



Discover a World of Opportunity™

Literacy 2020 Plan

Denver Public Schools' Comprehensive Early Literacy Plan

Supporting Goal 2 of the Denver Plan 2020

Goal 2: A Foundation for Success in School

A focus on preparedness in early childhood education builds an essential foundation that sets the course for a student's entire academic experience. Students who read and write at grade level in 3rd grade are likely to be at grade level or above in reading, writing, and mathematics in 10th grade. Therefore, DPS will focus on preparedness from preschool through third grade, with strong supports for students whose native language is not English.

By 2020, 80% of DPS third-graders will be at or above grade level in reading and writing.

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Introduction

“Once you learn to read, you will be forever free.”

Frederick Douglass

Why have a literacy plan?

Literacy – which DPS defines as reading, writing, speaking, and listening – is the gateway to success in school, career, and life. A comprehensive approach to early literacy education improves student achievement, reduces the need for costly special education services, and produces a better educated, more skilled, and more competitive workforce. Even more importantly, literacy unlocks critical thinking skills allowing us to grapple with the very issues that make us human, that tap our compassion, that compel us to be better today than we were yesterday, and that propel us to make the world a better place.

The importance of early literacy is well established in research and DPS data. Children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without a diploma than proficient readers. Recognizing this, DPS has set an ambitious target in the Denver Plan 2020 that **80% of all third graders will be proficient in reading and writing by the end of third grade**. Attaining literacy proficiency by the end of third grade is an essential step in students’ journey to reaching DPS’s vision of a graduate which is articulated in DPS’ Academic Strategic Plan.

We have a long way to go to meet this target – as **just over 30% of our third graders met or exceeded expectations** on the spring 2015 PARCC English language arts assessment. Gaps between student subgroups remain large, with a priority on ensuring we meet the needs of our English learners who comprise 40% of our student population.

This plan is designed to help us meet our aggressive target, but it doesn’t stop there. We view literacy attainment as critical to developing thinkers and lifelong learners who will build communities and tackle the vexing problems of our times. In developing readers, writers, and communicators, we’re not only changing lives – we’re changing neighborhoods, communities, and society.

The time to start is now. The time to stop is never – as literacy and the teaching of it is by its very nature a learning, and therefore continuous, endeavor.

In that vein of continuous learning, this is our first draft of the district’s early literacy plan. It is a living document that will drive our work over time. It will change as we get more input, learn from doing, and learn from others. All are invited to contribute to it and to make us better on behalf of the students we serve.

How Was the Plan Developed?

This plan was developed by a broad cross-section of DPS staff and includes contributions from members of the literacy team, early childhood education department, assessment and research department, special education and gifted education teams, English language acquisition department, library team, family and community engagement office, and instructional superintendents. Further input on the plan will be sought from key stakeholders including elementary teachers, principals, and families.

The plan is many years in the making, growing out of analysis conducted for the Denver Plan 2020 that resulted in a key goal focused on early literacy attainment. The plan was further informed by the Academic Strategic Plan that underscores the need to improve the instructional core through deep implementation of the Colorado Academic Standards. In addition, further analysis of our early literacy data was conducted in the fall of 2015. This included a review of the district's early literacy performance over time, an examination of schools, school systems, and states that have achieved significant gains in students' literacy performance, interviews with literacy experts across the country, survey results from DPS principals, and a review of literacy research. Through our analysis, we learned that:

- The district has experienced modest gains in early literacy performance over time.
- The rate of growth for all students must dramatically increase for the district to reach the goal of college and career readiness.
- Gaps are large and persistent between student subgroups.
- There are few outlier schools in the district that are achieving noteworthy results and those identified as performing well on early literacy assessments are not consistently demonstrating strong performance on the third grade, standards-aligned (CMAS) assessments.
- While we have implemented a range of early literacy strategies over the years, we have gaps in our approach to early literacy. We have not been as intentional, focused, comprehensive, and sustained in our efforts as other systems have been that have realized dramatic gains.
- Research, lessons learned within the district and best practice confirm that there are no silver bullets – no single strategy that if implemented will achieve breakthrough results.
- In addition, there are no short cuts.
- Leadership, professional learning with a clear focus on building and supporting the expertise of the adults in the system, curriculum, assessments, interventions, and time are key elements of an evidence-based comprehensive early literacy strategy. All are needed to drive and sustain results.
- These elements cannot exist in a vacuum.
- They must connect and converge in intentional ways with the district's early childhood, language acquisition, library, extended learning time, and family/community partnership endeavors.

Building on the years' of analysis, the Denver Plan 2020, and the Academic Strategic plan and referring to sample plans from benchmark districts and school systems, we worked as a team to craft each element of our plan.

What beliefs drive our plan?

For far too long, early literacy has been plagued by what is often referred to as the “literacy wars” with varying camps about how to teach children to read. These wars take various forms and often pit phonics against comprehension, early childhood against K-3, English learners versus non-English learners, research against innovation, and so on. Fundamentally, these wars are about adults in the system and they end up wasting precious time for our students. The philosophical wars create false dichotomies, promote siloed thinking and work, defuse focus, and inhibit the power of collective impact on a goal. Research suggests all are important if we are to ensure equity and meet all students' needs.

Recognizing this, we commit to DPS' shared core value to put students first. This literacy plan is in our students' camp and no one else's. It's designed to bring the best of what we know about early literacy to ensure that every child in DPS is an effective reader, writer, and communicator. Our plan is based on the Colorado Academic Standards for reading, writing, and communicating and focuses on providing teachers with the range of strategies they need to help their students meet and exceed the standards.

Our plan is grounded in the following core beliefs:

- All students can learn to read, write, and communicate as a result of effective teaching that is joyful, rigorous, and personalized.
- All students deserve rigorous standards-based curriculum including the opportunity to engage with complex texts.
- All teachers and leaders deserve to have ongoing professional learning, resources, and support they need to deliver high quality literacy instruction for all students.
- All students, teachers and leaders deserve time to learn.
- Intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary for student success.
- A comprehensive system of tiered interventions for differentiated instruction is essential for addressing the full range of student needs, including students performing below and above grade level.
- Student learning accelerates when students take responsibility for and own their learning.
- Collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation for effective problem-solving, instructional decision making, and successful literacy outcomes.
- Effective leadership at all levels in the education system, with specific focus on instructional leadership teams, is crucial for successful literacy development.
- At DPS, we value students' native language and culture. Literacy instruction for our native Spanish speakers strategically builds towards biliteracy. Literacy instruction for all

of our English language learners supports students in developing language while achieving at high literacy levels. All aspects of this plan support addressing the unique needs of our English language learner populations.

During our research on effective literacy practice, we identified the following elements as key to a comprehensive approach to early literacy.

What are the elements of this plan?

- **Leadership**
 - This element refers to the action of leaders in the system to establish a clear and sustained focus on early literacy. Leaders include the school board, superintendent, district staff, school principals, school instructional leadership teams, and teacher leaders. Leaders set the vision, build capacity of their teams, stay focused, eliminate competing priorities, and carve out and protect time for adults and students to focus on early literacy. Perhaps most importantly, leaders set the culture in the district and their schools. A shared culture of high expectations – an unwavering belief that all students can learn at high levels – was mentioned most frequently across high performing systems as critical to their success.
- **Professional Learning – Ensuring Best First Instruction**
 - This element focuses on the professional learning and ongoing job-embedded supports that teachers need to provide strong literacy instruction for all their students, often referred to as “best first instruction.” By providing teachers with the learning, job-embedded coaching, and tools they need to teach students how to read, write, and communicate, we minimize the need for interventions and re-teaching and we significantly reduce students’ chances for being mislabeled with learning disabilities. Prioritizing time for teachers to engage in intensive, high quality, and sustained professional learning on improving their literacy instruction is essential to realizing results for students.
- **Curriculum**
 - Curriculum is an organized plan for instruction. It is based in the standards of what we want all students to know and be able to do. It includes the scope and sequence of learning and the resources, texts, materials, and plans that help teachers ensure students meet or exceed the standards. It is designed for our students, ensuring that all of DPS’s students, including English learners, have equal and meaningful access to the content. A strong curriculum is a necessary but not sufficient element of a comprehensive early literacy plan. It can be enticing to think that simply by adopting a packaged curriculum we have an early literacy plan; when in reality, curriculum is one of many elements needed to deliver on results for students.
- **Assessments**
 - Assessments are a measure of what students have learned. They include frequent, informal checks for progress and less frequent, more formal,

standardized measures that capture how our students are performing as well as and everything in between. Assessments are part of good instruction, should match the language of instruction, and when used well in early literacy classrooms, help students and teachers diagnose needs and inform next steps.

