RESOURCE GUIDE

SPARKING EARLY LITERACY GROWTH IN WEST VIRGINIA: SCHOOL READINESS, HIGH QUALITY INSTRUCTION & EXTENDED LEARNING

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The primary purpose of the Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia (SELGWV) Resource Guide is to support applicants who wish to submit an early literacy grant proposal focusing on West Virginia learners ages birth-Age 8. Full details are outlined in the SELGWV Request for Proposals (https://wvpec.wvu.edu/events-and-initiatives/earlyliteracy); proposal submission deadline is June 15, 2022.

This guide is also a valuable resource to support the early literacy efforts of school personnel. It may be a resource for university faculty to teach early literacy content at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Educators may also use this document to guide discussion and inform policy educational stakeholders and policymakers. The guide can be used as a resource by community-based literacy organizations. Parents may also find the curated content useful in developing background knowledge on early literacy.

The 44-page Resource Guide includes five parts and an appendix. Part I outlines the importance of early literacy and highlights the state's efforts in literacy improvement. Part II expands on research, recommendations, and West Virginia initiatives for the Sparking Early Literacy Grant focus areas including school readiness, high quality instruction, and extended learning. The final sections (Part III-Part IV) include information on three influential components in early literacy achievement including remote/virtual learning, assessing student learning, and professional learning. The resource guide concludes with a multi-part appendix of supplemental resources.

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Part I: Early Literacy in West Virginia

Comprehensive literacy achievement and the gap between marginalized and privileged students has been a concern for educational policymakers, administrators, teachers, and families for many years. Legislative efforts, funding mandates, and research-based prescribed practices around literacy learning – reading and writing – have been prominent reform elements for decades. Frontline professionals from various education-focused groups have worked to provide opportunities for literacy learners from birth through Age 8. Early childhood professionals — including child care providers for children birth-3, home visitors, and public libraries, among others — promote childhood literacy learning starting from birth. PreK-12 schools and professional organizations support literacy learning through classroom instruction in public schools, private schools, and extracurricular and summer programming. Still, student literacy achievement, and the gap between student populations, has remained a significant problem plaguing education.

In 2019, the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report card, released the scores of the reading assessments of US school students, grades 4 and 8. Fourth-grade student reading proficiency is not promising with 35% of students performing below basic, 31% at basic, 26% at proficient, and 9% performing at an advanced level. Stated another way, 66% of fourth-grade students in the US are reading at a basic or below basic level. Closer to home, West Virginia NAEP results show the state's fourth-grade students' performance trailed the national average with 40% reading below basic, 30% at basic, 24% at proficient, and 6% performing at an advanced level (2019). As such, in West Virginia, 70% of fourth-grade students are reading at a basic or below basic level. NAEP performance in fourth-grade reading in West Virginia has remained relatively unchanged during the past two decades of the congressionally mandated assessment.

The West Virginia statewide average for third grade reading proficiency in the school year 2021 was 33%, down 11 percentage points from school year 2019. However, county-wide proficiency rates ranged from 14% to 52% (WVDE, 2021). 24 of the 55 counties had proficiency rates at or above the state average, and 9 counties had rates at or below 25%.

In 2014, the West Virginia Board of Education crafted a legislative policy called the Transformative System of Support for Early Literacy (18 W.V.C. §18-2E-10) to ensure a comprehensive statewide approach to closing the literacy achievement gap by the third grade. The West Virginia Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade Level Reading serves as the organizing body to help close the reading achievement gap for West Virginia's children. To yield long term gains in student achievement, partnerships between stakeholders at the national, state, and local levels help ensure all young children in West Virginia are provided ample opportunities to establish positive dispositions toward literacy learning. These efforts are aligned with the national Campaign for Grade Level Reading focuses on school readiness, chronic absenteeism, summer learning loss, family engagement, the health determinants to early school success, and state-level outreach. The focus of this work involves four components: school readiness, attendance, high quality instruction, and extended learning.

A strong partnership with The June Harless Center at Marshall University allows for the employment of seven Early and Elementary Learning Specialists to work on the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. Each of the 55 county school districts in West Virginia is assigned to one of the Early and Elementary Learning Specialists. The Specialists work to serve WV communities by connecting stakeholders with

research and resources to provide best practices in literacy education for every child. The Specialists work with county school districts, community partners, and families to share best practices for building literacy skills in children starting at birth. The focus of this work involves four components: school readiness, attendance, high quality instruction, and extended learning.

- School Readiness: One of the major initiatives to support families with early literacy development is to provide access to high-quality books in the home. Each of the 55 counties participate in the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program to support their efforts with this initiative.
- Attendance: The goal of the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading is to decrease the percentage of students that are chronically absent. The Early and Elementary Learning Specialists work with each county to develop a plan to address attendance issues specific to their students and families.
- High Quality Instruction: Each county has the opportunity to receive support in their professional development plans for their staff. Such support might include professional learning, coaching support, and resources and research of best practices for high quality instruction.
- Extended Learning: County literacy teams are encouraged to consider the opportunities children have in their community for both afterschool and summer programming. A major focus is on opportunities for learning over the summer to reduce the summer slide.
  - Also, during the academic year, the hours after the school day ends—from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.--are a peak opportunity to support students' learning. Afterschool and summer learning programs provide supplemental education and support to help close academic and opportunity gaps among students most in need.

Part II: Early Literacy Focus Areas

The following section of this Sparking Early Literacy Growth in West Virginia (SELGWV) Resource Guide is aligned with the SELGWV grant initiative. The purpose is to provide applicants with information to support the development of a grant targeting School Readiness, High Quality Instruction, and Extended Learning. Each of the three focus areas includes a summary of (1) research and national recommendations, (2) promising practices, and (3) West Virginia initiatives. The information in this section can be used to support an early literacy proposal.

i.　School Readiness

In West Virginia, **school readiness** refers to the process of ensuring children have access to the best available resources before entering first grade. Available resources support children and their families and focus on maximizing children's holistic development from birth. Research shows that learning begins long before a child enters kindergarten. Children, even infants, soak up words, rhymes, songs, and images. Most language acquisition occurs prior to children entering school, so it is important to provide a language-rich environment to ensure robust vocabulary development.

