

# **North Dakota Comprehensive State Literacy Plan**

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**NORTH DAKOTA'S  
COMPREHENSIVE STATE LITERACY  
PLAN**

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## Culture of North Dakota Literacy Essential Elements



## Leadership & Sustainability

Leadership and sustainability are crucial to the success of improving literacy within the state of North Dakota. In North Dakota, this commitment means utilizing a statewide coordinator tasked with organizing the statewide literacy team, mentoring, and monitoring programs. North Dakota has a strong statewide commitment to the literacy plan goals and objectives as a whole to specific implementation issues at a variety of levels within the educational system. The state is tasked with allowing those who know their programs best to lead programming for the schools and set parameters and budgets accordingly to meet the literacy needs of all students birth - grade 12.

At the district and classroom level, school administration, teachers, paraprofessionals, and parents support these same commitments. Across all of these levels, the central goal is improving literacy in North Dakota through ongoing instructional leadership and implementation.

It is the constitutional and statutory responsibility of the State Superintendent and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) to supervise elementary and secondary education students attending North Dakota schools (North Dakota Century Code §15.1-02-04). These duties include supervision of the establishment and maintenance of schools, and the advancement of statewide efforts to improve education for all students.

It is the responsibility of the State of North Dakota to ensure all students are provided high-quality instruction based on challenging state content standards. Highly qualified teachers who are supervised by effective principals must provide this instruction.

The State of North Dakota ensures that every teacher is highly qualified through the state's teacher licensure provisions. State administrative rules require teachers be supervised by qualified principals. The state and local school districts place supervisory, leadership, and management responsibilities on principals to ensure the proper administration of their appointed schools. The North Dakota Century Code §15.1-15 specifies that every public school district shall conduct an appropriate evaluation for each public school principal. Principal performance evaluations provide for the continual improvement of a principal's overall performance and may be used to inform personnel decisions.

The NDDPI also worked to align the new Principal Teacher Evaluation Support System (PTESS) with the statewide accreditation process with AdvancED. The department has the ability to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the new evaluation process through North Dakota state assurances within the AdvancED ASSIST tool and the external evaluation process used for accreditation. The connection of the new evaluation system to the accreditation of all public schools in North Dakota creates a uniform system of accountability statewide and helps to ensure the effectiveness of all schools.

North Dakotans understand that effective principals are important to students' growth and achievement. As a state, we believe we must build the capacity of our principals as a way to improve instruction and student achievement. The state's reliable PTESS fosters continuous improvement among all principals. These guidelines help local school districts improve the quality, uniformity, and reliability of their local principal evaluations. See Figure 1 on page 4.