- **Interventions**
 - Interventions refer to the strategies employed by teachers to help address students' unique needs. Informed by assessments, interventions provide focused instruction and practice in specific areas that allow all students to accelerate towards grade level goals. Interventions are short term and supplement core instruction. They should be culturally and linguistically appropriate to meet students' needs.
- **Time**
 - Learning to read, write, and communicate takes time. Time is necessary for students to immerse themselves in and grapple with complex tasks, to put their thoughts in writing, and communicate with confidence. Time is also necessary for adults to grapple with the same texts, plan effective lessons, collaborate with peers, review and use data to inform instruction, reflect, engage in observation and feedback cycles, and improve their practice.
- **Coherency**
 - Coherency refers to intentional connections among and across other initiatives and efforts within the district. This element is necessary because literacy efforts will not succeed if they are viewed as the sole responsibility of the district's literacy team and early elementary teachers. Helping students attain success in literacy requires the collective effort of the district as a whole, families, communities, and organizations.

How does this plan help us attain the vision of joyful, rigorous, and personalized classrooms as articulated in the Academic Strategic Plan?

By providing our teachers with the supports they need to deliver outstanding literacy instruction, we help them implement joyful, rigorous, and personalized learning in their classrooms. Literacy thrives in DPS' vision of classrooms that are joyful, rigorous, and personalized. Joy abounds as student listen to, read, communicate, and debate about complex texts and as they bring their ideas to life through writing. Rigor rules the classroom as students tackle challenging texts, communicate their thoughts verbally and in writing, and learn new skills that enable them to master increasingly more difficult tasks. Personalization is everywhere, as students make choices about their reading and writing, set goals for their progress, and receive individualized support to meet their goals.

How is this plan different than our prior early literacy efforts?

In the fall of 2015, as we engaged in our deep analysis of the district's early literacy achievement and instructional practices, we realized that the district has some pieces of a literacy strategy in place. These include: leadership that is focused on improving early literacy;

professional learning in Guided Reading Plus; job-embedded coaching through teacher leaders, literacy partners and Teacher Effectiveness Coaches; a range of assessments; a range of interventions; and a variety of supporting efforts from teams across and outside the district. What we acknowledged, however, was that these pieces lacked: 1) **intentionality** with some efforts occurring more by chance than by a clear district-wide plan or vision; 2) **coherency** with one another; 3) **comprehensiveness** by not including all teachers and students (often focused on specific networks or small groups of teachers); and 4) **sustainability** with efforts often year-to-year and lacking clear long-term focus.

In addition, we found that early literacy efforts were crowded with other district priorities, minimizing a strong focus on early literacy in recent years. We found that we were missing key pieces in our literacy work, including: intensive high-quality, and sustained professional learning for all ECE-grade 3 teachers and leaders; a district-adopted early literacy curriculum; a transition plan to new K-3 reading assessments and clarity on the use of early literacy assessments; a coherent approach to interventions; and clear guidance on time for literacy and the effective use of that time. We also uncovered differences of opinions – the literacy wars – playing out internally and limiting our ability to speak with one voice on literacy.

This plan attempts to address these gaps and to provide a comprehensive and coherent approach to early literacy across the district.

Leadership

“Education research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal.”

The School Principal as Leader: Guiding Schools to Better Teaching and Learning, Wallace Foundation, January 2013, p. 4

In studying schools, school systems, and states that have made significant gains in students’ literacy performance, strong leadership emerged as a common and essential ingredient. In these outlier schools and systems, leaders communicated a clear commitment to early literacy attainment. They set a culture of high expectations and no excuses. They made time and protected time for all staff to engage in intensive and sustained professional learning, ongoing collaboration, and job-embedded supports on literacy. They removed barriers. And, they maintained their focus on literacy over time, resisting the temptation to add priorities or switch focus after a few years.

Board and Senior Leadership Team Commitment

At DPS, the commitment to early literacy is clear. The school board identified early literacy as a key priority in the Denver Plan 2020. This has been reinforced by the superintendent and senior leadership team who have named early literacy as one of the district’s most important priorities for the coming years. This was exemplified by the superintendent’s intentional focus on early literacy performance dialogues in the fall of 2015 which helped reveal the need for a more intentional and coherent early literacy plan for the district.

Cross-district Early Literacy Team

A cross-district early literacy action team has been formed to drive the development and implementation of this plan. Led by the associate chief of academics, the team includes leaders from across the district in literacy, special education, gifted education, assessment, professional learning, elementary education, school networks, early childhood education, English language acquisition, and library services. The composition of the team is intentional in ensuring that the leaders of key teams across the district understand, have buy-in, and can assist in implementing the district’s literacy plan. Members can also ensure their respective work aligns with and supports the district’s literacy efforts. The team convenes on a monthly basis to help drive the deliverables in the district’s plan, monitor progress, provide feedback from schools on implementation, support mid-course corrections, and maintain a sense of urgency on helping all students become great readers, writers, and communicators.

Role of District Leadership

District leadership (including the superintendent, senior leadership team, department leaders, and instructional superintendents) plays a number of key roles in ensuring the success of this plan. These roles are outlined below along with action steps that will be taken to ensure fulfillment of those roles.

- Clarify and communicate expectations of district-level teams and school principals for improving early literacy performance.
 - All district staff supporting early literacy will share the same performance goal on improving early literacy.
 - All schools will write a UIP goal for improving early literacy, with targets set to support attainment of the district’s 2020 early literacy goal.
 - A communications plan will be developed and implemented to communicate the expectations in the plan and to generate broad engagement in the plan.
- Stay focused on early literacy and eliminate activities or initiatives that divert attention from early literacy.
 - A commitment from the early literacy performance dialogues is for district leadership to identify what we can stop doing in order to free up time and resources to support our early literacy work.
- Establish feedback loops with schools to monitor implementation of this plan.
 - The Elementary Education Division will leverage network meetings and existing data gathering processes to gather feedback from school leaders and ILTs on what’s working and not working regarding their early literacy efforts.
- Prioritize resources to support implementation of this plan.
 - Funds will be prioritized in the 2016-17 budget to support implementation of this plan, namely the intensive professional learning outlined later in this plan.
 - Early literacy will be included in the 2016 mill request to support sustained professional learning and high quality interventions.
- Garner support from the community and partners.
 - As part of the communications plan, include strategies for community and partner outreach to build strong support for and partnership in this work.
- Build the capacity of school leaders and instructional leadership teams to do the work.
 - This is outlined in the remainder of the Literacy 2020 plan.
 - In addition, with the current build out of the new LEAD progressive leadership framework, there is an opportunity to ensure the framework calls out instructional expertise in literacy.

Role of School Leaders and Instructional Leadership Teams

School leaders set the vision, culture, and sense of urgency for the school’s early literacy work. As leaders of their instructional leadership teams, principals communicate clear expectations for early literacy and dedicate and protect the time and necessary resources for staff to focus on it. They participate with their ILT and teachers in all of the early literacy professional learning opportunities. They model a commitment to equity and improving literacy for all students. Similarly, all members of the ILT, which include teacher leaders, demonstrate a shared commitment to the literacy work in the school, with one member designated as the early literacy lead for the school (which is described in more detail later in this plan).

The focus of this plan is to build the capacity of school leaders and instructional leadership teams while deepening the expertise of all teachers in early literacy – with the ultimate goal of ensuring all of our students are effective readers, writers, and communicators.

Professional Learning that Ensures Best First Instruction

“Neither mandated policies nor groupthink produce *systemic change*....In order to produce *systemic change* and change the outcomes for students, the members of the group need to study literacy and learning theories and research, examine their own and each other’s practices, reflect on those practices, and act on their learning.”

Forbes, S. “Developing Professional Capital in Educational Systems.” *Changing Minds, Changing Schools, Changing Systems*.

The good news is that as a profession, we *do* know how to teach children to read, write, and communicate. It involves intensive and sustained research-based training, job-embedded feedback and coaching, and instructional supports that build teacher expertise in high quality core literacy instruction, often through large investments of time. When done well, great literacy instruction epitomizes DPS’s vision of joyful, rigorous, and personalized classrooms. Currently in DPS, we have trained some teachers well and deeply; however, our data shows that a few ‘bright spots’ are not enough. The performance advantage of students who are taught by effective teachers over successive years is well documented, as is the reverse effect (Fletcher et al. 2010). We also know that there is a crucial need to provide excellent first instruction to ensure that students develop efficient processing systems, i.e. they are self-initiating and self-regulating learners (Allington & Johnson, 2015; Pinnell & Fountas, 2009). Our current challenge is to change the system so that it supports a sustained, comprehensive effort in developing each teacher’s expertise. This will require substantial investment in terms of time both before and during the school year on an ongoing, multi-year basis. It will also be essential to develop a coherent and sustainable system to support the continued professional learning of those that lead and coach teachers.

The New Teacher Project’s 2015 *Mirage* report substantiates that traditional ‘sit and get’ professional learning rarely makes a difference. The vast majority of learning that changes practice occurs on the job. We propose a structure that will provide professional learning that integrates theory and practice to set the foundation for the year. Across the school year, leaders and teachers will engage with a community of learners to examine and reflect on one another’s practice, be coached by a team lead or literacy leader in their building, and use formative and summative assessments to measure student outcomes and drive instructional shifts.

Our beliefs about professional learning in DPS:

- Professional learning for adults models the learning we want for our students and is joyful, rigorous, and personalized.
- Professional learning is designed for adult learners and responsive to the knowledge and skills they bring to the table.
- Professional learning provides participants with an opportunity to see, name, practice, and reflect on new learning. All sessions should include a heavy emphasis on practice, feedback, application and transfer to the classroom context.

