

North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan

A Systemic Approach to Literacy Education for All



NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Revised August 2019

The North Dakota State Literacy Team is comprised of ten members from diverse backgrounds, including educators across all levels of education from early childhood to high school, university professors who are experts in literacy, and officials from state and local agencies and will serve a term from 2017-2020.

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A special thank you to the North Dakota State Literacy Team for their valuable expertise and insight in the creation of this document.

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Foreword

Literacy skills are necessary for students in their life after high school, whether it includes higher education, career and technical education, military service, or other types of career development. Literacy skills are also relevant to work and relationships. The priority is to develop strong literacy skills in all North Dakota children.

Literacy defines a range of skills, not just proficiency in writing and reading. As North Dakota educators developed this statewide literacy plan, they took a structured approach to teaching literacy to our youngest citizens. The intent is to refresh the plan each year, and the commitment is to provide every student the instruction and resources they need to read, write, speak, and listen proficiently.

This plan is a framework for strengthening all students' ability to read, write, speak, and listen. It includes these essential elements: leadership, instruction and intervention, standards, assessment and evaluation, professional development, as well as family and community engagement. The plan incorporates shared beliefs and practices that have been tested and proven effective. It shows the relevancy and importance of reading, writing, and listening skills for work and relationships.

This latest update was completed with the assistance of a Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant, which was awarded to North Dakota in 2017. One of the grant's expectations is for this plan to be updated annually. Our latest revision process began in March 2019, and we invited North Dakotans to comment on the draft plan and suggest any changes they thought were necessary in June.

In addition, this year's revisions were influenced by conversations with local school districts, information from district Continuous Improvement System survey data, an analysis of the statewide needs of K-12 educators – particularly those working in early childhood education – and the resources needed to strengthen literacy programs within programs, schools, and school districts.

I want to extend my profound thanks to the literacy team that oversaw this update. Our team consists of ten members from diverse backgrounds, including teachers who work in all levels of education, from early childhood to high school; university professors who are experts in literacy; a children and family services administrator for a nonprofit agency; and advisers from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

I am especially grateful to our North Dakota educators, families, and taxpayers who take an interest in this plan, and who support and celebrate literacy instruction and learning.

Thank you.



Kirsten Baesler
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Six Essential Elements

A systemic approach to literacy education for all

INSTRUCTION & INTERVENTION

Consistent and effective literacy instruction for all includes valid, reliable, evidence-based literacy programs and practices implemented with fidelity, monitored for effectiveness, and responsive to student needs.

ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Enables systems to continually monitor and adjust the six essential elements of a comprehensive literacy plan to ensure high quality literacy education for all. Assessment and evaluation are necessary to fully understand the learning needs of the whole child and provide evidence of learning. A balanced, comprehensive assessment and evaluation system is foundational for continuous literacy improvement and development of children in homes, schools, districts, communities, and the state.

FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Intentionally collaborate with families and the community to expand the shared responsibility for literacy success for all.



LEADERSHIP

Established through defined roles and collaborative teamwork among all levels. The implementation and sustainability of quality literacy instruction is dependent on this dynamic model in which highly qualified, invested professionals carry out evidence-based work. Additionally, a strong literacy plan recognizes that a leader is not only those put in administrative roles, but any individual who has influence over others.



STANDARDS

Define what is to be learned and serve as a basis for aligning instructional materials and assessments to support literacy development. Standards move all children along an appropriate developmental progression in critical literacy experiences in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provides intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, and data-informed opportunities to develop the skills necessary to foster literacy success and readiness for all.



Introduction

Mission

Literacy skills are the foundation of learning for all children. The purpose of this plan is to provide guidance in creating a systemic approach to literacy education for all learners.

Definitions and Terms

Literacy, as it is referred to throughout this document, encompasses reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Literacy varies across contexts, and further explanations can be found within the standards listed in Figure 6 on page 9. For the purpose of this document, *all* refers to all learners, Birth through Grade 12. In addition, those who interact with learners from Birth through Grade 12 will be referred to as *instructors* (e.g., parents, child care providers, classroom teachers, educators, etc.).