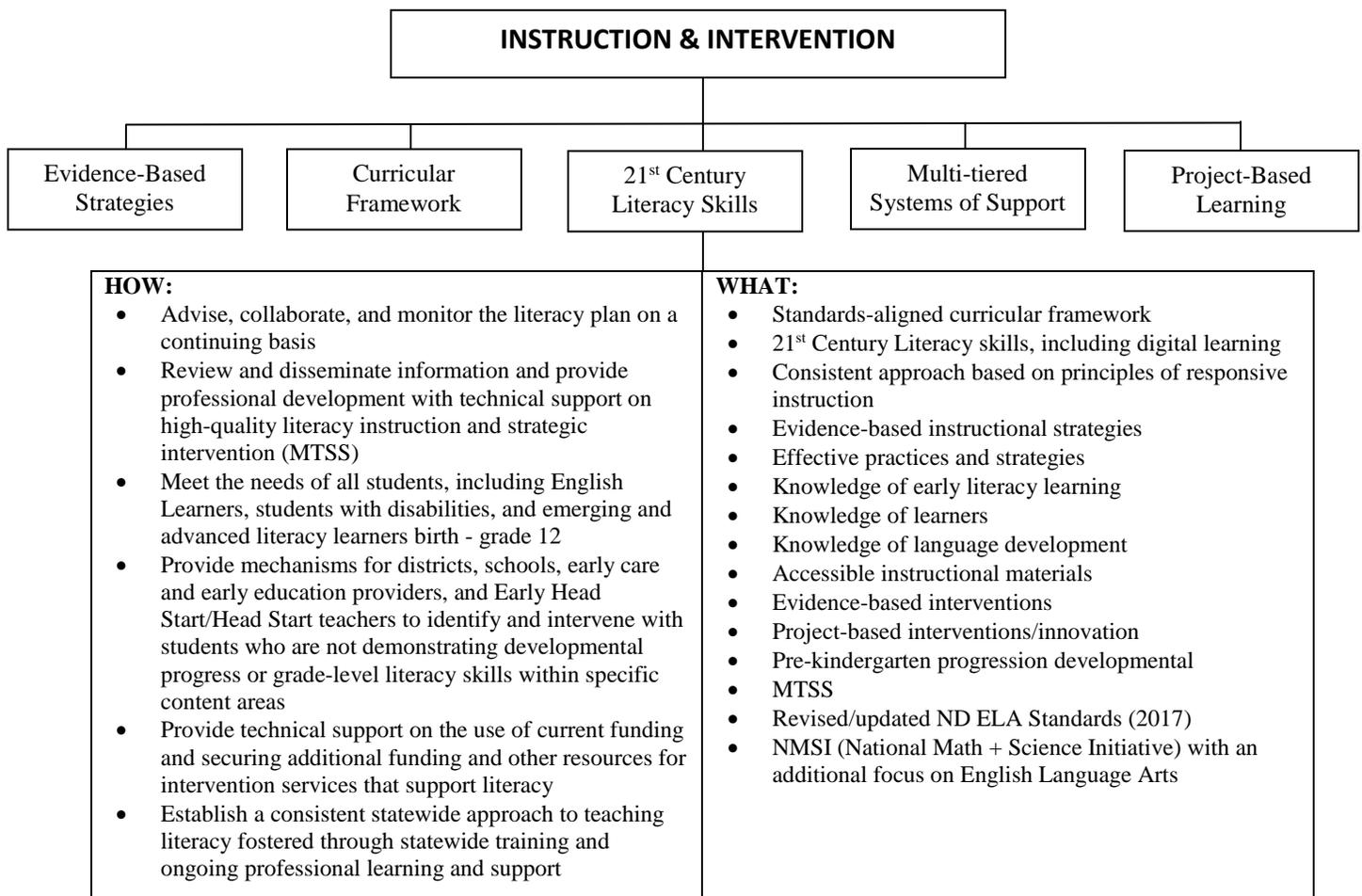
**Figure 1. Leadership & Sustainability**



## Instruction & Intervention

An important function of the North Dakota state literacy initiative is to ensure consistent and effective literacy instruction for all students, birth - grade 12. Literacy is a responsibility shared by all stakeholders allowing students to develop their knowledge and potential. During the early literacy continuum of learning, through progressive developmental milestones, students are influenced by their teachers' expectations for progress and school district opportunities for instructional strategies. Effective teachers use the instructional strategies within a range of contexts and approaches to teaching literacy. When instruction is high in quality, the information being presented makes sense to students, is interesting to them, and is easy to remember and apply (Slavin, 1995). The core instruction (Tier I in MTSS) is the literacy instruction all students receive; strategic interventions (Tier II) go beyond core instruction and are matched to student needs, adding resources, materials, and extending the activities as needed. Intensive high quality instruction and interventions (Tier III), matched to the needs of students, is key to improving literacy achievement for all students. Active learning is a process whereby students engage in activities in reading, writing, discussion, or problem solving to promote analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class content. See Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Instruction & Intervention**