- Professional learning is never given in a vacuum. It is always followed with opportunities to receive feedback from peers or a more knowledgeable other.
- Professional learning is most effective when it is fully supported by school leaders who expect, look for, and support implementation.

Foundational Professional Learning

In order to ensure consistency and alignment of good first instruction across schools and the district, district and school leaders and all school-level staff who support ECE- grade 3 students in literacy will participate in foundational professional learning during the summer of 2016-17 and throughout the school year. This is estimated to include:

- Online pre-requisite modules completed prior to attending summer training
- 5 days of intensive summer learning
- 8 half days throughout the school year

Note that the number of days and how they are structured (e.g., half-days, early release, dedicated Blue/Green days, etc.) are still being refined and will be finalized with the professional learning provider discussed later in this section.

Participation at the school level will include: ECE-3 teachers (current numbers of teachers in each grade level are ECE - 307; K - 352; 1st - 343; 2nd - 336; 3rd - 320), school leaders, team leads, teacher leaders focused on early literacy, facilitators/coaches, interventionists, special educators, gifted and talented teachers, teacher librarians, and paraprofessionals.

Participation at the district level will include: instructional superintendents, literacy curriculum specialists, literacy partners, data partners, and ELA partners, early childhood educational partners, peer observers, teacher effectiveness coaches, special education partners and specialists, gifted and talented specialists, as well as personnel who support family and community engagement, interventions, Summer Academy and library services.

Request for Proposal (RFP) for Professional Learning

A spring RFP will solicit quality professional learning providers to partner with DPS in the execution of summer professional learning and for the duration of the school year(s).

Summer Goals

1. Foundational professional learning on both the science of reading (including the six components of reading - oral language, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) and the state's reading, writing, and communicating standards (curriculum agnostic)
2. Professional learning on implementing the district's adopted early literacy curriculum and aligned assessments (for schools opting into the district's curriculum and aligned assessments)

School year Goals

3. Deeper practice and application of summer learning as part of a community of learners
4. Backwards planning and use of assessments to drive instruction
5. Walkthroughs to monitor and adjust implementation
6. Support with building internal capacity at the school and district level to sustain ongoing high, quality professional learning in literacy

The RFP submission should include details for meeting the below criteria for summer and school-year training. The vendor should explain their plan for:

- ensuring that the professional learning is joyful, rigorous, and personalized
- providing time to observe good instruction, practice, reflect on one's practice, and receive feedback and support
- developing pedagogical expertise in the six components of reading (oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary & comprehension) in an integrated approach with writing and communicating across the training days
- developing pedagogical expertise in the state's reading, writing, and communicating standards and ensuring alignment of professional learning with the standards
- supporting teachers in personalizing learning for their students and giving students responsibility for their learning
- providing a common vision/framing across ECE-3, but differentiating for three grade level strands: ECE, K-2, 3rd
- leveraging a literacy block (K-3) to ensure that teachers build skills in implementing the components of a block as well as intentionally promoting opportunities for application and transfer across the instructional day or across content areas
- incorporating strategies for closing achievement gaps of disaggregated groups, specifically for English language learners, students of color, and students with disabilities
- differentiating strategically for teachers who work with students receiving native language instruction in Spanish, including providing authentic examples and practice opportunities in Spanish (may be in partnership with DPS)
- training teachers in the use of READ Act assessments in combination with formative assessments and making explicit connections to data-driven instruction (may be in partnership with DPS)
- including multiple opportunities to practice planning and implementing lessons (which may include leveraging the district's Summer Academy)
- including multiple opportunities to view practices in action and reflect on teaching with colleagues and master teachers, differentiated by language of instruction (Spanish, English)
- providing differentiated professional learning in a train-the-trainer model for team lead teacher leaders to take back to their buildings
- leveraging a common walkthrough tool and using data to adjust implementation and professional learning in real time
- providing separate training for paraprofessionals who support ECE-grade 3 classrooms (this training should outline how paraprofessionals, who are crucial supports in

classrooms but do not hold the same knowledge as a certified teacher, can work effectively in classrooms to allow teachers maximum time to focus on quality instruction for all students, and particularly time for teachers to work with their most struggling students in small groups and/or individually)

- leveraging technology to do any of the above

Additionally, the vendor should outline a history of providing professional learning that has led to significant and improved changes in literacy achievement and educator effectiveness. Clear targets and goals will be established with the vendor, with a tiered payment schedule based on performance.

Job-embedded Support

Systemic change occurs when teachers have opportunities to examine their own practices in a collaborative learning community. Developing greater pedagogical expertise is a first step, but it is through job-embedded support that we will create opportunities for teachers to reflect on how their efforts to apply new learning are changing outcomes for students.

We recognize that schools across DPS vary both in terms of structure and where literacy expertise is housed. At a minimum, a school will identify one qualified member of the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) who will serve as the school's literacy lead.

We recommend that schools thoughtfully identify these literacy leads, who should at minimum exhibit substantial knowledge of the continuum of early literacy skills from ECE forward, deep understanding of the standards, demonstrated success with ECE-3 students, and effective or distinguished LEAP scores. In an ideal situation, these literacy leads would be a team lead who works as a quarter or half-time interventionist, allowing them to focus more fully on professional development, teacher support, and evaluation. In some instances, the literacy lead may be an assistant principal or other member of the ILT.

Network literacy partners, early education partners, and English language acquisition (ELA) partners will support schools in developing a comprehensive plan for providing support and feedback to all teachers in ECE-3. This plan will be developed by the instructional leadership team and identified school literacy lead to ensure that all parties responsible for supporting and evaluating teachers in early literacy have clearly defined roles and expectations.

Network-level partners

As we shift from a model where central office staff has traditionally held much of the expertise in early literacy to a model where expertise is developed and cultivated at the school level, literacy, early education, and ELA partners will be key levers to build the capacity of instructional leadership teams and support the growth of identified early literacy experts in the schools.

Literacy, early education, and ELA partners will support schools in the following ways:

- In collaboration with the school's instructional leadership team:
 - Develop a comprehensive plan for providing job-embedded support to all teachers in early literacy
 - Build capacity to turn-key professional learning sessions on the 8 identified half-days
 - Build understanding of and expertise in the state's reading, writing, and communicating standards
 - Build capacity to maximize the effectiveness of dedicated literacy planning time
 - Build capacity to maximize the effectiveness of data-driven instruction, specifically in leveraging the READ Act assessment and formative assessments
 - Lead walkthroughs to assess levels of implementation and determine next steps
 - Lead analysis of student work samples (running records, writing in response to complex texts) to determine next steps
 - Build capacity to identify and implement appropriate interventions
- In collaboration with the school literacy lead(s):
 - Provide dedicated professional learning and coaching to ensure team leads develop demonstration classrooms
 - Build capacity to effectively coach teachers
- In collaboration with school leaders and instructional superintendents:
 - Provide additional monthly professional learning at network meetings that summarizes foundational training teachers are receiving and specifies the school leader's role in supporting implementation and providing coaching/feedback
 - Assist with data analysis at the school and network level as it connects to literacy instruction

Sustained Professional Learning

The goal of 2016-17 will be to create a shared understanding across the district of the foundational components of the science of reading and to deepen implementation of the state's reading, writing, and communicating standards. We see this as our grounding year and merely the beginning. Truly developing expertise in teaching children to read, write and communicate will require sustained investment over time. In years two and beyond, the goal will be to deepen the expertise of returning teachers and to lay the same solid foundation for our new teachers.

We anticipate offering the foundational professional learning in early literacy every summer for teachers new to the district. We also anticipate that teachers who have completed the foundational professional learning will attend approximately 3 days in the summer and 8 half-days across the year during years two and ongoing. This extended training will focus heavily on particular pedagogical practices from a comprehensive literacy model that move the needle for children.

We anticipated that differentiated summer and half-day sessions during the year will be provided for the following groups:

- Classroom ECE teachers (ELA-E, ELA-S)
- Classroom K-2 teachers (ELA-E, ELA-S)
- Classroom 3rd grade teachers (ELA-E, ELA-S)
- Interventionists (ELA-E, ELA-S)
- ESL/ELD

In order to lay the foundation for extended training and further build the capacity of the central office to lead the early literacy leaders in our schools, we will invest in a year-long extended training for relevant central office staff in a comprehensive literacy model. This may be included in the RFP and done alongside the same vendor that partners with the district to provide foundational training.

Curriculum

“We can’t confuse curricular materials with good teaching, but we can support good teaching with high quality, comprehensive curricular materials.”

- Nonie Lesaux, Harvard Graduate School of Education

Research affirms that quality curriculum makes a difference in supporting student learning. The district has adopted curriculum for all DPS preschool classrooms and is in the process of making adoption decisions for K-3 early literacy and English language development.

