

South Carolina District Reading Plan Guidance Document



Office of Early Learning and Literacy
Division of College and Career Readiness
South Carolina Department of Education

SECTION A: NARRATIVE EXPLANATION OF DISTRICT READING PLAN COMPONENTS

The goal of Read to Succeed is to improve reading achievement for all students, prekindergarten through twelfth grade. Pursuant to the Read to Succeed, Act 284 legislation, all districts are required to annually submit a District Reading Plan, which supports evidence-based reading instruction. The District Reading Plan must accurately depict and detail the role of district and school leadership in support of assessment, curriculum, instruction, and intervention; professional learning; parent and family involvement; and school community partnerships in support of increased student achievement in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and inquiring.

The District Reading Plan must include a focus on:

- *leadership to guide and support evidence-based reading research practices aligned with state policies;*
- *clear and measurable student achievement goals;*
- *professional learning opportunities for educators in support of reading and writing;*
- *systemic reading and writing assessment and instruction plans for all students including intensive interventions for students who are not proficient in comprehending grade-level text;*
- *a system for helping parents and families understand how they can support their child as a reader and writer at home; and*
- *a strategic plan for developing partnerships with county libraries, state and local arts organizations, volunteers, social service organizations, library media specialists and others to promote reading and writing.*

The District Reading Plan must address the following:

- 1. A leadership plan to guide and support evidence-based reading research practices aligned with state policies is developed.**

The District Reading Plan must detail who will serve as the district leader to support evidence-based reading practices aligned with state policies, specifically Read to Succeed and the district leader's role, including specific responsibilities to improve student achievement district-wide.

Guiding questions: *Who will serve as the district leader to support evidence-based reading practices? How will stakeholders be informed regarding the prekindergarten through twelfth grade District Reading Plan? How will the District Literacy Leadership Team support evidence-based reading practices and effective writing instruction aligned to state policies, specifically Read to Succeed?*

The roles and responsibilities of the District Literacy Leadership Team include:

- *developing and implementing a plan for establishing student achievement goals and for informing stakeholders regarding progress towards meeting student achievement goals;*
- *providing information regarding Read to Succeed legislation and guidance for implementation;*
- *providing evidence-based instructional resources and supports;*
- *ensuring coordination among all program areas including federal programs (e.g., Title I, Title III, IDEA), special education and others as appropriate;*
- *establishing, leading, and supporting administrators and other educators in becoming more effective practitioners in literacy;*
- *ensuring the literacy practices of all are effective in helping students move toward demonstration of grade-level proficiency;*
- *defining to school administrators, teachers, and school-based reading coaches, the role of the reading coach as a full-time professional development resource for teachers and explaining clearly that the coach is not used as a reading resource teacher, a substitute, an administrator, an interventionist, or in any other capacity that takes them away from their primary role;*
- *facilitating research-based professional learning opportunities district-wide, which focus on effective literacy practices through the establishment of collaborative professional learning communities;*
- *developing a district-wide system which ensures the use of text-based assessment;*
- *engaging staff in identifying, collecting, monitoring, and responding to a variety of data on a regular basis and supporting staff in using data to inform instruction and interventions;*
- *determining a process for monitoring, evaluating, and providing feedback on the implementation of the district and school reading plans;*
- *providing updates to the local School Board and the Office of Early Learning and Literacy addressing implementation successes, challenges, and progress towards meeting student achievement goals; and*
- *establishing a plan to increase parent, family, and community involvement in the school.*

2. Clear and measurable student achievement goals are established.

Clear and measurable student achievement goals for literacy should be set for each grade, prekindergarten through twelfth grade and are necessary to drive instruction, improve achievement, and to evaluate overall effectiveness and student growth. Early literacy goals should be set for prekindergarten. Measureable student achievement goals must be established using state and local assessment results. If certain grade levels do not have state accountability measures, local assessments should be used to set student achievement goals. Action steps for obtaining goals by the end of each year should be clearly articulated and monitored frequently for each grade level.

Guiding questions: Using state assessment data, what are the student achievement goals for each grade, prekindergarten through twelfth grade? If state assessment data is not available for specific grade levels, what local assessment data will be used to set student achievement goals? What were the steps taken to establish goals for each grade, prekindergarten through twelfth grade?