This literacy plan addresses six essential elements to accomplish its mission: leadership, instruction and intervention, standards, assessment and evaluation, professional development, and family and community engagement (Figure 1). Within these six elements, districts have local autonomy to best serve the literacy needs of their children. The State provides support and measures of accountability to ensure all children receive high-quality literacy education.



Figure 1. Six Essential Elements (NDDPI, 2019)

State Literacy Team

The current State Literacy Team is comprised of ten members from diverse backgrounds, including instructors across all levels of education from early childhood to university professors and officials from state and local agencies, who are experts in literacy. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) convenes the State Literacy Team to revise the [North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#) according to current practices and is required to meet annually as part of receiving the federal [Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy \(SRCL\) grant](#).

Purpose

Commitment is required at every level to reach the goal of literacy for all. Local literacy plans exist throughout North Dakota. However, not all districts have a local plan, nor are all plans fully aligned to the state plan. It is a goal for the NDDPI that all North Dakota instructors be made aware of the North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan and work to ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading, writing, listening, and speaking for all children.

Revisions have been informed by local needs, data from continuous improvement system surveys, current practices, and analyzing the results of the 2018 North Dakota literacy needs assessment for [early childhood](#) and [K-12 educators](#) conducted by North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC). This process helped the team successfully identify, understand, and better address literacy challenges at all levels, specifically on the statewide view of literacy in early education programs, schools and districts, how literacy instruction aligns with the North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan, and, finally, what resources instructors might need to implement literacy practices successfully within programs, schools, and districts.

In addition, the State uses the updated definitions in the [“Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965” in Sec. 2221](#) to inform the State Literacy Team and support the federal Literacy Education for All goals “to improve student academic achievement in reading and writing by providing federal support to states to develop, revise, or update comprehensive literacy instruction plans that, when implemented, ensure high-quality instruction and effective strategies in reading and writing from early education through grade 12; and from which the SRCL grant funding originates” (ESEA, Sec. 2221, p.178).

History

The North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan was first drafted as part of a federal grant application in 2010. The State Literacy Team was created with the overall vision of the State, local education agencies (LEAs), and early childhood programs to integrate and align literacy resources and policies to support disadvantaged children, Birth through Grade 12, to be choice ready (i.e., with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful in whatever they choose to do, whether they pursue a post-secondary degree, enroll in a technical college, enter the workforce, or join the military). To support this vision, the State proposed eight specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely goal areas (Figure 2).

North Dakota’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan				
GOAL AREAS	1.	Prioritize serving Disadvantaged Children	2.	Prioritize literacy instruction alignment within the birth to age 3, 4- and 5-year-olds, and kindergarten to Grade 5 continuum
	3.	Implement high-quality comprehensive literacy instruction programs supported by moderate or strong evidence	4.	Implement the ND Comprehensive Literacy Plan
	5.	Implement a data-based decision-making process	6.	Provide technical assistance and professional development to support teachers
7.	Improve literacy outcomes	8.	Evaluate the efficacy and impact of local projects	

Figure 2. North Dakota’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan (NDDPI, 2017)

Current SRCL funding supports the alignment of subgrantee plans to the North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan as well as alignment along the Birth through Grade 12 continuum. All SRCL subgrantees are required to submit and annually update a local literacy plan that: 1) is informed by a comprehensive needs assessment; 2) is aligned with the North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan; 3) provides for effective professional development; 4) includes comprehensive literacy instruction programs supported by moderate or strong evidence; 5) includes a plan to track children’s outcomes consistent with all applicable privacy requirements, and 6) includes local literacy experts to provide advisory assistance and support for literacy goals in the community. In addition, these goals directly align to the [North Dakota PK-12 Education Strategic Vision](#) outcomes (Figure 3).