Preschool Curriculum

The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool was adopted four years ago for all DPS preschool classrooms. This curriculum focuses on project-based investigations as means to facilitate young children’s learning and development in the domains of language, literacy, mathematics, social-emotional, and physical. It is a comprehensive, research-based curriculum designed to help educators at all levels of experience plan and implement a developmentally appropriate, content-rich program for children with diverse backgrounds and skill levels.

After evaluating scientific studies done on Creative Curriculum, The *What Works Clearinghouse* “considers the extent of evidence for *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool, Fourth Edition*, on the school readiness of preschool children to be medium to large for four outcome domains—oral language, print knowledge, phonological processing, and math.”

Key features of Creative Curriculum that specifically focus on the language and literacy domains of early learning are outlined below.

Feature	Description
Foundational Skills Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foundational listening and speaking, reading, and writing skills are intentionally integrated in the curriculum as well as addressing targeted language and literacy learning.• The TS GOLD assessment aligns with the curriculum and provides resources that allow teachers to monitor and plan for students’ progress.
Reading Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Intentional Teaching Card lessons designed to address the spectrum of developmental student needs prevalent in early childhood are research-based and facilitate pre-reading and early reading growth and explicitly indicates assessment opportunities for TS GOLD.• Four professional development teacher volumes provide teacher support for effective instruction, one specifically addresses literacy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching Guides for each study provide daily teaching plans with specific guidance on language and literacy instruction for whole and small group instruction in addition to guidance on specific literacy infusion into interest areas and content based learning. • Students are exposed to a variety of text related to a study topic which can be used for shared reading and close reading practices. • Book Discussion Cards are provided to address effective read-aloud guidance and practices. • CD with eBook Collection is provided so that children can experience text in an electronic format. • Text-dependent questions are sequenced based on depth of knowledge and support deeper learning with connections to the study topic. • A balance of fiction and nonfiction texts are available and a comprehensive list of quality supplemental support texts are provided for infusion into lessons and the classroom library.
Writing Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing lessons are provided that address functions, forms, and conventions of print. • Teacher modeling of writing and encouragement of individual student developmental-scaffolding writing are embedded in the daily lesson plans.
English learner supports and Spanish parity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Curriculum provides a fully equivalent English and Spanish curriculum with inclusion of authentic Spanish literature. • Teacher resources have built-in scaffolds for multiple language levels. • ELD materials are aligned to core instruction.

Areas that we will augment are described below.

Areas Requiring Augmentation	District Plan for Augmentation
ELD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build out opportunities in the curriculum for more explicit and direct focus that aligns with district ELA expectations.

K-3 Early Literacy Curriculum

Recognizing the importance of quality curriculum, the district has engaged in multiple reviews of early literacy curriculum for grades K-3 aligned to the Colorado Academic Standards in reading, writing, and communicating (the Common Core State Standards for English language arts) and available in both English and Spanish. The reviews were conducted in 2014 and in the winter and spring of 2015. The district did not identify a curriculum for district-wide adoption. Through the spring 2015 review, the district identified two curricula to pilot in a small number of schools – Benchmark and Mondo. In the absence of a district-adopted curriculum, teachers

not participating in the pilot have been using district-developed pacing guides, standards-aligned scope and sequence and unit overviews or school-adopted/developed resources.

In the fall of 2015, the district re-engaged in a call for K-3 early literacy curriculum proposals. A district review committee comprised of teachers and staff across the district reviewed submitted curricula using a rubric based on the Achieve the Core’s Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET) and Council for Great City School’s Grade-Level Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool. In addition, the rubric included DPS specific elements related to scaffolds and supports for language learners and Spanish native language instruction. Key criteria for curriculum selection included:

- Common Core State Standards alignment
- Reading foundational skills (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and oral language)
- Text selection
- Questions, tasks, scaffolds
- Writing to sources
- Speaking and listening
- Spanish parity
- Professional learning
- Electronic/online resources
- Assessment
- Usefulness, design, focus

District-Recommended K-2 Early Literacy Curriculum

Based on this review process, **Benchmark Advance/Adelante** emerged as the **K-2 curriculum** that met the most criteria with some areas that would need shoring up by the district. It is important to note that no curriculum reviewed met all of the criteria. By providing teachers with strong foundational training in the science of reading and literacy instruction and by providing supplementary resources and tools, the district is able to compensate for and/or augment weaker areas of any selected curriculum.

Key features of Benchmark Advance/Adelante are outlined below.

Feature	Description
Foundational Skills Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational skills are taught as principles for whole text reading and writing. • Foundational skills are integrated in the curriculum (not a separate program). • Guided reading program is included with a range of incremental texts and detailed guides for teaching. • Assessment resources are included to monitor students’ progress.
Reading Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unit designs are research-based and provide time for students to read, write, listen to, and speak about texts and ideas.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are exposed to a variety of text-teacher modeling, shared reading, guided practice, and independent close reading practice. • Text-dependent questions are sequenced based on depth of knowledge. • A balance of fiction and nonfiction texts are available as interactive e-books.
Writing Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are exposed to a range of writing types (1 process piece every three weeks, 1 prompt every 2 weeks, quick writes throughout). • Student exemplar writing models are provided for analysis. • Students have the ability to use a digital interface to publish final pieces and write blogs.
English learner supports and Spanish parity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark provides a fully equivalent English and Spanish curriculum with inclusion of authentic Spanish literature. • Teacher resources have built-in scaffolds for multiple language levels. • ELD materials are aligned to core instruction.

Areas that we will augment are described below.

Areas Requiring Augmentation	District Plan for Augmentation
<p>Vocabulary Unit resources include a brief list of domain-specific, general, academic, and instructional vocabulary, but these are not called out in direct ways in the lessons themselves.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build out opportunities in the curriculum for more explicit and direct focus on vocabulary.
<p>Authentic texts Students have access to excerpts from authentic texts and not the actual books.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Benchmark’s trade book recommended list to purchase authentic texts. • Provide a bank of close reading lessons for teachers to use with the trade books. • Collaborate with Benchmark, the district’s education technology team and library services to provide authentic trade books as e-books.
<p>Writing The writing component focuses on three different writing prompts during the three-week units, so there is little opportunity to teach writing deeply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with Benchmark to address the gaps in the writing component of the curriculum. • Note: Benchmark is already responding to this feedback and has submitted a plan to address concerns, including providing longer, more focused process pieces and improved quality performance tasks.

<p>Comprehension While comprehension is a focus throughout the curriculum, opportunities for deeper levels of comprehension need to be developed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create supplemental mini-units to ensure students have opportunities for chunking texts, summarizing, and teaching comprehension with various lengths of text.
<p>Spanish Curriculum Though teachers can draw on this resource in our ELA-S classrooms, work still must be done to ensure we are meeting the Language Allocation Guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop planning documents to use both the Spanish and English resources in classrooms.

District-Recommended Grade 3 Curriculum (also the district’s recommended grade 4-8 English language arts curriculum) – Expeditionary Learning

During the curriculum review process that was conducted in the winter and spring of 2015, the district identified Expeditionary Learning (EL) for grades 4-8 for English language arts. While EL provides a third grade curriculum, it was not recommended because the district could not provide Spanish parity. The district is working during the 2015-16 school year to develop paired Spanish units for EL grade 3 that will be ready for use in the fall of 2016. As a result, the district is recommending EL grade 3 with the district-created paired Spanish units for adoption and use.

Benchmark Advance/Adelante, at K-2, aligns with Expeditionary Learning at grades 3-5 by providing the foundational skills students need to shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Expeditionary Learning, in grades 3-5, supports the goal of reading to build knowledge (learning) and provides a systematic build to college and career ready for grades 3-8.

In order to support an aligned and coherent approach across Benchmark and Expeditionary learning K-5, the district will need to create supports and resources (some of which were noted earlier with regard to writing) to ensure students have a continuous and rich literacy experience throughout their elementary experience.

English Language Development Curriculum

The district recently completed its review process of English language development curriculum that schools can opt-into. The district selected two curriculum options that are complementary to and supportive of the district’s adopted literacy curriculum, as language development and literacy acquisition go hand in hand. More details on the selected curriculum options can be found at <http://flexibility.dpsk12.org>.

Implementing the Curriculum

Schools will have the opportunity to opt-into the district’s recommended curriculum through the flexibility process. Schools that opt-into the district’s early literacy curriculum will have the

option to participate in professional learning specific to the curriculum that will occur as a portion of the summer and school year professional learning mentioned earlier.

District staff will use the winter and spring of 2016 to order resources, unpack the curriculum, develop scope and sequence supports, create the resources identified earlier to address gaps in the curriculum, ensure differentiated supports for ELA-E and ELA-S classrooms, and plan professional learning for the summer and school year in partnership with the curriculum providers and professional learning provider identified through the RFP process.