Selected Resources:

- The Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center states that school readiness is foundational across early childhood systems and programs. It means children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children's learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start views school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for school success and later learning and life. Physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development are all essential elements of school readiness. Managers, teaching staff, caregivers, family advocates, and families can learn more about creating an enriching and supportive learning environment for young children ages birth to 5.

- National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) Resource Repository: NCIL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and provides access to evidence-based approaches that can be used to screen, identify, and teach students with literacy-related disabilities.

- Phonological Awareness in Early Childhood Literacy Development: The International Literacy Association maintains that phonological awareness has a critical role in early literacy and language development (2019b). Purposeful, efficient, and developmentally appropriate instruction in phonological awareness can support young children's literacy and language development and help them understand how to decode and spell words, particularly when combined with instruction in both alphabet and vocabulary knowledge.

- What Effective Pre-K Literacy Instruction Looks Like: This brief shares some effective strategies for building literacy skills with young children and lists policy recommendations for early literacy achievement (ILA, 2018d).

West Virginia Initiatives

- According to the [National Institute of Early Education Research](#), West Virginia Department of Education's Universal Pre-K program, which enrolls four-year-old and three-year-old children with special needs, ranks 8th in the country for access and quality (Friedman-Krauss et al., 2019).
    - The participation rate for the 2018-19 academic year for four-year-olds is 78%. The WVDE Office of Early and Elementary Learning determines the four-year-old participation rate based on children enrolled in kindergarten during the 2019 school year compared with children who participated in pre-k for the 2018 school year (2020).

- The West Virginia Early Childhood Planning Task Force (2014) established a scope of work for a coordinated data system, professional development of early childhood providers, developmental screening, and families as teachers. The task force created four outcomes. Outcome Area Early Learning and Development Outcome statement: Children have positive early learning experiences
    - 3.1. Children under age 5 in at least one quality early learning program
    - 3.2. Children ready for kindergarten
    - 3.3. Children proficient in reading by the end of the third grade
    - 3.4. Early learning programs that meet quality standards

- [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) is a book gifting program that mails free, high-quality books to children from birth until they begin school, no matter their family's income. The Imagination Library program is built on decades of reading research consistently demonstrating that having books at home helps children develop literacy skills. Children from low-income homes across West Virginia deserve access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate books.

- [Ready, Set, Go! WV](#) is a program that offers a comprehensive approach for families, schools and communities to work together to provide all children opportunities to succeed and become lifelong learners.

ii.   High Quality Instruction

In West Virginia, high quality instruction must be implemented, and student learning must be monitored from pre-k through 3rd grade. During the early learning year, high-quality English Language Arts instruction involves immersion in a literacy-rich environment to develop awareness and understanding of spoken and written language. Through active participation in developmentally appropriate and engaging learning experiences, students develop reading, writing, listening, speaking, and media literacy competencies. To support the development of lifelong learning and global awareness, students should be given regular opportunities to participate in language experiences through developmentally appropriate contexts, utilize 21st-century skills, and equally employ literary and informational texts of appropriate complexity.

Selected Resources:

- The National Reading Panel (2000) published the report, <u>Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature and its Implication for Reading Instruction</u>, which identifies the following as most important for children to become good readers:
  - Phonemic awareness
  - Phonics
  - Vocabulary
  - Fluency
  - Comprehension

- The National Early Literacy Panel convened in 2002 to synthesize the most rigorous scientific research on the development of early literacy skills in children from birth to Age 5. The National Institute for Literacy compiled and reviewed these findings in <u>Early Beginnings Early Literacy Knowledge and Instruction.</u> The early literacy skills that NELP found to be most important for the later development of literacy skills such as decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling (NIL, 2009).

  - Knowing the names of printed letters and the sounds associated with them.
  - Being able to manipulate the sounds of spoken language—breaking words apart into smaller sound units such as syllables or phonemes, adding or deleting sound units
  - Being able to rapidly name a sequence of letters, numbers, objects, or colors
  - Being able to write one's own name or even isolated letters
  - Being able to remember the content of spoken language for a short time
  - Knowing some of the conventions of English print, including how to use a book or other printed materials
  - Being able to recognize and identify environmental print
  - Knowing how to put concepts, thoughts, and ideas into spoken words, and understanding other people when they talk
  - Being able to see similarities and differences between visual symbols, i.e., visual processing

- <u>Report: Best Practices in K-12 Literacy Models</u> – In the following report, Hanover Research (2014) examines the need for effective reading and literacy education, and the role of assessment in literacy instruction. In addition, the report reviews four models designed to promote literacy education for all students.

- ILA Position Statement and Research Brief: <u>Digital Resources in Early Childhood Literacy Development</u> - The International Literacy Association (2019c) maintains that rich, digital resources have a place in early childhood literacy development. Careful, intentional, and developmentally appropriate use of digital texts and tools can build young children's language and literacy skills while providing young children with opportunities to deepen their understanding about the forms and functions of digital text in meaning making.

- ILA Literacy Leadership Brief: <u>Improving Digital Practices for Literacy, Learning, and Justice More Than Just Tools</u> - Instead of placing trust in the latest gadget, faith must be placed in the expertise of teachers to sustain classrooms that reflect the contexts of learning that are encountered outside of schools and in the real world (ILA, 2018b). Educators can better prepare youth for civic,

academic, and vocational pathways beyond schools by weaving digital resources into a caring vision of literacy learning,

- National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) Resource Repository - NCIL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and provides access to evidence-based approaches that can be used to screen, identify, and teach students with literacy-related disabilities.

- Regional Educational Laboratory (REL)– Resource Roundup: Supporting early literacy development The following link includes a collection of resources from the REL network and WWC on early literacy development (Wackwitz, 2019).

- Education Commission of the States: Enhancing STEM in P-3 Education This Policy Guide, informed by experts in early education and STEM fields, identifies policies and actions a state can adopt to bring STEM opportunities to pre-K through third-grade students (Atchison, Zinth, & Weyer, 2020).