3. Systemic professional learning opportunities for district and school administrators and teachers are provided.

Professional learning is the vehicle used to provide administrators and teachers with the support, knowledge, skills, and instructional practices they need to deliver effective instruction. Effective professional learning opportunities are job-embedded and include five critical characteristics: 1) collaborative learning; 2) links among curriculum, assessment, and standards; 3) active learning; 4) deepening of content knowledge and how to teach it; and 5) are sustained over time. Ongoing support, offered through different delivery models, helps everyone master their craft so that every student can demonstrate or make significant progress toward grade-level proficiency.

Guiding questions: How will the district provide systemic professional learning opportunities for principals and teachers in the areas of evidence-based reading instruction, discipline-specific literacy, and intervention? How will the district provide professional learning opportunities to help schools use assessment data to target instruction and intervention based on student needs? How will the district utilize reading coaches to provide job-embedded professional learning opportunities? How will professional learning opportunities be targeted to meet individual needs, as determined by an analysis of student performance data? What delivery models will be used to ensure all educators have access to the professional learning opportunities provided?

4. A comprehensive assessment system is established.

Reading and writing assessments take many forms including formative and summative assessments and serve as the basis for delivering data-driven instruction. Educators must use assessments to identify students who are at risk academically in order to adjust instruction to meet each student's individual needs. Assessment systems should assess all research-based reading components including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and be used to regularly monitor student

progress. Progress monitoring is a practice that assists teachers in using student data to continually evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching in order to make informed instructional decisions to meet individual student needs.

Guiding questions: *What formative and summative assessments are used as part of the district’s comprehensive assessment system? How will assessment be utilized to enable teachers to measure student progress in reading and writing to better inform instructional and intervention decisions? How will assessment results be used to evaluate the district’s literacy program for all students? How will the district ensure assessment results are clearly communicated and provided to parents and families in a timely manner?*

5. Exemplary literacy classrooms for all students, prekindergarten through twelfth grade are established.

There are five critical elements of exemplary literacy classrooms.

Element 1: Significant time must be devoted to actual reading and writing.

Research is clear that in order to support and challenge students to reach proficient and advanced levels of literacy growth, the time students are expected to read and write for authentic purposes must dramatically increase during the school day (Allington, 2012, Brozo et al, 2008, Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992). When teachers increase the number of minutes students spend reading during the school day, students’ standardized reading achievement test scores improve. It is therefore imperative that students spend time reading in school. The Read to Succeed legislation requires ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction for all students in grades kindergarten through grade five and thirty minutes of additional daily of supplemental intervention for all students who do not yet demonstrate grade-level proficiency. Students in grades four through twelve must receive thirty minutes of supplemental instruction daily until the student can comprehend and write at grade-level independently. It is critical that students spend the majority of this time reading and writing. As noted in the State Reading Plan, “Guthrie (2004) clearly showed that teachers who consistently help all of their students reach high levels of reading achievement do so by fully engaging students in reading and writing text.” In the successful classrooms he studied, students spent “75% to 90% of instructional time reading and writing connected texts. Teachers routinely had students reading forty to forty-five minutes of each hour with only five to ten minutes preparing students to read and only five to ten minutes engaging students in activities after reading.”

Guiding questions: *How much time is devoted to daily, authentic reading and writing in all classrooms, prekindergarten through twelfth grade? The Read to Succeed legislation requires ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction for all students in kindergarten through grade five, and an additional thirty minutes of targeted instruction on a daily basis for identified students. Districts should work toward optimizing instructional time, working toward a ninety minute block of reading and writing instruction, in grades four through twelve. How much time does the district support for uninterrupted reading and writing instruction in prekindergarten, kindergarten through grade three, grades four and five, grades six through eight, and in high school? Do school schedules maximize instructional time? How*

much time, on average, will students at each grade level spend reading and writing independently? How will this be documented across grade levels?

Element 2: Numerous books matched to students' instructional reading needs, levels, and interests are available for a variety of purposes (read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and text sets).

Providing access to numerous books in the classroom is proven to be important for all students, but particularly critical for disadvantaged students who are less likely to have access to books and print materials at home.

There is a plethora of evidence that supports the need for students to have access to a wide variety of books they can read. As Routman (2000) pointed out, the number of books to which students have access has direct and dramatic impact on student reading achievement. McQuillen (1998) concluded that "access to books increases the amount of reading students do." Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale (1993) concluded that the easiest way to ensure student access to books is through a well-designed and organized classroom library. A 1992 study by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement found that "effective reading programs are usually supported by classroom libraries." Krashen (1998) concluded that "better libraries are related to better reading, as measured by standardized tests."