Instructional Supports Offered Regardless of Curriculum

The foundational professional learning on the science of reading and the standards that was referenced earlier is curriculum agnostic and available to all schools regardless of whether they opt into the district's adopted curriculum. In addition, the literacy team will continue to offer professional learning in Guided Reading Plus (GRP--English & Spanish). Guided Reading Plus is a research-based framework that integrates the six components of reading – oral language, phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency – and serves as a recognized best practice in early literacy instruction. The district offers certificate courses designed to build deep pedagogical knowledge & expertise of K-2 (text levels 1-28) classroom teachers, interventionists, and literacy leaders in schools. Since 2014, 70+ teachers have completed the certificate program. Teachers who have completed the certificate program have more students meeting READ Act targets and significantly fewer students reading significantly below grade level. Currently, there are 125 teachers enrolled in this year's K-2 courses. Nearly every elementary school in DPS has at least one graduate or current trainee. Additionally, to support smooth transitions of students in grades 3 through 5, the district has developed certificate courses for 3rd-5th grade teachers. This year, 55 teachers are enrolled in Intermediate Guided Plus (iGRP) courses geared towards building teachers' pedagogical expertise with text levels 30 through 50.

In addition to offering Guided Reading Plus, the literacy team will develop a resource that describes the learning progressions for reading levels for each text level from 1-28. This document will serve as an easy-to-use reference list of prioritized reading behaviors for each level. It will be grounded in *The Continuum of Literacy Learning* by Fountas and Pinnell. The document will provide a framework of shared vocabulary and understanding across the district for small group guided reading.

Assessment

“In complex learning, what is already known provides the learner with a useful context within which to embed new learning.”

Clay, M.M. (2006). *An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement*.

Although we can and must measure student achievement through outcome-based assessments, the power of assessment is not solely in its ability to provide us with a score. Rather, it is in providing a precise snapshot of where children are in terms of their literacy development. Teachers who move the needle in terms of early literacy are those who: 1) know precisely what all of their children know and are able to do; 2) have an understanding of standards and learning progressions against which to compare student strengths and needs; 3) set clear targets and goals and make sure students own their own learning; and 4) know the different instructional procedures that assist students at all levels in the acceleration of learning.

As we move towards fewer and better assessments, our goal is to leverage quality screening, progress-monitoring, diagnostic, summative, and formative assessments aligned with our core programs, language of instruction, and state standards. Through precise analysis of what all students (especially those who struggle) know and are able to do as readers, DPS teachers will be able to plan and implement targeted instruction that both meets students where they are and accelerates their progress to help them achieve at high levels.

Teaching Strategies GOLD for ECE-K

ECE

Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) is an observation-based assessment tool that comprises both formative and summative assessments for ECE students based on the continuum of development. ECE teachers are expected to collect and evaluate ongoing data on research-based standards that are aligned to both the CCSS and Colorado Academic Standards throughout the year. Early Ed partners will provide continued support for teachers around data collection, evaluation, and data-driven instruction based on this cycle. Of note, the language, cognitive, and math domains of TS GOLD have been shown to be predictive of literacy attainment at third grade.

Kindergarten

TS GOLD is the CDE supported assessment for the Individual Readiness Plan and the option is provided to schools to complete either the first checkpoint (with creation of a readiness plan outside of TS GOLD), or all three checkpoints (which fulfills the requirement of the readiness plan). Documentation of each objective is not required by law for Kindergarten students. It is the recommendation of the Early Ed department that kindergarten teachers use all three checkpoints, in order to best inform their view of each student as a whole child, as well as meeting the compliance of the Individual Readiness Plan.

Istation for K-3

Istation is the district's recommended CDE-approved early literacy assessment for the READ Act. It is a computer-adaptive, online reading assessment that acts as a universal screener and diagnostic assessment to identify specific areas of strength and weakness that may exist with a student's reading ability. It is administered in individual, small group, or whole class setting to students in kindergarten through eighth grade. It also provides an authentic kindergarten through third grade assessment developed in Spanish for K-3 students who receive the majority of their literacy instruction in Spanish. Istation assessments measure phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and text fluency.

Istation's suite of CDE-approved assessments provides teachers with the flexibility to meet the diverse needs of all Denver Public School's students. Accommodations for students with disabilities, such as extended time, allow students access to demonstrate their reading ability so teachers can differentiate and adjust instruction.

Istation fulfills the state requirements of the Colorado READ Act. Schools who use Istation as their READ Act assessment in K-3 will administer it as a universal screener and diagnostic assessment during identified windows at the beginning, middle, and end of year. Istation scores will initially identify students performing significantly below grade-level in reading in their language of instruction. Those students will repeat the assessment during the 30-day confirmation window. If the identification is confirmed, Istation, along with other relevant language and literacy data will be used to help teachers diagnose areas of need, write, and partner with parents to create READ Plans. The departments of Accountability, Research & Evaluation and Curriculum and Instruction will work closely with schools to ensure that 100% of students identified for READ plans have a plan written. Even more importantly, they will work to support teachers in creating *and implementing* quality READ plans that lead to targeted instruction and accelerated reading development. Special attention will be paid to ensuring that teachers are supported in considering the needs of language learners in writing READ plans.

In addition to identification and diagnosis of students who are reading significantly below grade level, Istation assessments provide data that can instantaneously inform instruction for all students. Teachers have the ability to see every question a student was asked, their answer, the correct answer, and the time spent on each question or in specific reading subtest areas. This level of detail is usually not provided by other online computer adaptive assessments due to proprietary concerns. This can be transformative with a teacher's practice because it shows the teacher specifically what reading skills children have mastered and are still struggling with so that instruction can be differentiated for individual student needs.

The assessments provide immediate, robust reporting through multiple user-friendly reports and two notable scores: the ability index/overall and percentile rank. The ability index/overall provides the student's reading ability as a number that matches the student's performance within an instructional tier level. The three tier levels identify whether students are reading on-grade level, below grade level and in need of intervention, or significantly below grade level and

in need of intensive intervention. Istation scores can be used to identify the level at which students are reading, set reading goals regarding student strengths and weaknesses, monitor reading progress, and create targeted reading interventions.

Istation also provides a vast array of online teacher resources like intervention lessons for small groups and additional, interdisciplinary class lessons, games, and activities.

Although Istation provides teachers, coaches, and school leaders with valuable data about the early literacy performance of students, it does have a few gaps in effectively addressing fluency and comprehension. Istation has the ability to screen and diagnose an entire class in roughly 30 minutes. However, it does not require a teacher to sit down and read with each student. It assesses the parts of reading, but not the *process* - how children integrate what they know about meaning-making, language syntax, and the visual information in print to read with comprehension and fluency. In grades K-2, when children are developing a *reading processing system*, the most informative way to inform tomorrow's instruction is through a running record of the child's reading of continuous text. Running records are quick five minute, individualized assessments that are built in to the instructional routine. The data gathered from a running record should be immediately scored and analyzed to determine: 1) if a student is on-track in his/her early reading development and 2) what the student needs to learn next to be able to read increasingly more complex texts independently.

ANet Interim Assessments for 3rd Grade

The DPS Assessment Strategy includes interim assessments for grades 3-8. ANet interim assessments provide valuable information for students, parents, and educators on whether students are progressing towards mastery of grade level content standards. Interim assessments are intended to provide teachers with insights to diagnose student learning and take instructional action in their classroom. Interim assessments are formative; not evaluative and are designed to provide an in-the-moment look into student understanding and knowledge - not as a way to track progress over the course of the year or measure growth.

For third grade, Istation and interim assessments complement each other and give teachers a more complete view of student knowledge and understanding as it relates to specific literacy skills (Istation) and grade level standards (ANet).

Supporting Effective Use of Assessments to Inform Literacy Instruction

In order to ensure that all teachers are equipped with the assessment knowledge and practices they need to effectively support the teaching-learning cycle in early literacy, the Assessment, Research, and Evaluation team, Student Services, and Curriculum and Instruction will partner to develop guidance and provide professional learning on the integrated use of the following assessments for student learning:

- Individual Readiness Act assessments (TS Gold)
- READ Act assessments (Istation)

- Interim assessments (3rd grade) (ANET)
- Formative assessments (running records)
- Curriculum-specific assessments

These groups will develop joint professional development on the use of frequent, differentiated progress monitoring through the assessment tools available. Because expertise in the use of running records is directly linked to expertise in instructional moves that accelerate learning, it will be of particular importance to train K-2 teachers well and deeply on the standardized administration, scoring, and analysis of running records. Training on assessments will be embedded in the required 10 days of summer professional learning and reinforced across the school year during the 8 half days. Literacy partners will provide additional support to schools in frequent data analysis to inform areas of need and adjust instruction.

Professional development for assessments will be differentiated by grade level strand (ECE, K-2, 3rd) and language of instruction (English, Spanish). It will include:

- Continuing supports to ECE teachers on the effective use of TS Gold to support school readiness
- Educating K-3 teachers and leaders about delivering the Istation assessment, student performance targets within Istation, effective data analysis, and how to use the full range of supports the tool provides
- Educating teachers and leaders about effective formative assessment, particularly the use of running records to closely observe student reading behavior in continuous text, analyze processing, and determine next steps to inform tomorrow's instruction
- Clarifying and providing guidance on effective practices with regard to progress monitoring and embedding assessment within instruction to maximize instructional time
- Developing expertise around the development and implementation of READ plans to provide daily, differentiated instruction for struggling readers
- Ensuring the proper use of assessments match the language of instruction

Interventions

"Though we have seen a variety of approaches to instruction and arguments about content over the years, the key role of teacher expertise in schools must be at the forefront of systemic change if we are serious about educating every child."