- The Role of Books and Reading in STEM: An Overview of the Benefits for Children and the Opportunities to Enhance the field - STEM Next and The Molina Foundation have extensive experience working with early childhood centers, after-school programs and K-12 campuses throughout the nation (Popov, Tinkler, Tore, & Meschen, 2017). They have seen that the strongest STEM educational programs interweave literacy-rich materials with hands-on investigation and experimentation. Among the findings in the enclosed 31-page report:
  - o Students need multiple exposures to target words and opportunities to engage in reading, writing, and speaking practice. to learn STEM vocabulary.
  - o There is a lack of culturally and linguistically relevant STEM books for underserved children.
  - o Although limited, there are strong programs, organizations, and materials which help bridge the gap between STEM and literacy.

- West Virginia Tiered System of Support (WVTSS): The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) is committed to ensuring equitable education opportunities that include high-quality resources, strategies, and practices. The West Virginia Tiered System of Support (WVTSS) is a framework that suggests flexible use of resources to provide relevant and appropriate academic, behavioral, and mental health support to enhance learning for all students.

- What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) – WWC serves as a "source of scientific evidence on education programs, products, practices, and policies," including those specific to the area of literacy. The following link provides access to the research findings on several literacy practices and programs.

West Virginia Initiatives

- Literacy Integration with the Content Areas. Using a redesigned school bus, the Marion County Leaders of Literacy team created a STEAM bus to introduce students in the elementary grades to constructional activities where they can learn skills in science, technology, engineering, art and

math. The STEAM Bus contains stations where students build boomerangs, balloon-powered cars, Lego towers, and Play Dough buildings. From week to week, the bus first traveled to area high school football games in order to be available for students to get a trial of the activities. The bus now travels to locations as needed, in order to give students at an elementary school a taste of STEAM.

- <u>STEAM-Minded WV</u> - STEAM-minded WV is a conduit to equip students, families, and school personnel with the tools necessary to become active learners and maintain a competitive edge globally (WVDE, 2020).

- <u>Garden-based learning</u> at North Elementary in Monongalia County - North Elementary has operated a school garden since 2011. They have 30+ garden beds, including a high tunnel, a newly renovated outdoor makerspace, composting, vermicomposting, indoor grow lights and EarthBoxes for indoor classroom gardening. They have a curriculum available online with lessons suitable for a full garden program or those just beginning. Garden-based learning, like all project-based learning, benefits all learners, but especially those challenged groups for whom hands-on learning is best.

iii.   Extended Learning

In West Virginia, **extended learning** is a critical component of the comprehensive approach to reading success by the end of third grade. Research indicates that, on average, literacy skills decline over the summer. However, not all students experience "average" losses, and the summer learning slide disproportionately affects low-income students. Low-income students lose substantial ground in reading during the summer, while their higher-income peers often gain. The decline of knowledge and educational skills during the summer months is cumulative throughout a student's career and further widens the achievement gap between low- and upper-income students (Leaders of Literacy Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2020). In addition to the opportunity to impact students over summer months in learning, programs serving students in the hours immediately after school can reduce the learning gap between low-income students and their more privileged peers. Engaging students during this time can help provide an opportunity to provide new ways to explore material and ideas. Also, students can engage in additional learning time in a way that feels valuable and rewarding, as well as different and still complementary to the school day.

Selected Resources:

- <u>Outcomes Linked to High-Quality Afterschool Programs: Longitudinal Findings From the Study of Promising Afterschool Programs</u> This study found positive outcomes among youth who regularly attended high-quality afterschool programs, either alone or in combination with varied sets of additional enrichment experiences available in their neighborhoods (Vandell, Resner, & Pierce, 2007). In contrast, low supervision coupled with intermittent participation in an unstructured program of extra-curricular activities posed developmental risks to both elementary school and middle school youth. The study focused on economically disadvantaged youth and BIPOC, many of

whose families were recent immigrants. The findings demonstrate the benefits of continuous participation in high-quality afterschool programs, community activities, and supervised home settings for youth from economically disadvantaged families. These findings suggest that plans for high-quality afterschool programming should span entire communities.

- <u>The Science of Learning and Development in Afterschool Systems and Settings</u> (SoLD) - SoLD is a collaborative effort to combine findings from diverse areas of research, from neuroscience to human development, into an integrated science of learning and development—a body of work that can bolster the youth development field's efforts in afterschool systems and settings to ensure that all young people have the opportunity to thrive. The SoLD research provides five findings that are relevant to all settings and systems, including youth development programs in afterschool (American Institutes for Research, 2019):
    - Each young person has the potential to learn and thrive at every stage of life.
    - Development of complex skills is a personalized journey.
    - Development is malleable, from birth to early adulthood.
    - Context is the defining influence on development.
    - Integration is essential for, and accelerates, learning.

- <u>America After 3pm Special Report: The Growing Importance of Afterschool in Rural Communities Report & Executive Summary</u> - Although families in rural communities are increasingly turning to afterschool and summer learning programs for their children, a review of the data finds that more can be done to help rural communities catch up with the rest of the nation (America After 3 PM, 2014 & 2016). The following recommendations can help ensure that all children in rural communities have the ability to take part in quality afterschool programs that can help them succeed in and out of school.
    - Ensure information about afterschool programs is more readily available to families in rural communities.
    - Raise national attention around the important role rural afterschool programs play in their communities.
    - Provide opportunities to support and enhance the sharing of promising practices and resources.
    - Increase STEM programming in rural afterschool programs.
    - Increase investment in afterschool programs serving rural communities.

- <u>What Does Research Say About Afterschool?</u> Afterschool and summer learning programs are locally-designed schools and community solutions that help kids learn and grow, keep children and teenagers safe, and support families to balance work with home (Afterschool Alliance, 2017). Students in programs participate in hands-on learning, discover new interests, receive nutritious snacks and meals, and have the chance to be physically active. Programs offer a broad array of enriching activities—from learning about electricity and how to build circuits to growing vegetables and preparing healthy meals—that help students build their communications skills, learn how to work collaboratively, and foster confidence in themselves. These are foundational skills and competencies that students need as they move through school and toward adulthood.