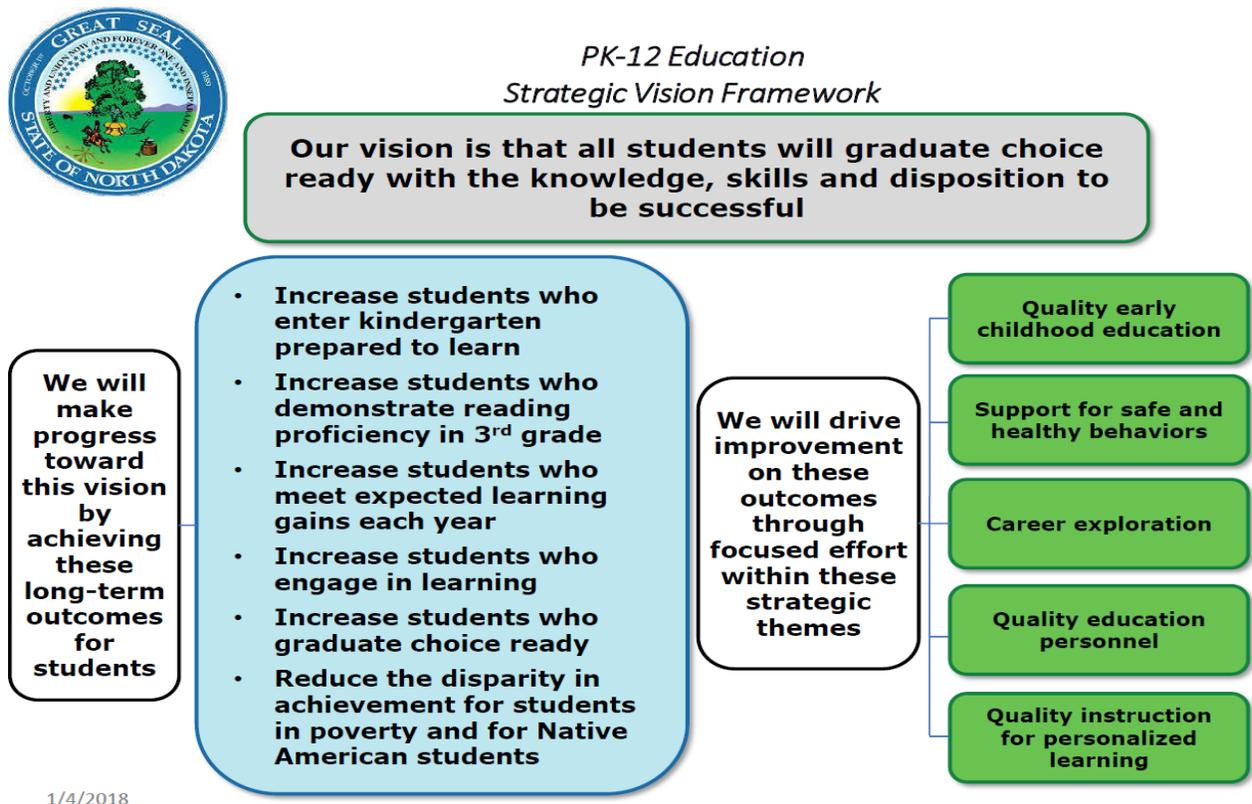


Figure 3. PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Framework (State of North Dakota, 2018)



Leadership

Effective leadership is established through defined roles and collaborative teamwork among all levels. The implementation and sustainability of quality literacy instruction is dependent on this dynamic model in which highly qualified, invested professionals carry out evidence-based work. Additionally, a strong literacy plan recognizes that a leader is not only those put in administrative roles, but any individual who has influence over others.

Description

Highly qualified educators who are supervised by effective leaders must provide evidence-based literacy instruction, along with developmentally appropriate and current best practices. Leadership and evidence of successful literacy programs are crucial to the success of improving literacy within North Dakota. In North Dakota, local literacy teams have a commitment to literacy goals and leadership implementation guided by state mandates. Leadership in this essential element includes, but is not limited to, local literacy teams comprised of school leaders, administration, instructors, and Birth through age five professionals who understand that effective leaders are important to learners' growth and achievement (Figure 4). State, local school districts, and the community place supervisory, leadership, and management responsibilities on principals to ensure the proper administration of their appointed schools.