Irene Fountas, Director of the Lesley University Center for Reading Recovery & Literacy Collaborative

Even in situations with the very best first instruction there will be students who need more assistance. Numerous studies of small-group interventions (Graham & Harris, 2005; Scanlon & Anderson, 2010; Vellutino, 2002) along with studies of one-on-one interventions (all Reading Recovery data for 30+ years) have demonstrated the effectiveness of these practices with struggling learners. But in virtually every case it is the expertise of the teacher that makes the difference in the success or failure of the child.

In a concerted effort to increase literacy achievement by the end of 3rd grade, accelerated learning through responsive teaching in interventions and special education must become the norm. Responsive teaching refers to teachers observing students' literacy behaviors and designing instructional interactions based on students' strengths and needs. Achievement in this area will require a significant and sustained investment of time in developing teacher expertise. The professional learning outlined earlier will include components that deepen teacher expertise in early literacy and the effective use of interventions over time.

In addition to building teacher expertise, the district needs a coherent approach to early literacy interventions. Currently, the district implements a range of interventions. While several show promising results, we have not been intentional in aligning them to the other elements of this plan, namely the district's adopted curriculum and assessments. This section outlines strategies for short-term improvement of interventions currently being implemented while laying out a longer-term plan for an aligned set of high-quality interventions.

Before outlining those plans, it is important to clarify that interventions must supplement core instruction, not supplant it. Interventions may not supplant core small group instruction. They must be offered above and beyond the core.

Short-term Plan

Strengthen existing interventions and align with the core curriculum, with a focus on Summer Academy and current partner pilots

1. Adjust the district's Early Language and Literacy Certificate Program to increase alignment with DPS's Literacy 2020 plan.

Current state - 2015-16:

- The Early Language and Literacy Certificate Program (comprised of three graduate-level courses) provide instruction and coaching in responsive teaching for students reading at DRA2/EDL2 levels 1-28 -- literacy assessment and

processing, learning progressions, specialized procedures to assist accelerated learning, and the role of teacher language and actions to build independence.

Future State - 2016-17:

- Offer courses in the daytime (available to anyone but specifically designed for interventionists needing to take them for qualification) as well as in the evening (available to classroom teachers, interventionists, special education teachers)
- Reorganize the certificate course division to support the Literacy Plan 2020.
- Encourage special education teachers to participate in the training.

2. Maintain Levelled Literacy Intervention (LLI/ILE--English & Spanish) as recommended interventions.

- Use these interventions as intended during the first years of implementation, recognizing that they are scaffolds for teachers who are moving to the next level of expertise their teaching.
- Dedicate time for an individual to:
 - oversee logistical program maintenance, expansion and inventory
 - train teachers on basic system use at the beginning of each year & troubleshoot startup issues
 - provide coaching to teachers on system use

3. Strengthen the DPS Summer Academy.

Historically ELA Academy had two main purposes, educate K-8 English Language Learners and provide a platform for embedded Teacher Qualification Basic courses. In 2014, ELA Academy was changed to “Summer Academy,” and the purpose was extended to include the education of READ Act students. The English Language Acquisition Department leads the process and partners with Curriculum and Instruction to carry out the new charge. This change resulted in the merging of ELL students and READ Act students, which brought with it the opportunity to provide both English and Spanish K-3 Literacy Instruction.

The Accountability, Research, and Evaluation team conducted an evaluation of the 2015 Summer Academy. Students in all grades showed significant gains in English literacy and Spanish literacy over the course of the Academy. Growth in learning was analogous to 2 months of literacy growth for K and 1st graders and 4 months growth for 2nd graders using these nationwide norms. Effect sizes were small to moderate and showed that Kindergarten students in particular, especially ELLs learning Spanish literacy, benefited from this program. In addition to documenting gains in student learning and strong teacher perceptions, the study identified several logistical and instructional opportunities for improvement. The district will take the following steps to address the opportunities and strengthen the Summer Academy’s alignment with the components of this plan, especially the district’s professional development on the foundations of reading and the district’s adopted curriculum and assessments.

- **Offer full-day wrap-around program and work to extend the length of Summer Academy.** In 2015, Summer Academy staff partnered with the Boys and Girls Club to create a full day wrap-around experience for students from Force, Godsman and Johnson for 8 weeks. In addition, Summer Academy partnered with Scholars Unlimited to ensure a full day six- week summer program. Plans are currently happening to expand the Boys and Girls Club partnership to Cole Elementary school. Summer Academy is also exploring partnerships with the YMCA, Denver Parks and Recreation, the DU Bridge Program, FACE, Kaleidoscope and other DPS summer programs.
 - **Hire strong teachers** with proven record of ELD and literacy success -- Summer Academy is currently working with literacy staff to give strong consideration to GRP-trained teachers, LLI/ILe-trained teachers, and others with a proven record of success in the area of literacy in addition to the requirement that all mentor teachers are fully qualified ELA-E or ELA-S teachers.
 - **Provide focused professional learning on the foundations of reading** and call out specific high impact instructional moves which must be implemented; observe teachers and hold them accountable for carrying out the specified teaching.
 - **Ensure small class sizes (ideally 15 students per class) and/or increase the adult to student ratio in a class.** Struggling students are more likely to thrive in a smaller class that includes even smaller group work. We may be able to increase the adult to student ratio if we are able to match the summer professional learning with Summer Academy which would allow participants to observe, practice, and support summer literacy instruction.
 - **Provide additional instructional materials** for small group instruction at certain levels.
4. **Strengthen and align work with specific intervention partners.** (Reading Partners, CLI)
- Review current pilots and intervention programs based on the criteria below.
 - Create menu of intervention options for principals to review and potentially select for 2016-2017.

Considerations When Selecting Intervention Partners	
Model	Coaching model or direct intervention model
Staffing	Staff members are committed to service in their communities and/or interested in pathway into teaching in DPS
Training	Training includes focus on building relationships with students, culturally responsive practices, specific instructional moves, and setting and maintaining high expectations
Curriculum and Research Base	Curriculum is research based and aligns to classroom in terms of core content scope and sequence and instructional approach
Target Student Population	Students below proficient are prioritized; particular focus on tier 2 students; Spanish language options are available

Considerations When Selecting Intervention Partners	
Space	Space requirements are clearly defined by provider/program and can be accommodated by school
Partners capability to “push in”	Partners’ ability to offer program within the core classroom
Schedule	Time in intervention does not replace core instruction and intervention can be built into school’s master schedule
Opt-in	In order to ensure program match and school buy-in, principals choose to opt-in to particular providers and/or programs based on individual school need
Results and cost	Clear metrics are set in terms of student outcomes with annual review and decision to continue or discontinue use; cost per pupil identified to facilitate return on investment analysis

Long-term Plan

Identify and implement an aligned set of high-quality interventions for the district

1. Develop a comprehensive intervention model where interventions are:
 - implemented by highly-trained expert teachers;
 - aligned with each other and with the core curriculum;
 - informed by assessments which help diagnose students’ processing needs; and
 - presented as frameworks for responsive teaching rather than scripted programs.

2. Provide comprehensive intervention professional learning during the summer of 2017 for all interventionists, school leaders, teacher leaders focused on early literacy, special educators, teacher effectiveness coaches, peer observers, literacy partners, and any K-3 teachers who are interested.
 - Provide continuing professional learning for all Early Language and Literacy Certificate Program graduates and other interested teachers to maintain and augment expertise, and to keep engagement and reflection within a professional learning community.

3. Ensure all interventionists meet rigorous qualifications by 2017-18 school year.

4. Offer a well-vetted list of quality interventions that schools can access and use as needed.

Time

In schools that close gaps, “time devoted to selected priorities is invested and protected. School leaders value and respect the time needed for effective instruction...and ...collaboration.”
Colorado Department of Education, High Achieving Schools Study, July 2015

Time for Students

Students need sufficient time to grapple with complex text, read at grade level and beyond, engage in rich discourse around complex ideas and concepts, and write in response to complex texts and ideas. With time, quality (how the time is used) and quantity (providing sufficient time to meaningfully engage in reading, writing, and communicating) matter.

Research and best practice recommend at least 120 minutes of dedicated time for literacy instruction (including time for interventions) – often referred to as the “literacy block.” The instructional components of a literacy block include:

1. Reading (shared reading, read aloud, guided reading, close reading, independent reading);
2. Writing (shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing, independent writing); and
3. Word Work (a focus on letters, words and how they work).

A working **draft** of a sample literacy block based on 140 minutes is outlined below.