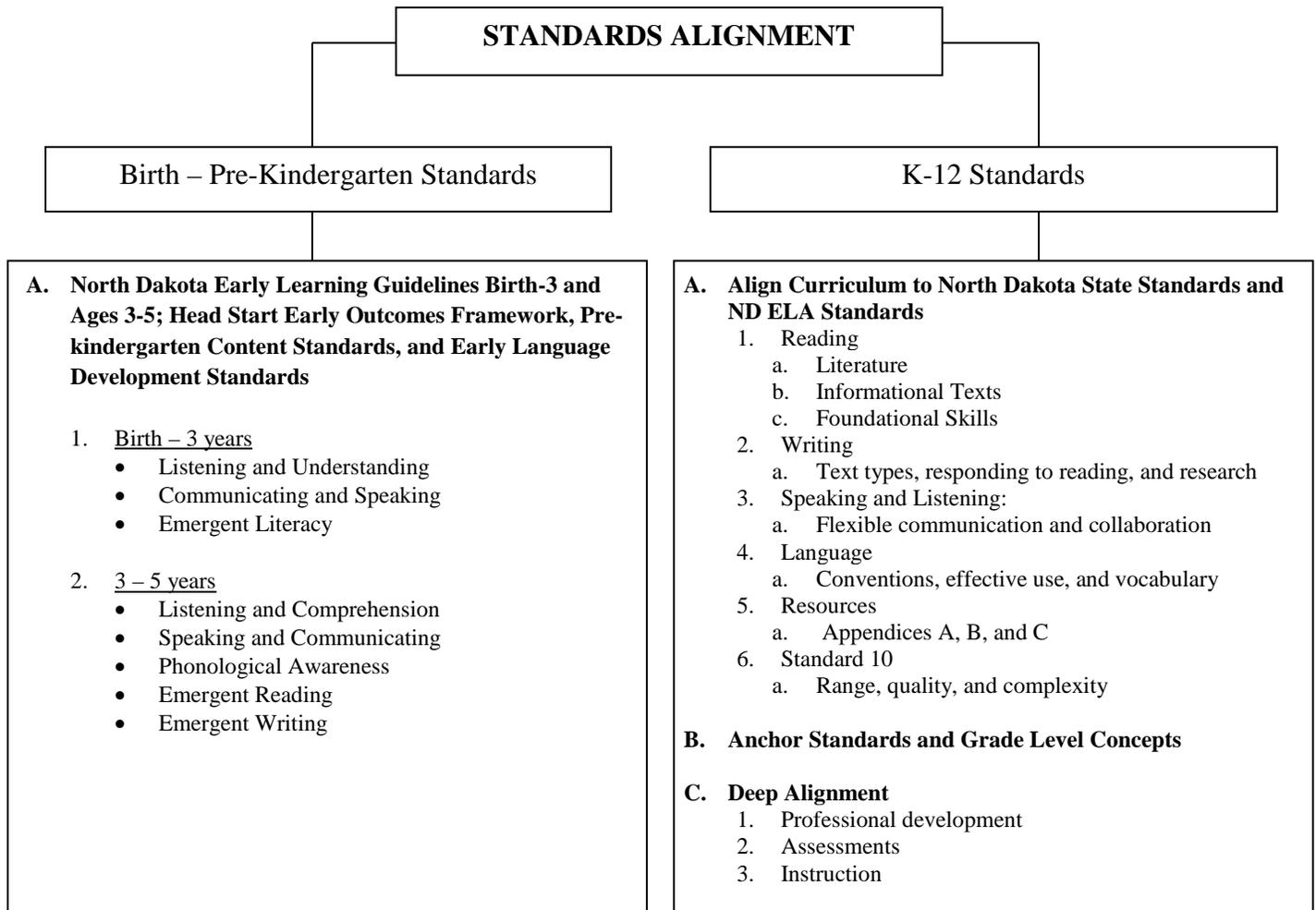


## Standards Alignment

The North Dakota State Standards in English/Language Arts are designed to build upon the most advanced, current thinking preparing all students for success regardless of their choice for the future. The North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines Birth-3 and Ages 3-5; Head Start Early Outcomes Framework; Pre-kindergarten Content Standards; the English Language Development Standards; and the Early Language Development Standards are aligned to the States Standards and are specifically designed to move all children from birth - grade 12 in critical literacy skills in both reading and writing. The standards are rigorous and created to prepare students for their future.

North Dakota has developed choice ready standards because even in high-performing states, students are graduating and passing all the required tests but still require remediation in their postsecondary work. The standards emphasize that both content and skills are important. In English language arts, the standards require certain critical content for all students, including classic myths and stories from around the world, America's founding documents, foundational American literature, and Shakespeare. In addition to content coverage, the standards require that students systematically acquire knowledge in literature and other disciplines through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The curriculum in each early learning program, Head Start/Early Head Start, and school districts across the state of North Dakota must be aligned to the developmentally appropriate practices to make sure each district is meeting these rigorous standards. Assessments, professional development, and instruction are aligned to the standards. See Figure 3 on page 7.