Guiding questions: *How will the district expand school/classroom libraries to provide a wide selection of texts over a wide range of genres and written on a wide range of reading levels to match the reading needs, levels, and interests of students? How will the district ensure books are available for a variety of purposes – read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, and text sets? How will the district support library media specialists in promoting increased access to a variety of high-quality texts for all students? How will library media specialists monitor and evaluate book circulation? How will library media specialists be supported in expanding and updating current collections to include a wide variety of genres and texts?*

Element 3: High-quality instruction in reading skills and strategies is provided.

Several researchers have conducted research on high-quality reading instruction. One of the first studies, *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (1985) listed these as aspects of high quality instruction:

- reading aloud to students;
- providing students with ample time for independent reading and access to books;
- ensuring that the books used are well written and matched to a student's reading level;
- allowing students ample time for writing;
- helping students understand the alphabetic principle, identify unfamiliar words rapidly, and make connections between what they already know and the text; and
- providing explicit instruction in comprehension strategies.

They argued that writing contributed to “growth in phonics, spelling, vocabulary and comprehension.” To help students identify words, they supported decoding by analogy. As one of the authors, Pearson (1999) later explained, “Interestingly, it does not appear that skilled readers identify unfamiliar words by rapidly applying ‘rules’ governing the relationship between letters and sounds. Instead, research suggests they work by analogy to known words.” The authors of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* concluded “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children.”

In (1992), based on fourth grade data, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) concluded that students who had higher reading comprehension scores were in classrooms with these characteristics:

- use of trade books;
- heavy emphasis on reading and writing;
- instructional time spent on comprehension and interpretation;
- literature-based reading;
- weekly visits to the library; and
- weekly use of written assignments.

These practices were associated with lower scores on the NAEP:

- amount of time devoted to teaching subskills (as opposed to integrative approaches);
- use of reading kits;
- use of workbooks and worksheets; and
- use of multiple-choice or short answer tests to assess reading.

In 1995, Pressley and his colleagues began a series of studies about the instructional practices of primary teachers considered to be effective in promoting literacy. Their findings echoed those of the *Becoming a Nation of Readers* and the NAEP reports. They identified these exemplary characteristics

- Classrooms were filled with print.
- Most reading was of children’s literature (as opposed to basal materials).
- Teachers modeled extensively.
- Students had opportunities to read and write.
- Teachers provided instruction via small, flexible groups.
- Teachers individualized instruction according to student need.
- Teachers taught basic skills in the context of authentic reading and writing.
- Teachers assessed students frequently.
- Teachers spent time motivating students to be literate.

In later studies, Pressley and colleagues added that effective teachers taught and encouraged self-regulation and integrated reading and writing in content areas. Other researchers have contributed to this consistent, but expanding list of effective practices. Turner (1995) found that students better

understood the purposes of literacy when tasks were “open” and defined open tasks as “those in which students themselves could select relevant information and/or decide how to use that information to solve a problem.” Taylor (2002) found that “most effective” classrooms were characterized by

- balanced reading instruction;
- higher-order thinking;
- small group instruction;
- effective classroom management;
- high expectations for student learning and behavior;
- authentic literacy engagements with a heavy emphasis on reading books and writing about what they read;
- the use of a Gradual Release of Responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) to foster independence; and
- coaching children versus engaging them in reciting or telling them information.

Bitter, O’Day, Gubbins, and Socias (2009) studied the reform efforts of the San Diego Public Schools. The schools used a balanced literacy approach. The classrooms of the most effective teachers had the characteristics previously identified in the literature. The strongest predictor of reading comprehension was teachers’ use of higher-level questioning and discussion about the meaning of texts. The researchers also found that greater amounts of writing instruction improved reading comprehension and that simply telling or providing students information led to negative growth.

Guiding question: *What evidence-based instructional strategies, materials, and/or curriculum, will be implemented to support high-quality reading instruction?*

Element 4: Small group and individualized instruction is observed.

Teachers must use a variety of grouping formats: whole class, flexible small groups, and individualized instruction. By so doing, teachers are able to tailor instruction to student strengths and needs. Teachers use data from classroom observations, one-on-one conversations, and other formative and summative assessment measures as well as more formalized school, district and/or state assessments to determine the instructional focus in any of these structures.

Guiding questions: *What flexible grouping structures will be used to meet the needs of all students? What methods, data, etc. will be used to determine the grouping structures needed? What progress monitoring tools will be used to ensure adjustments to the grouping structures are made, as needed, based on data? What monitoring practices are in place to evaluate the use of effective instructional approaches including variety in grouping structures?*

Element 5: Increased instructional focus and intensity based on student needs is provided.

