sustained collaboration across community literacy learning partners and dedicate time for ongoing professional learning to support partnerships. A supportive, collaborative environment will result in families and children who feel respected, connected, and engaged with partners in their learning communities (Michaels, 2011). The foundation for these partnerships must be data-driven and built upon evidence-based research. Partnership efforts should:

- Establish needs based on local, state and national data;
- Be inclusive and available to meet families where they are physically, emotionally, and mentally, maximizing both capacity and resources;
- Be seamless across and considerate of all developmental levels; and
- Result in sustained literacy improvement across all content areas and age spans.

Key State Level Strategies
✓ Provide technical assistance and professional learning related to building culturally sustaining family engagement. ✓ Develop guidance for schools to engage community partners in literacy education efforts. ✓ Cultivate relationships with and promote the efforts of key literacy education partners across Maine, including development of tools for sharing initiatives, resources, and opportunities with the field.

Local Level Literacy Planning Matrices

Birth-Age 5 Matrix

Grades K-3 Matrix

Grades 4-8 Matrix

Grades 9-Adult Matrix

Glossary

TERM	Definition - as used in Literacy for ME 2.0
ASYNCHRONOUS	Forms of education, instruction and learning that do not occur in the same place or at the same time
BALANCED ASSESSMENT SYSTEMS	Formative, interim, and summative assessments used effectively across a student's experience
CRITICAL FRIEND GROUPS	A professional learning collaborative
CRITICAL LITERACY	Ability to engage with sources to understand, evaluate, and use information to communicate effectively
CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATIONS	Engaging multiple organizations or agencies to meet a common goal

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE SOCIETY	Broadened awareness of the cultural and racial issues facing diverse students, families, and communities through reflecting on individual cultures and learning about those of others
CULTURALLY SUSTAINABLE PEDAGOGY	Learning that reflects multiple cultures respectfully and may help to sustain a cultural belief or practice
DIGITAL COMMUNICATION	Communications shared in a digital format
DIGITAL LITERACY	The ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS	Essential learning goals for developing literacy skills in English
EQUITABLE	Each student is given the support and accommodations needed to successfully complete a learning task or assignment
FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS	Frequent indications of student learning that provide immediate feedback and adjustment
INCLUSIVE	All students are educated so as to reach their fullest potentials, regardless of race, gender, sexuality, or ability
INTER-DISCIPLINARY LITERACY INSTRUCTION	Instructional strategies embedded in content learning

INTERIM ASSESSMENTS	Measurements of learning administered at intervals to gauge progress
INTERVENTION	An instructional technique designed to improve or remediate a certain set of skills
LITERATE	Ability to communicate effectively through reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing
NUMERACY	Knowledge of mathematics
OPEN-SOURCE	Free and available to all
PEDAGOGIES	Methods and practices of teaching
STAKEHOLDERS	Persons interested in best practices in education
SUMMATIVE MEASURES	Assessments that reflect the summation of learning
UNIVERSAL SCREENING	Efficient, valid, and reliable assessments used to identify students who may be at risk for experiencing learning difficulties and who may need more instruction
WEB-BASED	Digital or electronic access

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