**Figure 3. Standards Alignment**



## Assessment & Evaluation

Essential literacy components for student achievement include a balance of assessments and student evaluation. A balanced, comprehensive assessment plan is not necessarily one that can be implemented quickly. A complete reading plan includes a variety of both formative and summative assessments. The North Dakota Kindergarten Entry Assessment (NDKEA) is a formative assessment process that informs on-going teaching and learning in order to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes. The NDKEA occurs within the instructional routine rather than an isolated event. It is intended to build on instructional activities teachers are already utilizing rather than being viewed as added work. This process is designed to inform schools, teachers, and families about how to best support children's learning.

The purpose of our accountability system is to provide statewide responsibility of all stakeholders to pursue our North Dakota vision. Through this accountability framework, North Dakota will:

- ✓ Provide transparency and public reporting of key performance and improvement indicators for all schools, districts, and the state;
- ✓ Ensure all schools and districts are engaged in a process of continuous improvement;
- ✓ Identify when and where desired results are not being achieved, and prioritize which schools are most in need of support; and
- ✓ Allocate resources and support services, increase oversight and engagement, and elevate accountability for those schools most in need of support.

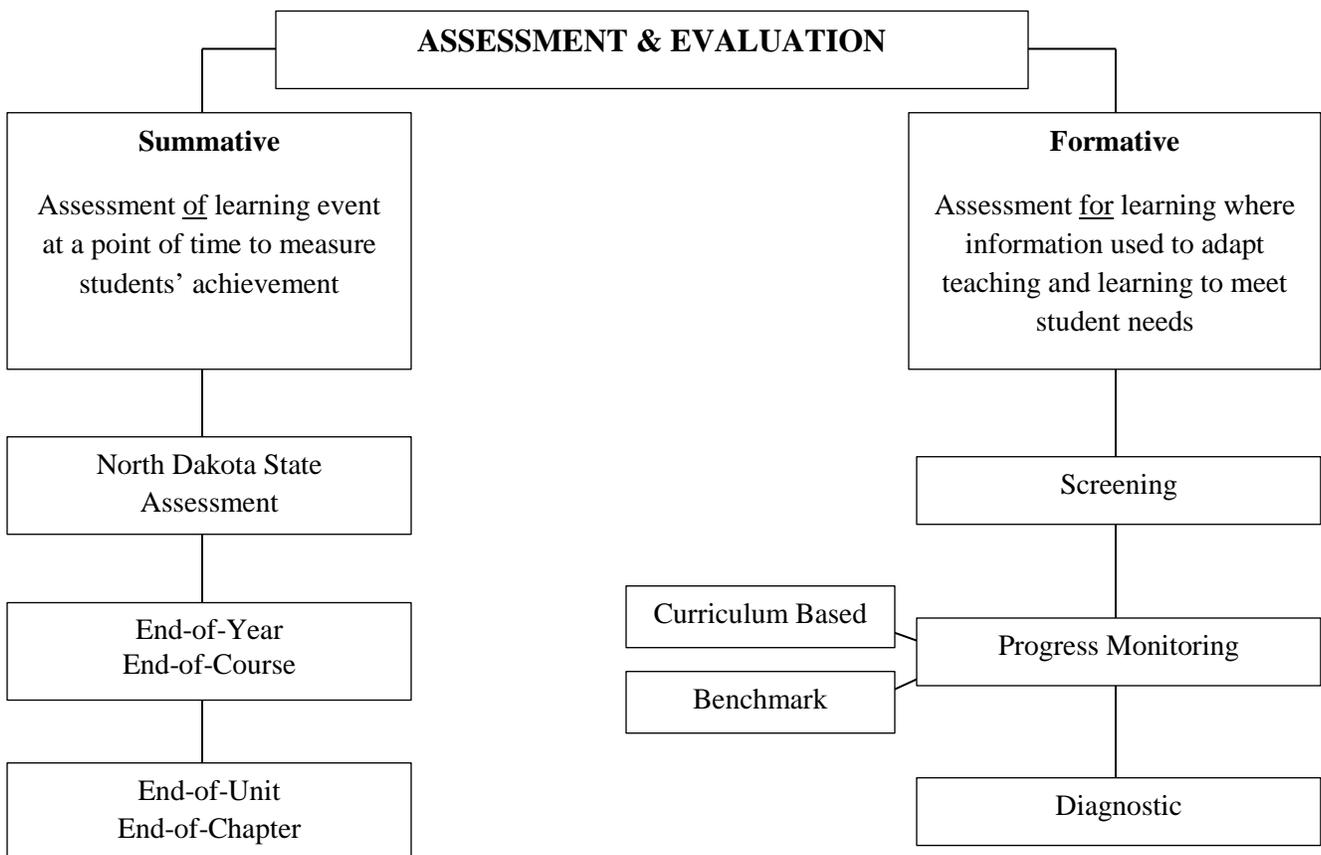
North Dakota's accountability system will provide a framework upon which we consistently, continuously, and holistically evaluate the ability of our state's educational system to achieve desired outcomes. North Dakota's discussions with its ESSA Planning Committee have focused on the use of a dashboard for all schools, which allows multiple factors outlining a school's measure of quality.