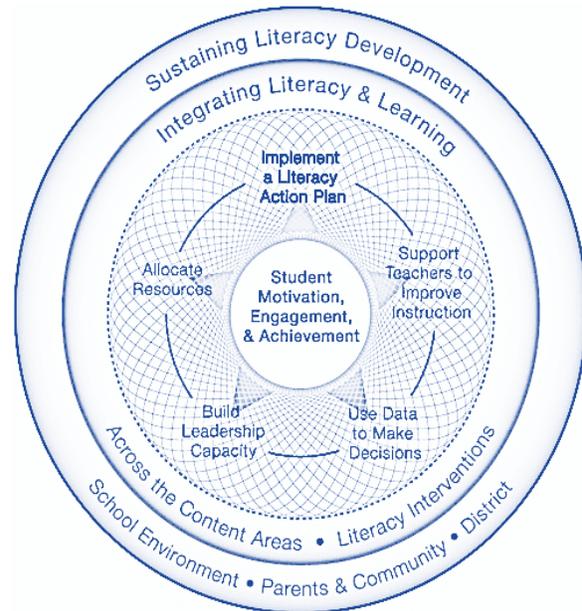


Figure 4: Leadership Framework (Irvin, Dukes, & Meltzer, 2007)

State Contribution

- Ensure every teacher is qualified through the state's teacher [licensure provisions](#)
- Require every public school district to conduct an appropriate evaluation for each public school principal (see [Principal Evaluation Guidelines](#) for more information)
- Require teachers be supervised and evaluated by qualified principals (see [Teacher Evaluation Guidelines](#) for more information)
- Implement a uniform system of accountability statewide to ensure the effectiveness of all schools
- Align the [Principal and Teacher Evaluation System Support \(PTESS\)](#) with the statewide accreditation process through the Cognia (formerly AdvancED) eProve platform
- Maintain State Superintendent's Administrators Cabinets to remain informed about specific leadership needs

Local Contribution

- Establish a dynamic local literacy team comprised of school leaders, administrators, instructors, and birth through age five professionals
- Value team voices and expertise
- Maintain literacy focus across content areas that is informed by literacy experts
- Build leadership capacity among staff
- Allocate resources
- Guide policies, structure, and culture
- Embrace both ability and cultural diversity
- Support instructor improvement through job-embedded and collaborative professional development
- Prioritize evidence-based instruction and intervention
- Use data and feedback effectively to monitor growth and inform change
- Set goals and plan for sustainability of literacy plan

Instructor Contribution

- Seek out and participate in leadership and literacy training
- Strive to lead in and out of the classroom in ways that positively engage and motivate children to learn
- Work collaboratively with colleagues to improve instruction through opportunities such as PLCs, mentoring, and observational walk-throughs
- Understand child and adolescent development
- Set and monitor clear learning goals that appropriately challenges all learners
- Engage families and communities



Instruction & Intervention

Consistent and effective literacy instruction for all includes valid, reliable, evidence-based literacy programs and practices which are implemented with fidelity, monitored for effectiveness, and responsive to student needs.

Description

Literacy learning is a process whereby learners engage in activities in oral language, reading, writing, or problem solving to promote discussion, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content. Literacy is a responsibility shared by all stakeholders allowing learners to develop their knowledge and potential.

During the literacy continuum of learning, through progressive developmental milestones, learners are influenced by their instructors' expectations for progress and school district opportunities for instructional strategies. Effective instructors use the instructional strategies within a range of contexts and approaches to teaching literacy. Effective instructors are the most important factor contributing to learner literacy achievement. When instruction is high in quality, the information being presented makes sense to learners, interests them, and is easy to remember and apply.