- How Afterschool Supports Student Learning - The afterschool field is an essential part of our communities' response to the coronavirus pandemic, and programs will continue to play a critical role throughout recovery (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). Today, afterschool programs are innovating to keep kids safe and engaged in learning, help essential personnel continue to do their jobs, provide food for families in need, and stay connected with caregivers and families. As we look ahead to summer and next school year, afterschool leaders and educators stand ready to help children catch up and keep up, which includes ensuring all kids have access to learning opportunities and the support they need to emerge from this crisis strong, resilient, and hopeful.

- Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL) – CELL promotes the adoption and sustained use of evidence-based early learning practices. This link provides resources for a variety of stakeholders in early literacy.

- Communities in Schools - (In partnership with WVDE) Every student deserves an equitable opportunity to succeed in school and fulfill their potential. And yet, in America, nearly 13 million children live in poverty and face significant barriers to earning a high school diploma. Students from low-income communities are twice as likely to drop out of school, and children of color are often disproportionately impacted by this reality. Whether it's hunger, homelessness, emotional trauma, or a lack of access to basic medical care, students shouldn't have to face these challenges alone. At Communities In Schools, we amplify each student's potential through an evidence-based model rooted in caring relationships. Working with more than 1.6 million kids in more than 2,470 schools in 25 states and the District of Columbia, our model is designed to address poverty's impact from every angle (WVDE, 2020). We build lasting community relationships—with businesses, volunteers, agencies, healthcare providers, and educators—to help students stay focused today, so they can go further tomorrow.

- Extended Learning Toolkit - Extended learning is a critical component of the comprehensive approach to reading success by the end of third grade. The purpose of this toolkit is to provide support that encourages and assists counties in providing effective extended learning opportunities (before, after, or during the summer months). We believe that strong relationships between extended learning partners, families, school systems, and the community at large are crucial to providing high-quality out-of-school-time experiences for students (Leaders of Literacy Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, 2020). In this toolkit, you will find resources that will help to foster these relationships and ultimately improve program effectiveness.

- Leaders of Literacy: Campaign for Grade Level Reading Extended Learning Resources – This website includes the goals for extended learning for the WV Campaign for Grade Level Reading, research about why extended learning opportunities are important, and resources to supplement existing programs (WVDE, 2020).

West Virginia Initiatives

- West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network (WVSAN) The WVSAN works to sustain a statewide partnership to raise awareness of (West Virginia University Extension Service, 2020b):

- the importance and accessibility of high-quality afterschool and summer learning programs for all school-age children
- share criteria of effective programs and best practices among providers and the public, and
- promote the sustainability of such programs throughout the state.

▪ WV ESSA Plan – with a specific focus on Title IV (p. 74) The purpose of this title is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of States, LEAs, Schools, and local communities (WVDE, 2018, p. 74).
- Provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
- Improve school conditions for student learning; and
- Improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.
- For more information regarding ESSA and literacy, visit the International Literacy Association's (2016) Every Student Succeeds Act Advocacy Toolkit

▪ Energy Express - AmeriCorps Energy Express is a 6-week summer literacy and nutrition program for children living in West Virginia's rural and low-income communities, operated through the West Virginia University Extension Service (West Virginia University Extension Service, 2020a). College students serving as Energy Express mentors help children to practice reading skills through creative and captivating uses of art, drama and vocabulary. Students attend Energy Express each day, where they practice reading, writing, teamwork, creativity and other essential skills in order to stop the "summer slide" many struggle with. With the help of volunteers and mentors, students enjoy a daily read aloud to further enhance comprehension and fluency. Families and guardians are also encouraged to get involved with their children, reading aloud to them and encouraging them to practice reading and writing over the duration of the program. Mentors make home visits and Due to COVID-19, during the summer of 2020 Energy Express went fully remote and partnered with West Virginia Public Broadcasting to air 30-minute episodes on literacy, STEM, and more.

▪ Mobile Feed and Read Programs - The Beverly Bookmobile in Randolph County runs routes to rural areas in the community without access to public libraries or easy access to fresh groceries. The bookmobile parks in a community and provides free books and free fresh produce from local farmers to families.

▪ Read Aloud WV - Read Aloud West Virginia motivates children to read for fun by sending 1,000 volunteer readers into classrooms each week; by distributing thousands of books and magazines to children each year, stressing choice and book ownership; by showing the public the importance of reading early and often; and by supporting teachers and their students. In response to the extended disruption of school, the group launched Read Aloud Families where families sign up to receive monthly shipments of books that children choose, as well as helpful reading nudges informed by research on habits and motivation. This effort evolved from a previous research-based project to prevent summer learning loss. It is immediately scaleable, ideal for partnerships, and continues whether schools are open in whatever capacity.

- For the 2020-2021 school year, the following counties were eligible for the Rural and Low Income Schools (RLIS) portion of the Rural Education Achievement Program (REAP) funding. Please see an explanation of Title V, RLIS, and REAP funding table below.

WV counties eligible for the Rural and Low-Income Schools (RLIS) portion of REAP funding for the 20-21 academic year				
Barbour	Grant	Logan	Pendleton	Tucker
Boone	Greenbrier	Mason	Pocahontas	Tyler
Braxton	Hampshire	Mercer	Preston	Upshur
Calhoun	Harrison	Mingo	Randolph	Webster
Clay	Jackson	Monroe	Ritchie	Wetzel
Doddridge	Lewis	McDowell	Roane	Wirt
Gilmer	Lincoln	Nicholas	Taylor	Wyoming

- <u>Leap Into Science</u> - Leap Into Science is an evidence-based literacy and STEM program. The Leap curriculums offer hands-on learning for children ages 3-10 through three different opportunities of making predictions, asking questions about scientific concepts, and testing predictions. The curriculum for 3-5-year-old youth includes books and STEM activities that connect and encourage exploration. The curriculum for youth ages 6-10 provides books and hands-on activities to expand and encourage critical thinking. The program also includes a family engagement component. The current curriculum for Leap Into Science are Balance, Wind, and Light and Shadows. Leap Into Science is implemented through The Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and provider training are offered through the West Virginia Statewide Afterschool Network and West Virginia University Extension Service.

