

# SCHOOL LITERACY ACTION PLAN

Office of Elementary Education and Reading



## **Introduction**

Literacy is at the core of academic and economic success. Strong literacy skills are critical for Mississippi students to succeed academically as well as to prosper in the current global economy. Students must be able to read, write, and think at increasingly higher levels of complexity, creativity, and sophistication to prepare for college and career pathways (Zhao, 2009).

Substantial research points to the importance of developing strong early literacy skills because they are closely linked to reading achievement in the primary grades and are the basis for successful performance in school and beyond (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008; Foorman et.al., 2016; National Reading Panel, 2000).

**The ability to read is arguably the most important life skill needed for success.**

Mississippi's approach to literacy acquisition is grounded in the Science of Reading and implemented in the early grades through a [structured literacy model](#) guided by The Simple View of Reading, Four-Part Processing Model, and The Reading Rope.

## **Purpose**

The primary purpose of the School Literacy Action Plan is to provide a plan for addressing areas of concern in reading that have been identified through **data analysis** (i.e. screeners, observations, formal/informal assessments, etc.).

**Section 1** includes graphs for listing beginning of the year (BOY) universal screener data. Data analysis from these results should yield target goals for improving student performance.

**Section 2** outlines the goals for addressing school concerns. This section should include opportunities for professional development, targeted coaching support, and approaches for implementing evidence-based literacy practices.

## **Additional Considerations**

### **Creating a Shared Vision to Improve Literacy Outcomes**

Utilizing key legislation, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) created a shared vision to improve literacy outcomes. These key pieces of legislation include a focus on the following:

- Pre-K programs in underserved areas across the state (Early Learning Collaborative Act, 2013)
- Elimination of social promotion and concentrated attention on improving reading skills of kindergarten through grade 3 students (Literacy-Based Promotion Act, 2013)
- Requirement for all kindergarten students to be assessed at the beginning and end of the year (Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, 2014)
- School choice for students with dyslexia in grades 1-12 and dyslexia screening requirement beginning with kindergarten students (Dyslexia Scholarships, 2012, 2016, 2020)

With these key policy pieces in place, the MDE developed a shared vision across the state for literacy instruction and support. Literacy implementation strategies within the Literacy-Based Promotion Act (LBPA) include educator training at all levels of the educator pipeline, coaching support for teachers, and early identification of students with literacy needs. In addition, the LBPA implementation emphasizes preventing reading difficulties over retention, creating individual reading plans as a mechanism for prevention, and communicating to parents about the law and about the [individual reading plans](#), if created.

Likewise, schools must create a shared vision to improve literacy outcomes. Creating a shared vision includes putting school-level systems and processes in place that support all students and families in the pursuit of reading proficiency. To improve and sustain student literacy achievement, schools should promote a school-wide culture for literacy learning, enhance and refine reading instruction and intervention, target instructional coaching using the gradual release model, and build capacity for literacy instruction across the curriculum.

## **Building teacher capacity through coaching and professional learning**

Professional learning is at the center of the “[science of reading](#)” with foundational professional development across the state beginning with [Language Essential for Teachers of Reading and Spelling \(LETRS\)](#).

*The “science of reading” refers to the research that reading experts, especially cognitive and linguistic scientists, have conducted on how we learn to read. This body of knowledge reveals what happens in the brain during reading and what needs to take place instructionally to enable skillful reading.*

As a result, schools should build teacher capacity in the knowledge of the science of reading and the application of the science of reading through structured literacy instruction. Structured literacy instruction in Mississippi is more than phonics. The components of structured literacy instruction are phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, listening and reading comprehension, and written expression. Structured literacy instruction is systematic, explicit, scaffolded, differentiated, and includes a planned scope and sequence.

To further support teachers, schools should consider providing job-embedded coaching support so that teachers continuously improve reading instruction. Coaching helps teachers recognize their instructional knowledge and strengths, supports teachers in their learning and application of new knowledge and instructional practices, promotes job-embedded learning, and uses data to provide differentiated support to individual teachers or small groups by grade level or department.

## Families as Partners

Knowing that families are critical partners, the MDE supports families in multiple ways. Using the [Strong Readers Strong Leaders website](#), families have access to activities, resources, and information to assist them in their children's literacy development from birth to fifth grade. In addition, the state partners with [EPIC Mississippi](#), a free text message program that offers tips to families to increase oral language as well as social emotional health. Finally, recognizing that communities can help support families and children, the MDE partners with the [Mississippi Campaign for Grade-Level Reading](#) to help communities align and strengthen resources to ensure that all students read on grade-level by the end of third grade. The MDE also partners with [Mississippi Public Broadcasting](#) to provide lessons taught by local literacy coaches and teachers so that families have access to science of reading instructional opportunities in the home.

Schools also must view families as critical partners. In planning for school literacy improvement, schools should explain the current MDE resources, as well as provide school-specific opportunities for families to support literacy learning. Schools should also consider more strategic and intentional approaches to garner community support to ensure that families and children receive support beyond the school day and school year.