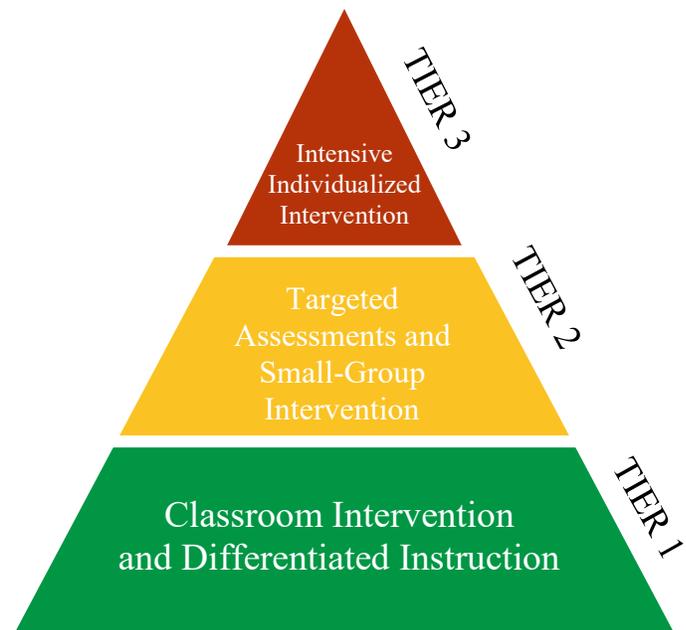


Figure 5: Basic Multi-Tiered Instructional Model (NDDPI, 2019)

Core instruction (Tier I) is the high-quality literacy instruction all learners receive; strategic interventions (Tier II) go beyond core instruction and are matched to learner needs, adding resources, materials, and extending the activities as needed. Finally, some children require intensive instruction and interventions (Tier III). This systematic and intentional support, appropriately matched to that of each learner, is key to improving literacy achievement for all (Figure 5). Quality formative assessment drives instruction and interventions that are carried out in each Tier. Learners can move through Tiers based on progress. More information about the North Dakota Multi-Tier System of Supports can be found at www.ndmtss.org.

State Contribution

- Provide [evidence-based](#), statewide literacy resources and training opportunities
- Provide technical support on the use of current funding
- Secure additional funding and other resources for intervention services that support literacy
- Ensure certification of qualified educators

Local Contribution

- Review and disseminate information on high-quality literacy instruction and strategic intervention
- Provide professional development with technical support on high-quality literacy instruction and strategic intervention
- Identify and intervene with learners who are not demonstrating developmental progress or grade-level literacy skills within specific content areas
- Meet learners where they are and challenge all students to reach their full literacy progress potential
- Provide standards-aligned and accessible curricular materials for instruction and intervention

Instructor Contribution

- Use consistent approaches based on the principles of responsive instruction and/or a multi-tiered system of support
- Use evidence-based, effective instructional strategies and interventions
- Increase knowledge and understanding of the literacy learning continuum from Birth through Grade 12
- Incorporate knowledge and understanding of social-emotional learning and literacy development



Standards define what is to be learned and serve as a basis for aligning instructional materials and assessments to support literacy development. Standards move all children along an appropriate developmental progression in critical literacy experiences in reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Description

North Dakota content standards are the vision for what it means to be a literate person. Standards, written by development committees comprised of North Dakota content experts at all levels, are rigorous and created to prepare learners for their future. The standards emphasize that development of critical literacy skills is imperative to access content. The locally selected curriculum in all education programs, early learning and K-12, must be aligned to the developmentally appropriate practices to ensure each district is meeting these rigorous standards. Assessments, professional development, and instructional practices are aligned to standards and are continuously reviewed, revisited, and refined to ensure learners are progressing in their critical literacy skill development (Figure 6).