- <u>21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) Programs</u> - Many of the Boys and Girls Club focuses on tracking homework completion and grades and provides homework and tutoring support. These clubs' specialty is "power hour '' where students complete homework with staff assisting as needed (ED, 2020c). Some 21st CCLC programs use online differential learning platforms such as I-Ready, Freckle, and APR to support literacy achievement and track improvements of students, yet others integrate experiential learning such as theater or cooking classes to increase reading skills. Many teachers, often from the same schools that offer afterschool programs, are employed to offer small group tutoring as part of the afterschool programs. Save The Children, a 21st CCLC funding recipient and national non-profit has literacy, math, and social-emotional programs in 7 after-school sites and soon to have 10 after-school sites. The Save The Children programs are for kindergarteners through sixth grades and feature a curriculum built around the Literacy Block – an hour of activities supporting increased reading achievement, including guided independent reading practice, fluency-building support, and listening to books read aloud.

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Part III: Remote/Virtual Learning

Teaching and learning shifted from preschools to higher education in ways no one could have imagined due to the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic. Schools moved instruction from face-to-face learning to remote/ virtual teaching overnight. Classroom teachers were required to adopt the new pedagogical approaches and practices in real-time. Learners also adjusted by learning from home. Parents became tech support and tutors and provided a front-row seat to their children's day-to-day work. Some have asserted this shift has shone a light on an already inequitable education system. While researchers, stakeholders, and decision-makers are working on understanding the long-term implications, many have published research-based recommendations for remote/virtual learning.

Selected Resources:

ILA Position Literacy Leadership Brief: Meeting the COVID-19 Challenge to Literacy Instruction- The International Literacy Association (2020) outlines five challenges to providing equitable access to remote virtual learning. These include students with limited or no digital access, teachers and students transitioning to teaching and learning remotely, engaging anxious and disinterested students, focus on culturally responsive teaching. and inequitable opportunities to promote student and family relationships. For each of these areas, ILA recommends various ways to meet the challenges. Below are select examples, with many others in the brief.
- Limited or no digital access
    - Repurpose available funds to ensure that every student has at least one digital tool and high-speed Wi-Fi not only in homes where such access is unaffordable but also for students living in homeless shelters or emergency or transitional housing.
- Transitions to teaching and learning remotely
    - Establish consistent blocks of instructional time (e.g., whole-group and small-group weekly instruction, biweekly individual conferences) and time management strategies for completing independent work.
- Engaging anxious and disinterested students
    - Use polling and commenting tools to gauge students' thinking prior to small-group work, discussions, and writing.
- Focus on culturally responsive teaching
    - Incorporate print, digital, and/or audio resources and materials into the curriculum that focus on issues that students and their families face
- Inequitable opportunities to promote student and family relationships
    - Maintain frequent contacts with students who are learning remotely and their families (e.g., with daily morning check-ins, sending messages and greetings via phone calls or video platforms, sending notes through the mail system with stamped envelopes for return mail).

The RAND Corporation (Schwartz et al., 2020) found that approximately two in ten school districts plan to adopt, or are considering adopting, virtual schools after the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, new and innovative virtual learning practices are needed to ensure high quality instruction and student growth.

In a recent article published by the American Psychological Association (Abramson, 2021), educators and school psychologists identified several benefits of virtual learning.

1. **Renewed focus on mental health.** Virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic provided opportunities for educators to discuss issues related to mental health, integrate social and emotional learning into their instruction, and improve access to mental health resources.
2. **Student autonomy.** Virtual learning provides opportunities for individualized learning. Learning schedules are more flexible, allowing students to learn at their own pace and pursue activities aligned with their interests.
3. **Parental involvement.** Virtual learning can allow parents to be more involved in their child's learning and better understand their needs.
4. **Decreased bullying.** Research shows that most bullying takes place in-person and in unsupervised areas. Bullying is less common during virtual learning therefore it can reduce students' stress and improve their self-esteem, mood, and ability to learn.
5. **Opportunities for special needs students.** Virtual learning can afford students with special needs the ability to learn in a more comfortable environment, use of educational technology, revisit materials, and learn at their own pace.

West Virginia Initiatives

- The [West Virginia Virtual School](#) (WVVS) is an online learning program offered by the West Virginia Department of Education. For grades K-5, the WVVS collaborates with multiple counties statewide to provide an online learning environment for local elementary students. Counties may lease curriculum vetted by the WVVS to allow students to complete online courses taught by West Virginia certified teachers employed by the county.

- [Wheeling Country Day School](#) is partnering with Energy Express and Boys & Girls Clubs across the state to provide virtual and/or in-person structured literacy tutoring for students in grades 3-5. These sessions will take place outside of the traditional school day during summer and after-school programs for those students identified as needing additional reading support. These West Virginia partners will collaborate with the Literacy Education program at West Virginia University.

Part IV: Assessing Student Literacy Learning

Projects must measure student change/growth/improvement using a pre-post assessment tool [selected by project director/organization]. Assessment plans may consist of data collected as part of the organization's existing assessment strategy or include assessment protocols specific to the project.

Selecting Assessments

ILA Literacy Leadership Brief: <u>Literacy Assessment – What Everyone Needs to Know</u>
The quality and utility of both summative and ongoing literacy assessments is dependent on the context and consequences of their use (ILA, 2017). All literacy assessments must provide some value-added for teaching and learning (International Reading Association, 2010a). All assessments—regardless of purpose—should provide valuable and timely information about desired literacy goals. They should be composed of authentic literacy activities instead of contrived texts or tasks explicitly generated for assessment purposes. The quality of assessment information should not be sacrificed for the efficiency of an assessment procedure. It is incumbent upon all users and consumers of literacy assessments to interpret results within the context of the purpose for which an assessment is best suited, the specific literacy skills and knowledge being evaluated, and the potential of the assessment to improve teaching and learning.

<u>A Consumer's Guide to Analyzing a Core Reading Program Grades K-3: A Critical Element Analysis</u> The selection and adoption of an effective, research-based core reading program in the primary grades is a critical step in developing an effective school-wide reading initiative (Simmons & Kame'enui, 2006). The investment in identifying a core program that aligns with research and fits the needs of learners in your school will reap long-term benefits for children's reading acquisition and development. A critical review of reading programs requires objective and in-depth analysis. We offer the following recommendations and procedures for analyzing critical elements of programs for these reasons. First, we address questions regarding the importance and process of a core program. Following, we specify the criteria for program evaluation organized by grade level and reading dimensions. Further, we offer guidelines regarding instructional time, differentiated instruction, and assessment. We trust you will find these guidelines useful and helpful in this significant professional process.