Sample **Working Draft** of a Literacy Block

	Components Kindergarten - 2nd Grade	
W H O L E G R O U P I N S T R U C T I O N	<u>15 minutes</u> Word Work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Focus on reading foundational skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Print concepts -Phonological awareness -Phonics and word recognition -Fluency ✚ Mastering high frequency words 	
	Components Kindergarten - 2nd Grade	Components 3rd Grade – 5th Grade
	<u>55 minutes</u> Literacy Lesson – Standards-Based Instruction focus on R.1, W.1, L.6 & SL.1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Read aloud/shared reading/interactive read aloud of complex text ✚ Discuss and respond to text-dependent 1uestions (TDQs) and ask TDQs using Habits of Discussion ✚ Writing process and writing in response to complex text 	<u>60 minutes</u> Literacy Lesson – Standards-Based Instruction focus on R.1, W.1, L.6 & SL.1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✚ Read aloud/close reading of complex text ✚ Discuss and respond to text-dependent questions (TDQs) and ask TDQs using Socratic Seminar ✚ Writing in response to complex text ✚ Incorporation of grade level foundational skills

S M A L L G R O U P I N S T R U C T I O N		Components 3rd – 5th Grade
		<u>25 minutes</u> Teacher-Led Paired Literacy (PPF1 Students):
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Spanish is used as a language of instruction, not a support  Spanish and English are used strategically to deepen understanding of complex text
	Components Kindergarten – 2nd Grade	Components 3rd – 5th Grade
	<u>70 minutes</u> 15 min/kindergarten group 20 mins/1 st through 2 nd grade group Teacher-led Guided Reading Plus or Guided Reading (text levels 1-30)	<u>60 minutes</u> 20 minutes/3 rd – 5 th grade group Teacher-led Guided Reading Plus or Guided Reading
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Small groups of 4-6 students reading at the same instructional level  Teacher using leveled texts  Includes literacy stations aligned to foundational skills and customized to the needs of students  Independent reading  Writing stations and personalized projects  Literacy intervention groups would be pulled here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Small groups of 4-6 students reading at the same instructional level  Teacher using leveled texts  Includes literacy stations aligned to foundational skills and customized to the needs of students  Independent reading  Writing stations and personalized projects  Literacy Intervention groups would be pulled here

Overview of the Elements of the Working Draft Sample Literacy Block

Word Work

This is 15 minutes of whole group time where the teacher focuses on word work specific to the grade level (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, etc. are included in word work). Word work is also addressed during guided reading and whenever the opportunities arise throughout the instructional day.

Literacy Lesson – Standards-based Instruction

Here 55 minutes are allocated for the teacher to engage in standards-based instruction. This may include the teacher modeling the initial reading of a complex text followed throughout a unit of interactive study by many rereads giving students opportunities to explore the many layers of complexity and to increase their ability to independently read and comprehend the text. Common Core shifts ask that students be exposed to texts that are beyond their ability to

read independently. Through this exposure, students have the opportunity to grapple with decoding of unfamiliar vocabulary, complex text structures, complex meaning, concepts and ideas through well-crafted lesson plans that include text-dependent questions and opportunities to engage in rich discourse (Socratic Seminar) using “Habits of Discussion.” When students are using “Habits of Discussion,” you will hear things like, “I agree! I also think...Maybe you’re right, but I was thinking...I disagree because...I’d like to add...Another example is... Did you mean...?” Opportunities to engage in rich discourse around complex text is a meaningful prerequisite to writing in response to complex text.

Guided Reading

During this time, instruction happens in small groups of 4-5 students who are reading at the same reading level based upon a text leveling system. The teacher focuses on reading behaviors and teaching students to apply specific strategies to effectively decode and comprehend text. At the kindergarten level, each group should convene for 15 minutes; at the 1st through 2nd grade levels, typically text levels 6 through levels 30, each group would convene for 20 minutes. During guided reading, the balance of the class should be engaged in meaningful, differentiated literacy stations. This is also a time for partner reading, independent reading, and writing. Students would be pulled during this period of time for interventions only after or before they have participated in their guided reading group. This has serious implications for the requirement that schools carefully design intervention schedules to ensure students do not miss their small group time with the classroom teacher. Interventions should never replace core instruction but should supplement core instruction. 70 minutes daily allows the teacher to pull 4 guided reading groups daily in kindergarten, and 3 guided reading groups daily in 1st and 2nd grade.

Time for Preschoolers

The purpose of the preschool programs in DPS is to ensure young learners are engaged in comprehensive, rigorous, integrated, and whole-child-focused educational experiences, which are the foundation of early literacy. In the earliest phases of literacy development, forming reading and writing concepts and skills is a dynamic process (National Research Council 1998, 2000). Early literacy is an emerging set of relationships between reading and writing. The development of children’s early reading and writing are embedded in a larger developing system of oral communication.

The chart in Appendix A illustrates where specific literacy-related learning would be intentionally taught, supported, and embedded in DPS preschool classrooms.

Time for Adults

Just as students need time to learn, teachers need time to plan, collaborate, practice, reflect, and learn. There is great value in making sure that teachers have time to collaborate over instructional practices, discuss what’s working and what’s not working, observe one another, improve their practice, and analyze data including running records, formative assessments, and

writing samples in order to make decisions over next instructional steps. The DCTA Contract Article 8-2 articulates expectations for teacher planning time, noting that each teacher shall receive a minimum of forty (40) minutes of uninterrupted, self-directed planning time scheduled during the student school contact day. In addition, many schools incorporate opportunities to collaborate before or after school, during early release/late start days, and during scheduled professional development days.

Teacher collaboration can look many different ways, for example:

Component	Teachers collaborate for a variety of reasons:
Word Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and analyze baseline data, formative assessment data • Determine rubrics and assessments that the team will use to consistently monitor student progress toward proficiency • Share instructional strategies that are proving successful based upon data • Have a Make It-Take It week: Create fun, meaningful, interactive Literacy Stations that students can use to achieve mastering around foundational skills
Standards Based Literacy Lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share lesson planning and areas of focus in order to create consistency across grade level classrooms • Discuss unit anchor text in order to get at the qualitative and/or qualitative aspects of complexity • Develop high quality text dependent questions to support lesson and get at standards • Create exit tickets to be analyzed across classrooms at future gatherings to inform instruction • Share video clips of Close Reading lessons including student engagement to help each other develop expertise and to know when text is worthy of reading closely
Guided Reading Plus/Guided Reading/Literacy Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master the art and science of giving and analyzing a running record using data gleaned to inform instruction • Discuss video clips of guided reading instruction • Come together, using the change of time chart, to determine instructional strategies to best address reading behaviors and next steps
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share lesson planning and areas of focus so that there is consistency across grade level classrooms • Share and analyze baseline data, formative assessment data and students' written products in order to make instructional decisions • Practice modeling writing for students
Personalized Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share project ideas so that artifacts and materials can be collected across grade level teams

Component	Teachers collaborate for a variety of reasons:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share creative ways for students to explore topics of interest using technology, field trips, etc. • Identify ways for students to publish and share projects • Create grade level rubrics to help guide students as they research, explore, and plan how to share new found knowledge around their topic of study

Over the course of the implementation of this plan, the literacy team will provide additional guidance on the recommended amount and effective use of collaborative planning time and professional learning time to deepen teachers’ and leaders’ literacy expertise and improve their practice.

Coherency

“It takes a village to raise a city of readers.”

Reading Partners, November 2014

Ensuring that our students are great readers, writers, and communicators requires collaboration and partnership with early childhood education programs, libraries, families and community members. A significant amount of work in support of literacy is occurring in these areas; however, it often exists in isolation of other district-wide efforts and thus lacks explicit connections with and coherency to the district’s early literacy plan. We have an opportunity to make more explicit and intentional the literacy connections across the district’s initiatives in these areas to help support and accelerate the literacy attainment of our students.

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood experiences make a difference. The more time student spend in quality early learning environments, the better prepared they are for Kindergarten. DPS offers a rich array of early childhood education experiences for students ages three and four, providing 7,246 slots to eligible students with 5,390 of those slots provided in DPS classrooms and the remaining in community sites. The majority of incoming Kindergarteners are from district and community partner early childhood education providers. This makes collaboration across ECE and K-3 an essential and powerful lever for supporting students as they transition from early childhood education into Kindergarten.

To better connect and align the work between ECE and K-3, we will involve all ECE teachers and district staff in the intensive and ongoing early literacy professional learning outlined earlier. Learning will be differentiated and appropriate for the developmental needs and progression of our early learners. By engaging in shared learning, the district will be able to develop common vocabulary and shared approaches for supporting early literacy as appropriate at each step in a student’s developmental continuum.

With ECE staff participating on the district’s early literacy team, we will work to align expectations across ECE-K with regard to students’ readiness in literacy. This work is already underway as shared “aim lines” and learning progressions are being developed by ECE and literacy staff. In addition, ECE and early literacy staff will deepen their understanding of and identify opportunities for alignment across ECE and K-3 curriculum and assessments so that students experience continuity in their learning as they move from grade to grade.

We will also leverage DPS’s emerging Birth to 8 Roadmap project that will engage local leaders to articulate a strategic plan for serving Denver children ages birth through 8 years old. Early literacy will be a key strand in that plan. We expect that additional strategies for strengthening the ECE to K-3 early literacy work will emerge from these community conversations.

School Libraries & Leveraging Denver Public Libraries

Strong school library programs positively impact reading comprehension and writing by: 1) increasing the number of minutes spent reading during out of school time; 2) deepening instruction in information literacy, literacy strategies and inquiry; 3) creating building-wide cultures of literacy; 4) providing access to high quality reading choices both in print and digital formats; and 5) building the habits and joy that create lifelong learners.