To meet the needs of students who cannot yet demonstrate grade level proficiency, it is critically important that classroom teachers are knowledgeable about the reading process, understand how to

provide effective instruction, select materials, and provide ample time every day for instruction and independent reading. Instruction must be adjusted to meet individual student needs. The Read to Succeed legislation requires that interventions be provided to all students who are unable to comprehend grade-appropriate texts and reach grade-level proficiency. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) promotes a multi-tiered approach to differentiating instruction for all students. Through this approach, teachers identify struggling readers early and offer the intensity of support students need which begins with high-quality classroom instruction. Students are continuously monitored to ensure they are progressing as expected, and when they are not, they receive additional, more intensive reading instruction in addition to the core reading instruction all students receive. Formative and summative assessment data is analyzed and used in order to inform sound instructional decisions which meet students' needs.

Students must be provided with evidence-based instruction that builds on their strengths and addresses their needs as determined by a variety of assessment measures – formative and summative, formal and informal, state and district. Those students in prekindergarten through grade three who experience reading difficulties must be provided intensive intervention for at least thirty minutes each day in addition to the ninety minutes of daily reading and writing instruction provided to all students. This additional instruction must be provided by highly effective certified personnel. Additional supplemental instruction outside of the school day may be needed for some students. This support may be provided through before or after school offerings, book clubs, summer reading camps, or other structures.

The law requires schools to notify any parent whose student is not yet demonstrating grade-level proficiency explaining the additional supports and interventions their student will receive. Parents must also be notified that their student may be retained in third grade beginning with the 2017-18 school year if “the student substantially fails to demonstrate third-grade reading proficiency.” The school must develop an individual progress plan for any prekindergarten-grade three student who is not yet demonstrating grade-level proficiency. The plan must address the classroom and supplemental instruction and interventions the student will receive. These services should be different from what the student has already received, be based on the strengths and needs of the student, and be consistent with best practice research.

Guiding questions: *How will the district ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to intensify instruction for students having reading difficulties? How will the district promote a multi-tiered system of support? How will assessment data be analyzed and used in order to drive instructional decision-making for all students, specifically those not reaching grade-level proficiency? What supports will be in place to intensify instruction for students having reading difficulties (e.g. more time, smaller group size, more explicit and systematic instruction targeted at student needs, more guided practice, and immediate corrective feedback)? How will the district support increased time devoted to intensive interventions for struggling readers (e.g. struggling readers will receive thirty minutes of intervention on a daily basis above and beyond the ninety minute reading block)? How will supplemental instruction be provided outside of the school day – for whom and by whom? What additional strategies or interventions will be encouraged, supported, and implemented to support students who are not progressing at the rate needed to reach grade level proficiency by the end of third grade? How will the district communicate*

with parents and families? What documentation will be used to notify parents and families of the intensive interventions their student will receive? What system of documentation will be used and how will parents be notified of possible retention?

Act 284 further states that beginning with the 2017-18 school year, students that are not proficient in reading will be retained. Students retained must be provided more intensive interventions using effective instructional strategies to improve the student's specific reading deficiency. The district is required to:

- provide Summer Reading Camps for those students identified as being in danger of being retained in third grade;
- provide a minimum of ninety minutes of daily, uninterrupted, evidence -based reading instruction;
- provide students with a highly-effective teacher as determined by student performance and performance evaluation data;
- provide written notification, including proposed interventions, to the parent indicating that his/her child has not met promotion requirements and the reason(s) the student is not eligible for a good cause exemption; and
- implement a policy for the midyear promotion for any student who can demonstrate mastery of third grade skills and readiness to be promoted to fourth grade.

Guiding questions: *How will the district communicate the third grade retention policy to all stakeholders, especially parents and families? How will parents be educated on the grade level expectations as students progress from grade to grade?*

6. Parental understanding of the Read to Succeed legislation including how they can support their child as a reader and writer at home is evident.

Parents are a child's first teacher and play a critical role in their child's reading development. Homes need to be print and language-rich. Books and talk are the key ingredients to creating literacy-rich home environments. Families can support language and literacy development by creating a home atmosphere in which reading, writing, talking, and listening are a natural part of daily life. In a review of research, Fiore (2006) states school leaders must be willing and able to recognize that the diversity and socioeconomic status of the community may hinder effective school and parental collaboration. Many families may still feel that their interests are not fully taken into account and may be reluctant to get involved. Leaders at the district and school level must be willing and able to recognize the extent of this disconnection and make an extra effort to communicate and collaborate with all families.