Assessments Commonly Used in West Virginia

- <u>BRIGANCE Early Childhood</u> - focuses on the skills that lead to school success. Our developmental screeners and assessment inventories use observation, interviews, and child performance to pinpoint understanding in the domains tied to early development and school or kindergarten readiness. Test content aligns to many state-specific learning standards to equip educators with familiar information to fit their existing framework. Educators use our products to identify potential delays and giftedness, support referrals for services, and plan individualized instruction.

- The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) – an observation instrument that assesses the quality of teacher-child interactions in center-based classrooms. <u>Learn more about CLASS</u>

- Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) - Short (one minute) fluency measures that can be used for universal screening, benchmark assessment, and progress monitoring K-8. Included: Letter Naming, Phonemic Segmentation, Nonsense Word, Word Reading, Oral Reading, and Maze passages. <u>Learn more about DIBELS</u>

- Early Learning Rating System (ELRS) – through the WV Department of Education <u>Learn more about ELRS</u>

- iReady – an informal reading assessment that offers diagnostic assessment, progress monitoring, personalized online instruction, and differentiated instructional resources.

- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) – a comprehensive assessment of young children's knowledge of the important literacy fundamentals that are predictive of future reading success. Available for PreK-8. <u>Learn more about PALS</u>

- Star Early Literacy Assessment - Star Early Literacy measures both early literacy and early numeracy in a single assessment, providing reliable and valid data about students' phonological awareness, phonics, word recognition, fluency (including estimated oral reading fluency), and vocabulary as well as early number recognition, counting, and more. <u>Learn more about Star</u>

- Teaching Strategies *GOLD*®– An authentic, ongoing, observation-based assessment system that helps teachers and administrators focus on what matters most for children's success. Grounded in 38 research-based objectives for development and learning, *GOLD*® supports effective teaching and assessment, while providing you with more time to spend with the children in your program. <u>Learn more about GOLD®</u>

Informal Literacy Assessments

- <u>Clay's Observation Survey</u>. Early literacy assessment includes letter identification, word text, concepts of print, writing vocabulary, hearing and recoding sounds in words, and text reading.

- IRI (Informal Reading Inventory) or QRI (Qualitative Reading Inventory): In general, IRIs are individually administered diagnostic assessments designed to evaluate students' reading performance including grade level reading, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and oral reading accuracy. IRIs typically include graded word lists and passages. Students are asked to read from graded word lists to help the administrator determine the appropriate graded reading passage. After students read the passage, they are asked to respond orally to follow-up questions to assess their comprehension and recall skills.

    o There are several different IRIs to choose from, to name a few:
        - <u>Applegate, Quinn, & Applegate (2008)</u>
        - <u>Bader (2005)</u>
        - <u>Burns & Roe (2005)</u>
        - <u>Cooter, Flynt, & Cooter (2007)</u>
        - <u>Johns (2005)</u>
        - <u>Leslie & Caldwell (2006)</u>

- Silvaroli & Wheelock (2004)
- Woods & Moe (2007)

- Quick Phonics Screener (QPS): A diagnostic assessment measuring decoding skills. Skills assessed include letter names, letter sounds, VC and CVC patterns, digraphs, CVCC, silent e, R-controlled vowels and advanced o. Learn more about QPS.

- Words Their Way (WTW) Inventory: This inventory (available for different grade level bands) assesses students' ability to write letters to represent the sounds they hear. Each of the inventories has a list of words that increase in complexity of spelling skills. Once the spelling inventory is given, teachers can use the Feature Guide to score and identify the student's developmental level. *From here, teachers can decide where to begin word work skills with each student or a group of students either independently or using the Words Their Way word sort program.) Learn more about Words Their Way.*

Formal Literacy Assessments

- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP): CTOPP helps to measure phonological awareness, phonological memory, and rapid naming. Measuring this type of processing provides an early gauge for reading fluency. The test comes in two forms: one for ages five to six and one for seven to twenty-four. Testing can take a minimum of thirty minutes but can increase depending on the number of subtests administered. Results are categorized into raw scores, standard scores, age equivalents, grade equivalents, and percentile ranks.

- Gates-MacGintie Reading Test (Gates): Gates measures student levels of and achievement in reading based on state and national standards. The test measures important reading stages along a comprehension continuum. There are two test levels available—Level 1 is 1:55 minutes, and Level 2 is 2:75 minutes. There are also alternate pre and post testing options. Gates is suitable for Reading First and Striving Readers programs. Online reports of the test are available in Interactive Results Manager.

- Gray Oral Reading Test (GORT): GORT measures oral reading rate, reading fluency, reading accuracy, and reading comprehension. The test ranges from fifteen to forty-five minutes long and offers both pre and post testing forms. Test results are rate scores, accuracy scores, fluency scores, comprehension scores, standard scores, quotients, and percentiles. GORT also provides miscue analysis that can be used to drive future instruction.

- Test of Reading Comprehension (TORC): TORC measures reading comprehension. There are different test sections for different subjects that include key vocabulary words pertaining to each subject, allowing for assessment of reading comprehension relative to the subject area. The test is forty to sixty minutes in length. The results are categorized into scores for general vocabulary, syntactic similarity, paragraph reading, sentence structure, subject vocabulary, and reading directions.

Part V: Teacher Professional Learning

High quality literacy instruction begins with effective teacher preparation and professional learning opportunities. This section highlights critical features of effective professional learning that could be helpful to applicants when planning to implement a new project.

