

## North Dakota Literacy Task Force: Convening #3 on Educator Training May 3, 2024 | 9:30 – 11:00AM CT | Virtual

### OVERVIEW

The recent enactment of House Bill 1231 requires the State Superintendent to appoint a task force to review all sections of the North Dakota Century Code related to literacy, dyslexia, and teacher professional development. The third convening of this North Dakota Literacy Task Force took place on May 3, 2024. The Task Force is comprised of [19 members](#) who are responsible for developing a report of findings and recommendations to be presented to the sixty-ninth legislative assembly. The third convening focused on various topics related to pre-service and in-service educator training in evidence-aligned literacy instruction. Superintendent Kirsten Baesler began the convening with opening remarks on the importance of educator training. Opening remarks were followed by a presentation about educator preparation programs and professional development. The remainder of the meeting was spent in break out groups, focused on discussing elements of evidence-aligned literacy instruction training for pre-service and in-service educators.

### North Dakota Department of Public Instruction:

- [The Honorable Kirsten Baesler](#), State Superintendent | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

### The Hunt Institute Staff:

#### FACILITATOR:

- [Maureen Stover](#), Deputy Director | K-12

#### STAFF:

- Jaalil Hart, Deputy Director of K-12
- Kathleen Arney, Policy Analyst K-12

### RESOURCES

[Meeting #3 Agenda](#)

[Power Point Presentation](#)

[Recording Link Part 1](#)

[Recording Link Part 2](#)

## Key Takeaways from The Path Forward: Education Preparation Programs Working Group

### Overview

[Dr. Becky Pitkin](#), Executive Director of Program Approval, Professional Practice | Education Standards and Practices Board

[Kerri Whipple](#), Director of Literacy | South East Education Cooperative

- The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, NDDPI, is hosting a [literacy summit](#) July 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 in Bismarck.
- Over the past four years, NDDPI in partnership with Regional Education Associations (REAs), has trained [educators](#) through Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling ([LETRS](#)) training.

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## Key Takeaways

- [Curriculum fairs](#) provide an opportunity for district teams to explore Tier 1 evidence-aligned instructional materials, including The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Tool and North Dakota's Curriculum Materials Considerations Guidance Document (link to <https://ndrea.org/assets/images/Flyers/Curriculum%20Guidance%20Updated%2011.13.23.pdf>)
- High-quality instructional materials provide additional time for teachers to develop and students to engage in extension activities.
- The elements of evidence-aligned literacy instruction include informed and trained teachers, high quality instructional materials, [standards-aligned](#) instruction, and supporting teachers through coaching, data meetings, common planning time, cross-district training and professional learning communities with a focus on implementing teaching strategies and methods with fidelity.
- [Scarborough's Reading Rope](#) forms the basis of all programs and training in ND with the [five pillars](#) of literacy overlaying the rope.
- The [Education Standards and Practices Board](#) approves education preparation programs (EPP) as a lever to ensure all program completers are proficient in teaching evidence-aligned literacy.
- EPPs and NDDPI share a commitment to developing and supporting pre-service training grounded in the International Dyslexia Association's (IDA) Knowledge and Practice [Standards](#) for Teachers of Reading.
- North Dakota categorizes the standards into three levels. Level 1 indicates that the standard is introduced in one course, Level 2 indicates that the standard is introduced in several courses, and Level 3 indicates the standard is acted out and practiced in the field with students during the pre-service teachers' practicum experience.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Professors have articulated that some of the evidence-aligned literacy theory and practice taught by EPPs is not reinforced with practice in the field. Pre-service teachers should be placed into classrooms with mentor teachers who are trained and proficient in evidence-aligned literacy instruction.
- North Dakota statute should require at least one reading expert in each school and define their role. All teachers need to be supported with training, implementation support, and identification of high-quality instructional materials. Identifying exemplar programs and districts could enable North Dakota to replicate effective programs to scale at the state-level.

## RESOURCES

[The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines 2023](#) | A tool to evaluate how well a curriculum aligns with the findings from the Science of Reading

[HB 1388](#) | North Dakota In-Service Educator Literacy Law

[HB 1231](#) | North Dakota Pre-service Educator Literacy Law

## Key Takeaways from Small Group Discussions

### PRE-SERVICE EDUCATOR TRAINING

- Pre-service literacy instructional training programs in North Dakota incorporate specific components aligned with the five pillars of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Dickinson State University's [program](#) adheres to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Knowledge and Practice [Standards](#) for Teachers of Reading, grounding instruction in the five pillars of literacy.
  - The IDA standards are integrated into reading classes at all three levels: foundational, intermediate, and advanced.
- Conversations are underway at NDDPI regarding the expansion of literacy training to higher grade levels beyond the traditional K-6 focus.
- North Dakota's pre-service literacy training emphasizes addressing the diverse needs of students, including those with specific learning disabilities, learning differences, and those at risk for reading difficulties identified by universal screeners.
- Faculty engagement with assessments and screening tools enhances their capacity to understand results and diagnose student needs effectively.
- Increasing hands-on experience for students is deemed critical in the training process.