All but two DPS elementary schools have libraries, with about 25% staffed by certified teacher librarians. The majority are staffed by para-librarians or part-time teachers, with nine libraries unstaffed. The Library Services Department provides professional learning sessions focused on supporting literacy instruction at the annual Library Resources Expo, through individual-building based coaching with library staff, with classroom teachers in buildings without library staff, and with central administrative departments.

We can leverage school libraries to provide equitable access to engaging and diverse texts at a variety of reading levels, in a number of different formats, aligned to the curriculum, and reflective of students' interests, cultures, and languages.

Libraries can be the hub of social experiences that model and promote a joy of reading. Librarians engage students in reading aloud, book talks, book clubs, book reviews, displays, book fairs, one book programs, and author visits. These programs and experiences facilitate experiences and conversations around reading that make texts memorable and relevant to students' lives.

In addition, school libraries can help make meaningful connections with the community, most notably with partner Denver Public Libraries (DPL). A few examples of partnerships with DPL are provided below:

- **DPL Read Aloud Program** is in almost every DPS ECE classroom (weekly read alouds and backpacks of new, engaging texts).
- **DPL Summer Reading:** Aligns with student choice and reading motivation.
- **DPL Bookmobile:** Currently serves 24 DPS schools. Library Services is working to increase support for Summer Scholars and summertime neighborhood stops to increase access and summer reading engagement.

To better connect and align the work of libraries to the district's literacy plan, we will engage all library staff in the professional learning outlined earlier in this plan. In addition, we will:

- Increase the communication between building administration and teachers with para-librarians and Library Services so that buildings without Teacher Librarians have the support to better align their resources around literacy instruction and independent reading.
- Increase collaboration between the district's Literacy team and Library Services team in order to leverage e-books and other digital resources for both independent reading, instruction and other curricular areas.

- Increase collaboration with the Denver Public Library in order to share digital resources that can support independent reading, instruction and other curricular areas.
- Develop consistent messaging around reading behaviors including selecting “just right” texts so this can be communicated out to all library staff. Include student choice in these decisions so that reading minutes outside the classroom can be seen across all buildings.
- Partner with Denver Public Library to offer parents learning sessions on best early literacy practices in the home, including leveraging DPL’s *EarlierisEasier* website to communicate the importance of birth to five-year-old to parents.

Family and Community Engagement

The DPS Family and Community Engagement (FACE) team at DPS offers a variety of programs designed to support youth and adult literacy.

Power Lunch

The Power Lunch Reading Program is a collaborative effort between the Office of Family and Community Engagement, the Denver Public Schools Foundation, and Mile High United Way that leverages volunteers to serve as reading buddies to 2nd and 3rd grade students. Through participating in the Power Lunch Reading Program, volunteers are matched 1-1 with students and foster a deep relationship, improving students overall confidence and increasing their love for reading.

Power Punch! Summer Camps

In collaboration with Denver Math Fellows, Open World Learning (OWL), KPMG, and Youth One Book One Denver (YOBOD), the Power Punch! Summer Camps offer support to students in 1st - 3rd grade in math and literacy, providing resources and programming that aim to mitigate summer learning loss through structured and experiential learning.

Each One Teach One

Each One Teach One recruits and trains parents from the local community to serve as tutors, impacting overall student literacy scores through daily 45 minute lessons that occur over a nine week period. Tutors conduct intensive, small-group language development and reading instruction, which is inspired by a rotating series of books that help build vocabulary and encourage students to observe, label, and describe what they see.

The Center for Family Opportunity

The Center for Family Opportunity (CFO) offers families free services in financial coaching, workforce development, legal assistance, English language, basic and continuing education, tax preparation and citizenship. CFO is currently operating at College View Elementary and is designed to be a hub of services for families in the central part of southwest Denver.

FACE is planning to expand its literacy efforts in the following areas.

Text Message Program - *Two-generation support*

In partnership with Stanford University, FACE will pilot a text messaging literacy program, sending a weekly text message to parents of students in Kindergarten - 3rd grade with a curriculum-based, 140 character literacy tip that they can implement at home with their child.

Literacy Nights

In support of a *two-generation approach*, targeted Power Lunch school sites will host a Literacy Night for families to participate in, where they will receive information on the importance of grade-level reading, resource information from literacy partners such as Denver Public Library, and how they can help foster an environment at home to promote reading.

Center for Family Opportunity (CFO) Expansion

The ultimate goal of the CFO is to provide services for families in each region of Denver Public Schools. The aim is to expand the model currently operating at College View Elementary.

To build coherency of these efforts to the literacy plan, the literacy team will increase communication and involvement with the FACE team. Specific efforts will be placed on aligning outreach efforts with the district's literacy instruction, curriculum, assessments, and related endeavors.

Community Partners

DPS benefits from the support and engagement of a range of community partners including but not limited to the Denver Major's office, Padres Unidos, Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, higher education partners, community college partners, foundation partners, the Colorado Children's Campaign, A+ Denver, Stand for Children, Denver Health and Human Services, Boys & Girls Clubs of Denver, Denver Public Libraries, and more. There is a tremendous opportunity to engage our partners in this plan and to create a city-wide social movement aimed at improving early literacy for students across Denver. The district's early literacy team will work with the communications and family and community engagement team to create a plan for activating community partners in a campaign to support our students in becoming great readers, writers, and communicators.

Note on Additional Areas to Include to Ensure Coherency

As teams across the district reviewed this draft, we identified areas that need to be included and/or more explicitly connected in future revisions. These include:

- Leveraging literacy across content areas, especially science and social studies
 - These subjects lend themselves to multiple opportunities work with nonfiction text and writing as well as deep content based knowledge, vocabulary and language development so important for the ultimate goal of reading which is comprehension and application of knowledge.
- Ensuring that personalized learning is evident throughout our literacy work

- We need to be explicit about how we are giving students agency in their learning by giving them choices, helping them participate in creating goals for their learning, and monitoring their own progress.
- Connecting before- and after-school programming to this work
 - The district offers a range of before- and after-school programming for students. There are opportunities to extend students' engagement in high quality reading, writing, and communicating experiences through these programs.

Conclusion

"Literacy is an every-century skill."

How important is teaching literacy in all content areas? Edutopia, August 2010

"Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives."

Richard Vaca, *Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum*

This plan aims to provide an intentional, comprehensive, and coherent approach to early literacy across the district. It is a working document that will evolve over time as we learn and get better at helping all of our students reach literacy proficiency by the end of third grade.

It is also a call to action, as we have a long way to go to reach our goal and only four short years to reach it. Statistically, we need to grow by 50% points in four years. Incremental growth won't get us there. We need breakthrough results.

We believe this plan sets us on the path to achieve breakthrough results, but it will require focus, determination, and the energy of every member of the DPS community. Are you ready to join us in building young readers, writers, and communicators? We need you.

Appendix A: Early Childhood Education - Literacy Components Guidance

	Component	Time (Number of minutes required)		Literacy (writing, reading, oral language)
Required for Compliance and Effective Practice	Free Choice/Interest Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library • Blocks • Math/science • Manipulatives and puzzles • Dramatic play • Art • Music and movement • Writing • Sensory 	$\frac{1}{3}$ of total minutes in the day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full day 144-160 min • Half day 53-60 min 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read to students • Writing (student generated and directed) • Shared writing • Oral language development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic vocabulary ○ Topic area vocabulary ○ Language structure ○ Pragmatic language • Concept development • Knowledge of print and its uses • Reading-Foundational skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Print concepts ○ Alphabetic principle ○ Phonological awareness
	Outdoor gross motor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 minutes full day • 30 minutes half day 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral language development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic vocabulary ○ Topic area vocabulary ○ Language structure ○ Pragmatic language • Concept development • Phonological awareness games and activities
	ELD	4 year-old full day programs	30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral language development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic vocabulary ○ Topic area vocabulary ○ Language structure ○ Pragmatic language • Concept development • Shared reading • Read aloud
		4 year-old half-day programs	20 minutes	
3 year-old full day programs		20 minutes		
3 year-old half day programs		10 minutes		

Suggested	Whole-group activities	5-10 minutes <i>*Based on attention span research of an child's attention span equaling 1 minute per year of child's age</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Aloud • Shared Reading • Shared and modeled writing • Phonological awareness games and activities • Topic investigation • Knowledge of print and its uses • Oral language development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic vocabulary ○ Topic area vocabulary ○ Language structure ○ Pragmatic language • Reading-Foundational skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Print concepts ○ Knowledge of alphabet ○ Phonological awareness
	Effective Practice- Small Groups	10 minutes per group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Aloud • Story retell • Shared Reading • Writing • Shared writing • Phonological awareness games and activities • Topic investigation • Reading-Foundational skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Print concepts ○ Knowledge of print and uses ○ Knowledge of alphabet ○ Phonological awareness • Oral language development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic vocabulary ○ Topic area vocabulary ○ Language structure ○ Pragmatic language