North Dakota is collaborating with AdvancED on many elements addressing continuous improvement and the development of an index model for incorporating growth within each school's dashboard. North Dakota has applied a composite growth model within its accountability system under ESSA. Any academic achievement goals, either long-term or interim, apply to composite and subgroup academic achievement for schools, districts, and the state. School participation in the AdvancED process, engage in a needs assessment every five years if they are a Title I Targeted Assisted school. If determined to be Title I Schoolwide, an annual needs assessment will be conducted.

Assessment is a process of collecting, reviewing, and using information to make the best instructional decision, which will ultimately benefit student performance. It is the goal of the implementation team to work collaboratively and systematically with teachers to routinely guide instructional decisions to meet the learning needs of their students. There is no single assessment that provides enough information for teachers to make this decision. North Dakota schools will locally decide which assessments best meet the needs of their instructional practices.

Examples of other assessments given by schools around the state may be, but are not limited to, NWEA, STAR, DIBELS, and AIMSweb. See Figure 4 below.

**Figure 4. Assessment & Evaluation**

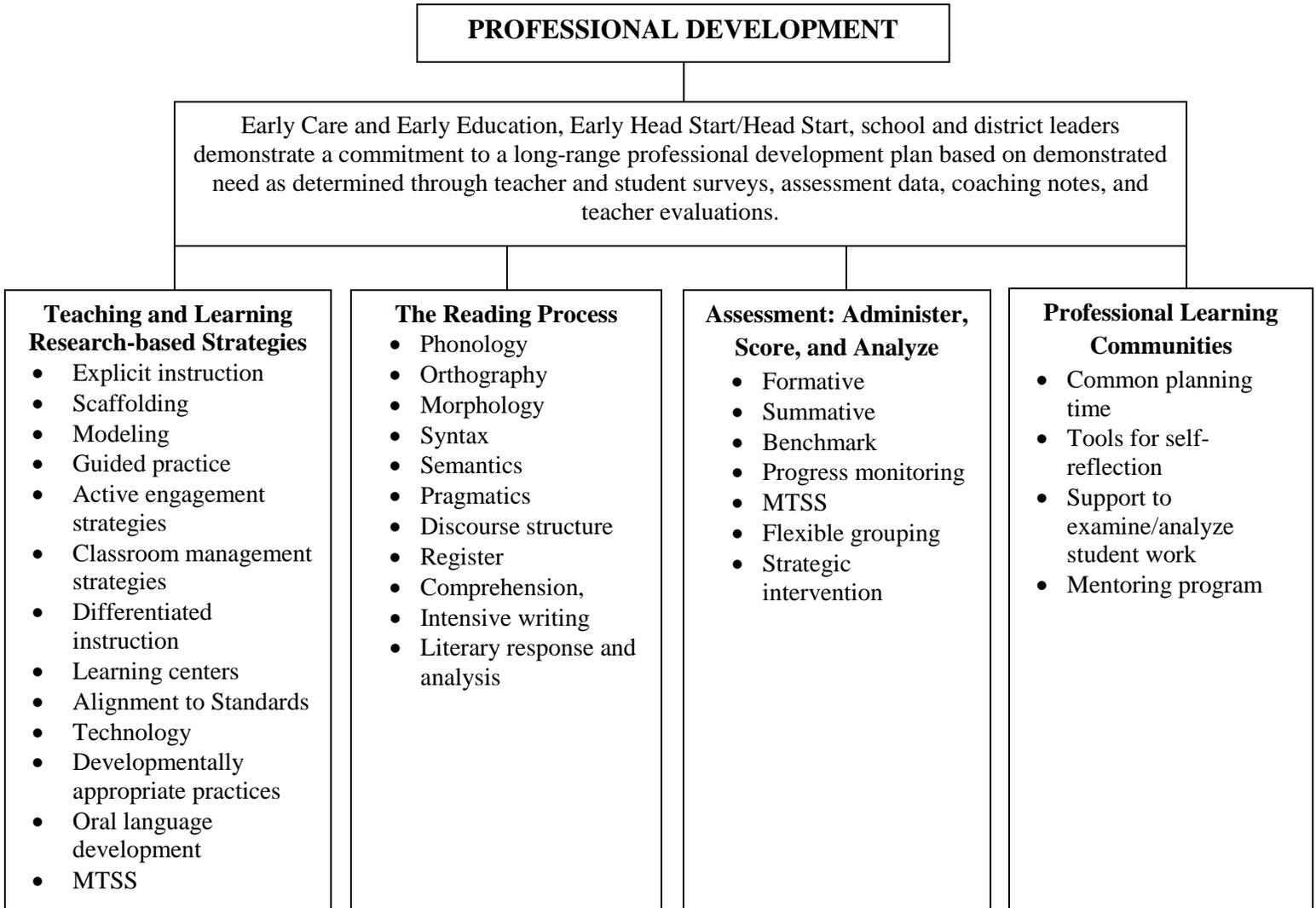


## Professional Development

An effective literacy plan designed to build a culture of literacy provides sustained and intensive professional development that is connected to practice, focuses on teaching and learning of specific content, aligns with school improvement priorities, and builds strong working relationships among staff to solve complex issues. This requires substantial resources and a comprehensive, coordinated support system birth - grade 12. All educators must have access to materials and opportunities that continue to foster their skills as literacy leaders and promote lasting change. Professional learning, for the State of North Dakota and its educational entities, is defined as ongoing activities that are an integral part of schools and local education agencies that contain strategies for providing all faculty and staff with techniques that will impart the knowledge and skills to form well-rounded students. Professional learning shall be an intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data driven, classroom-focused strategy to develop the skills necessary to enable students to succeed in a well-rounded education and meet the challenging state 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills necessary to foster readiness after high school.