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## Key Takeaways

- Collaboration between districts and universities is vital; exploring ways to strengthen partnerships is essential for enhancing pre-service training effectiveness.
- The University of North Dakota faculty engaging in LETRS training with rural schools exemplifies a valuable model. This shared learning environment fosters practical understanding and application of literacy strategies.
- Testimonials, relating students' experiences, affirm the effectiveness of pre-service training programs in equipping teacher candidates with necessary skills and standards comprehension.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- NDDPI should collaborate with EPPs to develop a pilot or program that would allow EPPs to administer assessments to candidates' understanding of content around the IDA standards throughout their program of study.
- EPPs should introduce IDA standards across various courses and map them to identify any gaps in coverage across the program's course of study.

## IN-SERVICE EDUCATOR TRAINING

- The NDDPI in collaboration with the REAs, provides in-service training to educators statewide.
- Several REAs partner with the state to provide the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training to in-service teachers. NDDPI is working to expand access to these trainings across the state. There are also independent districts providing LETRS training to their staff.
- Some districts have chosen to utilize "data days" or professional development days to prioritize reading training. The St. John school district was able to break down the five pillars of reading and prioritize training based on grade level appropriateness.
- Due to state and REA efforts, districts report an increased ability to identify teacher needs systematically. By using teacher data to make training decisions, schools and districts avoid a top-down approach and make training more responsive to teacher needs.
- The science of reading trainings has allowed The St. John school district to implement evidence-aligned literacy instruction and review their curriculum materials to ensure alignment. They reported that it was helpful to have a mix of veteran and new teachers involved in this process.
- Some districts struggle to provide professional development in reading; therefore, one challenge to ensuring all educators are trained in the science of reading is securing funding and providing class coverage for teachers and facilitators to attend literacy training programs.
- Science of reading and LETRS training has helped schools and teachers change the way they assess students. The increased data enables teachers to pinpoint areas of support directly rather than grouping students by overall performance. This allows for more thorough and effective intervention.
- Individual teachers appreciate the additional asynchronous training to deep dive into specific areas, such as dyslexia, to expand their professional practice to better support students with learning differences and specific learning disabilities in reading.
- Facilitators of literacy training reported a need to clarify that science of reading approaches benefit all students including students with learning differences, English Language Learners, and other struggling readers.
- Concerns over the lack of opportunities for pre-service teachers to engage in literacy instruction during intern teaching experiences are influencing public perceptions of urgency of strengthening literacy instruction.
- Embedding the required components of the science of reading legislation into core instruction may better support struggling readers and potentially reduce their required interventions.
- Implementation is the next biggest challenge for literacy policy. Strategies that have been helpful so far include:
  - Literacy grants,
  - Accessible literacy training, and
  - Literacy coaches or experts to support beginning and veteran teachers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

# North Dakota Literacy Task Force Key Takeaways



- North Dakota should Implement a gradual release model during literacy training to support the implementation period after direct training instruction. This will allow teachers to improve implementation faster and potentially be a tool to support teacher retention.
- North Dakota should Increase funding or access to literacy or reading coaches across schools to assist in the implementation of the science of reading after training.

## RESOURCES

[Professional Development Decision-Making Flowchart](#) | This resource outlines the science of reading professional development options available to in-service educators from teachers to instructional coaches to administrators across the state.

## Appendix A

### North Dakota Literacy Task Force Members

#### Task Force Members:

- Kirsten Baseler | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, State Superintendent
- Angie Waletzko | Parent and Family Engagement
- Dr. Pam Krueger | Dickenson State University
- Janet Bassingthwaite | Mandan Public Schools, Early Learning Coordinator
- Tina Pletan | Bismarck Public Schools, K-5 Literacy Specialist
- Jerlyn Gaberielson | Flasher Public Schools, Elementary Teacher
- Nicole Manson | Fargo Public Schools, Interventionist
- Nicole Polum | Grand Forks Public Schools, Middle School Teacher
- Ben Scallon | Lakota Public Schools, High School Teacher
- Dr. Nicole Reybok | Griggs-Steele-Traill Special Education Unit, Director of Special Education
- Cheryl Hagar | Minot Public Schools, Title I and Family Engagement Coordinator
- Kerri Whipple | Southeast Education Cooperative, Director of Literacy
- Beth Slette | West Fargo Public Schools, Superintendent
- Dr. Sherry Tandeski | St. John School District, Elementary Principal
- Dr. Noelle Green | McKenzie County Public Schools, Middle School Principal
- Representative Cindy Schreiber-Beck | North Dakota State House
- Senator Donald Schaible | North Dakota State Senate
- Kari Bucholz | Haley's Hope Dyslexia Learning Center
- Dr. Cory Steiner | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Chair

#### Ex-Officio Members:

- Dr. Becky Pitkin | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Executive Director
- Brenda Ehrmantraut | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Academic Support
- Lea Kugel | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Specially Designed Services
- Ann Ellefson | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Director of Academic Support
- Jessica Thomasson | North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Executive Policy Director