Guiding questions: *How will the district inform parents and families about Read to Succeed? How will the district involve parents so they can support their child as a reader and writer at home?*

7. *Partnerships to communicate Read to Succeed goals and to promote literacy achievement are developed.*

Districts are encouraged to create family-school-community partnerships that focus on increasing the volume of reading, in school and at home; during the school year and over the summer. Schools and districts should partner with county libraries, community organizations, local arts organizations, faith-based institutions, pediatric and family practice medical personnel, businesses, and other groups to develop a cadre of volunteers, mentors, or tutors to assist with the provision of instructional supports, services, and books in support of increased reading proficiency.

Guiding questions: *How will the district create partnerships with business and community organizations to raise awareness of the importance of literacy? What supports will be in place to increase the amount of reading done in and out of school?*

SECTION B:

DISTRICT READING PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Consider the questions below in order to describe the process the District Literacy Leadership Team used to develop the District Reading Plan including data collection and feedback; how the team plans to communicate and support the components of the plan; the importance of communicating an increased focus on literacy to stakeholders; and how the team plans to monitor implementation of the plan over the next year.

Literacy Vision and Culture

Why is it important to focus on improving literacy in our district? What will literacy and learning look like in our district if comprehensive reading reform policy is successful?

Context

How does this plan connect to other plans and district initiatives? Which ones?

Communication

How will the components of the plan be communicated to stakeholders?

Implementation

How will implementation be monitored over the next year? How will we know that progress is being made? How will we share that information? What does the district expect schools to do in support of the implementation of the district plan?

Please consider the following in preparation for completing the Read to Succeed Performance Goals as part of the District Strategic Plan.

Improvement Goals

What is our overall measurable literacy improvement goal? What are measurable goals for each of the components of the district reading plan: leadership, student learning outcomes, professional learning; assessment plans, instruction plans, parent and family involvement, and school community partnerships?

Action Steps

What actions will be taken in the next year to support progress toward each goal (by whom, when, what resources, how success will be measured)?

SECTION C: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND REFLECTION RUBRIC FOR DISTRICT READING PLANS

The following rubric is provided as a self-assessment and reflection tool for districts to use before writing their reading plans. The rubric considers each of the components required as part of the District Reading Plan. It is strongly suggested that districts use this rubric as a self-reflection tool prior to the development of their District Reading Plan.

Each district should assume their plan will be read and reviewed using the rubric below. Use this rubric as a way to assess the current status of each component in your district.

Scoring:

- 0 = Information not included
- 1 = Information is included but lacks some specificity or relevance
- 2 = Information is included, accurate, and pertinent
- 3 = Innovative approaches worth sharing with all districts

District Reading Plan Components	3	2	1	0
LEADERSHIP: <i>District Leadership supports the development of a plan to guide and support evidence-based reading research practices aligned with state policies. A plan is developed and implemented.</i>				
STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES: <i>A plan to establish clear and measurable student learning outcomes or achievement goals is developed.</i>				
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES: <i>A plan to provide systemic professional learning opportunities for all educators and other stakeholders is developed, implemented, and continuously updated based on data.</i>				
ASSESSMENT PLAN: <i>A comprehensive assessment system which authentically and regularly assesses student progress toward achievement goals exists. Data from both formative and summative assessments are used to inform decisions.</i>				
INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN: <i>A plan in support of the establishment of exemplary literacy classrooms for all students, prekindergarten through twelfth grade is developed and implemented. Each of the five elements listed below are supported and expected in all schools and classrooms.</i>				
Element 1: <i>Significant time devoted to actual reading and writing.</i>				
Element 2: <i>Numerous books matched to the students' reading levels.</i>				
Element 3: <i>High-quality instruction in reading and writing skills and strategies.</i>				
Element 4: <i>Prevalence of small group and individualized instruction.</i>				
Element 5: <i>Increased instructional focus and intensity based on student's needs.</i>				
PARENT AND FAMILY SUPPORT: <i>A plan to support frequent and understandable communication with parents and families in support of the understanding of the Read to Succeed legislation, including how parents and families can support their child as a reader and writer at home is developed.</i>				
DISTRICT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: <i>Partnerships with various community groups and organizations are established and fostered in order to communicate the goals of Read to Succeed and to promote overall literacy achievement.</i>				

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