North Dakota believes and is committed to the common goals of improving literacy and professional learning. (Easton, 2008; Gaffney, Hesbol, & Corse, 2005; Reagan, Case & Brubacher, 2000; Schon, 1983). Professional learning must include professional development, professional collaboration, and job-embedded support (Easton, 2008; Schon, 1983). It must also include a clear commitment to providing the time (Easton, 2008; Meltzer & Ziemba, 2006), scheduling support (Easton, 2008), and role clarification (Easton, 2008; Klein, Monti, Mulcahy-Ernt & Speck, 1997; Meltzer & Ziemba, 2006) that will enable genuine change to occur. See Figure 5 on page 11.

**Figure 5. Professional Development**



## Family & Community Engagement

North Dakota recognizes the most effective forms of parent family involvement to engage parents directly with their children on learning activities from birth - grade 12. It is critical to build on a foundation, a framework that highlights a set of desired family outcomes and examples of strategies to achieve them. These outcomes may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Family well-being
- Positive parent-child relationships
- Families as lifelong educators
- Families as learners
- Family engagement in transitions (e.g., to birth-preschool, preschool-kindergarten, kindergarten, kindergarten-elementary school, elementary school-middle school, middle school-high school)
- Family connections to peers and the community
- Families as advocates and leaders

While a framework may recommend a specific way for programs to work towards these outcomes, strategies are flexible and adaptable to local needs.

Community and parent ties can have a lasting effect on student growth, while empowering them to succeed in and outside the classroom.

NDDPI encourages its schools to work collaboratively and intentionally with their parents and community to assist students to build on skills taught each day. This will in turn have lasting effect on student academic success and self-belief systems. See Figure 6 on page 13.