- In 2017, the Learning Policy Institute published a report titled [Effective Teacher Professional Development](). This report notes that teacher professional learning is of increasing interest to support the increasingly complex skills students need to learn in preparation for further education and work in the 21st century. In turn, effective professional development (PD) is needed to help teachers learn and refine the pedagogies required to teach these skills. This report identifies seven key features of effective teacher professional development (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, Gardner, & Espinoza, 2017):
    - Is content focused
    - Incorporates active learning utilizing adult learning theory
    - Supports collaboration, typically in job-embedded contexts
    - Uses models and modeling of effective practice
    - Provides coaching and expert support
    - Offers opportunities for feedback and reflection
    - Is of sustained duration

- In the recent ILA Literacy Leadership Brief, [Democratizing Professional Growth With Teachers: From Development to Learning](), the organization describes a transition between traditional teacher professional development and professional learning. This new take on professional learning is grounded in the notion that teachers are also learners and acknowledges the following (ILA, 2018a):
    - Teachers can model and enact the processes of active inquiry, critical thinking, and problem-solving with their students
    - Teachers are active agents in an immersive, sustained process of learning
    - Enabled by social media and other technologies for collaboration, teachers can now define their learning networks and engage in substantive dialogue and inquiry with other educators both in their school and beyond.

- Effective professional learning goes beyond the "sit and get model" and provides feedback and reflection. Engaging in coaching and coaching partnerships is one way to engage in such reflective conversations. The following articles describe the benefits of coaching in professional learning:
    - [Why Coaching]()
    - [ILA: Coaching as Hands-On PD]()
    - [How Three Schools View the Success of Literacy Coaching: Teachers ', Principals' and Literacy Coaches' Perceived Indicators of Success]()
        - Four perceived indicators of success were found: growth in student achievement, improved teaching, an increase in professional dialogue in a safe environment, and a commitment to the literacy coach (Ferguson, 2014).

- National Board Certification - Currently, 1,046 West Virginia teachers have successfully earned [National Board Certification](), the gold standard in the teaching profession.

Appendix A: Components of Early Literacy – Glossary of Early Literacy Terms

The International Literacy Association (ILA), an international professional organization and recognized literacy advocacy group, provides an extensive glossary of literacy-specific terms. Below is a list of vocabulary terms most relevant to early literacy. For a full list of terms, please reference the ILA Glossary.

Alphabetic principle. The concept that letters or groups of letters in alphabetic orthographies (i.e., written systems) represent the phonemes (sounds) of spoken language.

Community literacy. Involves the development of literacy and learning skills for any individual or group of individuals outside of the formal education system. It is learning that happens in the context of home and community, and it happens as a collective approach.

Concepts about print. Understandings of written language acquired by young children as they interact with literate persons and text and as a result of their membership in a literate society. For example, in English, children learn how print is organized (i.e., top to bottom, left to right), the purpose of the spaces between letters and punctuation, and the relationship of graphics and text. As they develop as readers, children acquire concepts such as letters, words, and sentences.

Decoding (reading). (1) Using one or more strategies to identify a printed word and its meaning; (2) Using knowledge of the logic of the written symbol system (especially letter–sound relationships and patterns in alphabetic orthographies) to translate print into speech; encoding involves translating speech into print using this knowledge.

Early intervention. Includes a range of targeted services designed to identify reading difficulties that might interfere with learning. Providing early intervention services helps children acquire these missing skills and knowledge and increases their chances for future learning success. (*Note*: Early literacy intervention may be something different, as it may not mean cognitive or health risk factors but reading difficulty.)

Emergent literacy. Early reading and writing behaviors (e.g., scribble writing and pretend reading), knowledge (e.g., a book is a source of a story or information), and attitudes (e.g., question asking about neighborhood signs) are demonstrated by individuals as precursors of conventional literacy. The term is often used to characterize those aspects of literacy that develop without any formal instruction but rather through a stimulating environment. The concept reflects an appreciation for the notion that literacy development begins well before formal instruction.

Encoding (writing). Involves translating speech into print using the knowledge of the logic of the written symbol system (especially letter–sound relationships and patterns in alphabetic orthographies).

Family literacy. The home literacy activities of families. The term is also used to refer to literacy education programs that focus on developing the literacy skills of families and children simultaneously.

Fluency. The ability to act (speak, read, write) with ease and accuracy. Research indicates that oral reading fluency is the ability to read text accurately, with sufficient speed, prosody, and expression. It is

an essential component of reading because it permits the reader to focus on constructing meaning from the text rather than on decoding words.

Formative assessment. The continuing study of student learning in an instructional program as it moves toward its goals and objectives by monitoring the learning progress of its participants. Diagnostic testing and various formal and informal assessment procedures can be used to identify needed adjustments to the teaching and learning activities.

Language acquisition. The process by which humans obtain competence in the use of language. (*Note*: Contemporary theories and studies of language acquisition, especially by young children, are foundational in current conceptions of literacy development in and out of school.) (*cf.* **language learning**)

Listening. The act of understanding spoken language.

Literacy. The ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, compute, and communicate using visual, audible, and digital materials across disciplines and in any context. Over time, literacy has been applied to a wide range of activities and appears as computer literacy, math literacy, or dietary literacy; in such contexts, it refers to basic knowledge of rather than to anything specific to reading and writing.

Literacy practices. Diverse forms of interacting with text that enable individuals to accomplish a range of purposes and attain personal benefits in ways that are shaped by cultural contexts and language structures.

Motivation. The goals, values, beliefs, and dispositions that energize behavior, elicit cognitions, and regulate literacy processes and learning.

Phonemic awareness. The ability to detect and manipulate the smallest units (i.e., phonemes) of spoken language. For example, recognition that the word cat includes three distinct sounds or phonemes represents phonemic awareness. Individuals with phonemic awareness can blend phonemes to form spoken words, segment spoken words into their constituent phonemes, delete phonemes from spoken words, add phonemes, and substitute phonemes.

Phonetics. The study of speech sounds. (*See also* **phonology**)

Phonics. An approach to teaching reading that emphasizes the systematic relationship between the sounds of language and the graphemes (i.e., letters or letter combinations) that represent those sounds. Learners apply this knowledge to decode printed words.

Phonological awareness. Awareness of sounds of words in learning to read and spell. (Note: The constituents of words can be distinguished in three ways: (1) by syllables, as /bŏok/, (2) by onsets and rimes, as /b/ and /ŏok/, or (3) by phonemes, as /b/ and /ŏo/ and /k/. (cf. **phonemic awareness**)

Phonology. The study of speech sounds and their functions in a language or languages.