North Dakota State Standards

- [Career and Technical Education Standards](#)
- [Computer Science and Cybersecurity K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Dance K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Early Learning Standards \(2018\)](#)
- [English Language Arts/Literacy K-12 Standards \(2017\)](#)
- [Health Education K-12 Standards \(2018\)](#)
- [Library and Technology K-12 Standards \(2012\)](#)
- [Mathematics K-12 Standards \(2017\)](#)
- [Media Arts K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Music K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Physical Education K-12 Standards \(2015\)](#)
- [Science K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Social Studies K-12 Standards - DRAFT \(2019\)](#)
- [Theatre Arts K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)
- [Visual Arts K-12 Standards \(2019\)](#)

Figure 6: North Dakota Education Content Standards (NDDPI, 2019)

State Contribution

- Support local districts in using the North Dakota content standards to align curriculum and instructional practices, per [North Dakota Century Code Chapter 15.1-21](#)
- Support and revise North Dakota content standards
- Communicate new developments within the North Dakota content standards and professional learning opportunities available
- Solicit feedback from district stakeholders and the public through the work of development and review committees

Local Contribution

- Allow autonomy in developing and delivering curriculum aligned to the North Dakota content standards
- Provide resources, materials, and professional learning to all instructors aligned to standards
- Monitor alignment and ensure fidelity of standards implementation in all content areas

Instructor Contribution

- Integrate literacy skills across contents
- Acquire knowledge of the standards continuum
- Provide responsive instruction to ensure all children meet and/or exceed standards
- Collaborate with all stakeholders regarding standards implementation



Assessment & Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation enable systems to continually monitor and adjust the other five essential elements of the North Dakota Comprehensive Literacy Plan to ensure high-quality literacy education for all. Assessment and evaluation are necessary to fully understand the learning needs of the whole child and provide evidence of learning. A balanced and comprehensive assessment and evaluation system is foundational for continuous literacy improvement and development of children in homes, schools, districts, communities, and the state.

Description

Assessment is the ongoing process of interviewing, observing, collecting, reviewing, and using valid and reliable measures to make the best instructional decisions, which will ultimately benefit literacy performance and enhance teaching practices. A comprehensive literacy plan includes formative and summative assessments; formal and informal assessments; and screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring. Summative assessment is defined as assessment of learning and occurs at a point in time to measure learners' achievement. Formative assessment is defined as assessment for learning where information is used to adapt teaching and learning to meet unique learner needs to improve their achievement of intended instructional outcomes.

Evaluation is the process of critically examining the effectiveness of systems. It is a cyclical approach that drives continuous improvement to best meet the literacy needs of children, instructors, schools, and districts. Evaluation of all components contributing to the literacy plan is essential for decision making. This process provides accountability of literacy achievement for all learners. By collaboratively and systematically analyzing data, targeted instructional decisions can be made to best meet the literacy needs of learners. No single assessment can provide enough information for instructors to make this decision (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Assessment & Evaluation Cycle Example (Program-Level Assessment, 2018)

State Contribution

- Provide statewide responsibility of all stakeholders in pursuit of the North Dakota literacy vision
- Evaluate statewide literacy outcomes consistently, continuously, and holistically
- Provide an accountability system framework upon which to evaluate the ability to achieve desired literacy outcomes
- Collaborate across state agencies to provide technical assistance
- Continually review and reflect on [assessment practices](#) across the state
- Provide technical assistance support for the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) and the North Dakota Alternate Assessment (NDAA)
- Use data from the NDSA, NDAA, and other statewide data measures to inform budgeting allocations and policy

Local Contribution

- Provide technical assistance and support regarding all local assessments used
- Align local assessments
- Provide professional development for instructors on effective assessment practices
- Conduct routine and systematic data-informed decision making of learners and systems
- Administer and ensure fidelity of all state and local assessments
- Evaluate systems through an efficient and structured process
- Review data systematically
- Continually review and reflect on assessment practices

Instructor Contribution

- Administer assessments
- Use assessment data results to be responsive to student needs
- Analyze multiple assessments to ensure a holistic understanding of a child
- Collaborate to analyze data results and use data to drive instruction and professional learning
- Review and reflect on assessment practices on a continual basis



Professional Development

Professional development opportunities provide intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, and data-informed support for instructors to develop the skills necessary to foster literacy success and readiness for all.