**Figure 6. Family & Community Engagement**

North Dakota encourages the following key strategies for effective partnerships (NEA-2017):	
Strategy 1: Using data to set priorities and focus strategies	Looking closely at current achievement trends and addressing areas of weakness in students' knowledge and skills.
Strategy 2: Providing relevant, on-site professional development	Basing professional development on data and conversations among stakeholders, in a way that builds both educator-educator and educator-parent collaborations.
Strategy 3: Building collaborations with community partners	Pulling in strategic partners and developing community buy-in – with colleges, social services agencies, community groups, faith-based organizations, local leaders, public officials, and businesses – to improve student learning and other outcomes.
Strategy 4: Using targeted outreach to focus on high-needs communities, schools, and students	Identifying groups that need special attention, learning about their concerns and needs, and responding in culturally appropriate ways.
Strategy 5: Building one-to-one relationships between families and educators that are linked to learning	Taking time to have conversations and reach agreement on how best to collaborate in order to improve student achievement.
Strategy 6: Setting, communicating, and supporting high and rigorous expectations	Making it clear that success is the norm by creating pathways to college, especially for students at risk and those at the margins, and providing students with support to succeed.
Strategy 7: Addressing cultural differences	Providing support for teachers and education support professionals to bridge barriers of culture, class, and language.
Strategy 8: Connecting students to the community	Making learning hands-on and relevant to students' lives while also showing that students and schools serve the community.

## Literacy Timeline

Grade/Level	Planning	Beginning	Implemented	Expanding
<b>Ages Birth-3</b>	Emphasize the importance of the child's experiences and engagement in literacy activities prior to starting school. Emphasize early literacy development and instruction based on the North Dakota Early Learning Guidelines Birth-Age 3 and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.	Provide research-based, early literacy instruction through collaborative agencies and programs such as Early Intervention (e.g., ND Dept. of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division).	High-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategies to curriculum framework, ND State Standards, &amp; EL Development Standards.</li> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-K Ages 3-5</b>	Recognize the significance of the transition to school in terms of a child's learning and the importance of meeting the needs of those whose home literacy practices differ from those of the school, and understand the fact that children take different pathways toward becoming literate.	Provide research-based, early literacy instruction through collaborative agencies and programs (e.g., ND Dept. of Human Services, Children and Family Services Division). Emphasize early literacy development based on the ND Pre-kindergarten content standards; Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework; the ND Early Learning Guidelines Ages 3-5; and the Early Childhood Special Education Outcomes Process. Provide early language development instruction for dual language learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MTSS being modeled in various schools in North Dakota with hopes to grow in the future.</li> <li>• Early EL professional development cohort.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> <li>• Goals for statewide professional development.</li> </ul>
<b>Primary Gr. K-3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan the core literacy instruction all children will receive.</li> <li>• Plan core EL instruction to allow for access to literacy instruction.</li> </ul>	Use of instructional strategies within a variety of contexts and approaches to teaching reading and writing, based on principles of responsive instruction and using a standards aligned curricular framework.	High-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategies to curriculum framework, ND State Standards, &amp; EL Development Standards.</li> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate Gr. 4-6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan the core literacy instruction all children will receive.</li> <li>• Plan core EL instruction to allow for access to literacy instruction.</li> </ul>	Use of instructional strategies within a variety of contexts and approaches to teaching reading and writing, based on principles of responsive instruction and using a standards aligned curricular framework.	High-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategies to curriculum framework, ND State Standards, &amp; EL Development Standards.</li> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> <li>• NMSI</li> </ul>
<b>Middle Gr. 7-8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan the core literacy instruction all children will receive.</li> <li>• Plan core EL instruction to allow for access to literacy instruction.</li> </ul>	Use of instructional strategies within a variety of contexts and content areas and approaches to teaching reading and writing, based on principles of responsive instruction and using a standards aligned curricular framework.	High-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategies to curriculum framework, ND State Standards, &amp; EL Development Standards.</li> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> <li>• NMSI</li> </ul>
<b>Secondary Gr. 9-12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan the core literacy instruction all children will receive.</li> <li>• Plan core EL instruction to allow for access to literacy instruction.</li> </ul>	Use of instructional strategies within a variety of contexts and content areas and approaches to teaching reading and writing, based on principles of responsive instruction and using a standards aligned curricular framework.	High-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, and monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals. Data are used to allocate resources to improve student learning and support staff implementation of effective practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment of strategies to curriculum framework, ND State Standards, &amp; EL Development Standards.</li> <li>• Goal for continuous statewide expansion.</li> <li>• CREAM, NMSI</li> </ul>

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