Description

An effective literacy plan designed to build a culture of literacy will provide intensive and sustained professional development that is connected to practice, focused on teaching and learning of specific content, aligned with continuous improvement priorities, and built on strong working relationships among staff to solve complex issues. It shall provide faculty, staff, collaborative agencies, and community partners with techniques that will impart literacy knowledge and skills. Professional learning should include collaboration, job-embedded support, and a clear commitment to providing time, scheduling support, and role clarification that will enable genuine change to occur (Figure 8). This requires substantial resources and a comprehensive, coordinated support system Birth through Grade 12.

Common Types of PD	SUSTAINED not stand-alone, 1-day or short-term workshops	INTENSIVE in-depth learning on a specific concept or practice	COLLABORATIVE multiple people working toward a common goal or shared practice	JOB-EMBEDDED ongoing learning directly connected to instruction	DATA-INFORMED analyze data and evidence to meet learners' needs	CLASSROOM-FOCUSED practices taking place during instructional time
IN-SERVICE DAYS staff-only training and development days	?	?	?	?	?	?
WORKSHOPS/ CONFERENCES on-site or off-site topical training	?	?	?	?	?	?
MENTORS/ COACHES providing advice and guidance to instructors	?	?	?	?	?	?
PLCs professional learning communities	?	?	?	?	?	?
ONLINE PD web-based professional learning	?	?	?	?	?	?

Figure 8: Do these common professional development opportunities meet the criteria above? (NDDPI, 2019)

State Contribution

- Support professional development provided through Regional Education Associations and other state agencies around literacy (check out northdakotapd.com for an easier way to find meaningful professional development in North Dakota)
- Provide guidance and technical support through Title II funding allocations and planning
- Align statewide initiatives on school improvement, student and family engagement, and standards development
- Respond to feedback from education stakeholders regarding professional learning needs
- Organize a statewide educators' conference based on current best practices and trends in education
- Require professional development as a condition of continued licensure

Local Contribution

- Demonstrate a commitment to a long-range professional development plan based on identified needs as determined through teacher and learner surveys, assessment data, coaching notes, and teacher evaluation
- Provide professional development based on evidence-based best practices within the six essential elements
- Monitor effectiveness of professional development offered
- Provide opportunities for all instructors to access resources and opportunities that continue to foster their skills as literacy leaders and promote lasting change
- Professional development opportunities occurring in the home, early care, and education environments should coordinate with professional learning within the school systems to provide the best opportunities for alignment and transitions

Instructor Contribution

- Participate in professional development opportunities aligned to learner needs and goals, as well as to assessment and evaluation results in order to continuously improve
- Seek out and access resources and opportunities that support literacy and promote lasting change
- Reflect on professional learning
- Apply professional learning to practice
- Assess the impact of professional development on learners



Family & Community Engagement

Intentionally collaborate with families and community to expand the shared responsibility for literacy success for all.

Description

Student success is the shared responsibility of schools, communities, and families. Engagement occurs across multiple settings and is continuous from Birth through Grade 12. Trust, equity, and inclusion are built through a focus on relationships. Collaborative practices among these entities are developed through shared ownership of results, strategic partnerships, resource coordination, data-driven planning, and inclusive leadership. Family engagement culture is developed through stakeholder professional learning and sustained through a continuous improvement process (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Principles of Family Engagement (Constantino, 2016)

State Contribution

- Provide a platform for collecting data about family and community engagement (i.e., Cogna, Livingtree, PowerSchool, etc.)
- Secure funding through federal and state avenues to increase awareness of high-impact family and community engagement practices
- Maintain Superintendent's Family Cabinet for parent voice
- Seek feedback from the public on statewide initiatives
- Ensure equitable avenues for learner, family, and community feedback

Local Contribution

- Establish a plan for ongoing review and development of family engagement philosophy
- Include families and community in development of policies and practices
- Ensure equitable avenues for learner, family, and community feedback
- Prioritize family engagement policies and procedures that have high impact on student success
- Lead and support ongoing, professional development related to evidence-based family engagement

Instructor Contribution

- Establish positive communication channels
- Maintain awareness of family and learner needs
- Prioritize building relationships
- Differentiate family and community engagement practices
- Seek out opportunities to involve the community in lessons and activities
- Stay informed of current, evidence-based practices

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