Reading. The process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension.

Science of reading. *Science of reading* refers to a corpus of objective investigation and accumulation of reliable evidence about how humans learn to read and how reading should be taught.

Speaking. The act of communicating through producing oral–aural language.

Spoken language. Language used in speaking is distinct from writing. It can also imply a style of language that is written as if spoken, as in conversation or dialogue. (See also written language)

Systematic instruction. Systematic instruction in reading is a plan of instruction (e.g., scope and sequence) that takes students through an explicit sequence of learning activities.

Vocabulary. The words known or used by a person or group or a set of words compiled from written or oral sources. Contrast this definition to that of lexicon, which is all the words of a language.

Writing. The process of recording language graphically by hand or other means, as by letters, logograms, and other symbols.

Written language. The representation of language through a writing system that corresponds with specific symbols and structures that govern and organize usage.

Note: Definitions from ILA (2020b).

Resource	Oral Language	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Writing	Motivation
The National Reading Panel (2000) published the report, Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature and its Implication for Reading Instruction, which identifies the most important skills for children to become good readers.	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	NA	NA

The National Early Literacy Panel convened in 2002 to synthesize the most rigorous scientific research on the development of early literacy skills in children from Birth to Age 5. The National Institute for Literacy (NIL) reviewed and compiled these findings in <u>Early Beginnings Early Literacy Knowledge and Instruction.</u> The early literacy skills that NELP found to be most important for the later development of literacy skills such as decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, writing, and spelling (NIL, 2009).	✔	✔	✔						
The Collaborative Classroom (2019) published a white paper titled <u>The Settled Science of Teaching Reading</u>, which explains the importance of literacy instruction that supports the developmental process of reading on a continuum of learning (Stukey, Fugnitto, Fraser, & Sawyer, 2019).			✔						
The International Literacy Association (2019a) published a Literacy Leadership Brief titled <u>Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction</u>, which outlines the importance of explicit and systematic phonics instruction and describes seven key characteristics of effective phonics instruction.		✔	✔						
<u>Teaching Reading is Rocket Science</u> was published by the American Federation of Teachers and Center for Development and Learning as an update to their original piece, published in 1999. Together they acknowledge that, although some progress has been made in teaching reading effectively, too few students who are at-risk, disadvantaged, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) become proficient readers (Moats, 2020). In support of implementing the science of reading, the organizations note the importance of a core curriculum on effective literacy instruction for pre-service and in-service teachers.			✔		✔	✔	✔		

Teaching Writing to Improve Reading Skills, published by the International Literacy Association (2020c), describes the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.							✔	
The National Council of Teachers of English's (2008) policy brief, _Writing Now_, addresses te notion that writing, a necessary skill, cannot be taught by applying a single approach due to the diverse backgrounds and knowledge and learning styles of learners.							✔	

Appendix C: Additional Resources

- The Collaborative Classroom published a white paper titled <u>The Settled Science of Teaching Reading</u>, which explains the importance of literacy instruction that supports the developmental process of reading on a continuum of learning (Stukey, Fugnitto, Fraser, & Sawyer). As such, the paper explores:
  - The importance of explicit and systematic decoding instruction
  - The most effective format for phonics instruction
  - The role of comprehension and the ways in which students build a body of knowledge
  - The connection between research and classroom practice

- COVID-19 Related Resources
  - <u>Partnering with Schools to Reopen and Meet Students Needs</u>
  - <u>Reaching Out to School Leaders about Reopening</u>
  - <u>A School Year Like No Other Demands a New Learning Day: A Blueprint for How Afterschool Programs & Community Partners Can Help</u>
  - <u>COVID National Fact Sheet</u>
  - <u>ILA's Literacy Teaching in Turbulent Times webinar</u>

- <u>Education Commission of the States - Early Childhood Education Reports</u>
  The early years are critical for building strong foundations – research shows that disparities in children's learning are evident as early as nine months of age – and for creating a springboard to later developments and academic success. States play a role in crafting policies and guidance that help to make the early years a cohesive, high-quality experience for children, regardless of their geographical location, race, or income. These recent reports from the Education Commission of the States provide important context and legislative examples that aim to ensure such experiences for children in the early years.

- <u>The International Literacy Association's What's Hot in Literacy 2020 Report</u>
  The International Literacy Association is a global advocacy and membership organization of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers, and experts across 146 countries. Its mission is to empower educators, inspire students, and encourage leaders with the resources they need to make literacy accessible for all.

  The ILA 2020 What's Hot in Literacy Report goes beyond a ranked list of trending topics to offer a deeper look at what literacy professionals think about the issues most critical to the future of effective, high-quality literacy instruction (2020d). Below are some highlights and key takeaways from the biennial survey, which includes data from 1,4443 respondents from 65 countries and territories, including teachers (56%), higher education professionals (37%), literacy consultants (19%), and Pre-K-12 administrators (10%).

  The following are the most commonly chosen topics that respondents selected as most important in improving literacy outcomes in the next decade (ILA, 2020d):

  - Determining effective instructional strategies for struggling readers (66%)

- Building early literacy skills through a balanced approach that combines both foundational and language comprehension instruction (65%)
- Increasing equity and opportunity for all learners (59%)
- Providing access to high-quality, diverse books and content (59%)
- Increasing professional learning and development opportunities for practicing educators (58%)

Respondents were then asked to rank the above chosen topics. The following includes highlights of which topics respondents felt were most critical to the improvement of literacy achievement (ILA, 2020d):
- A majority (51%) said a balanced approach that combines both foundational and language comprehension instruction is among the most critical topics for improving literacy outcomes in the next decade, with 47% saying the topic doesn't receive enough attention.

- When it comes to explicit and systematic phonics instruction, only 32% said it is among the most critical topics. And respondents are split in how much attention the topic is given, with 31% saying we should be paying more attention to phonics instruction and another 24% saying it already gets too much.

- Regarding professional development, 39% of respondents would like more PD and/or a greater understanding of a balanced approach, while 30% would like more PD and/or a greater understanding of explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

Challenges facing literacy (ILA, 2020d):
- When respondents were asked to choose what support they need to address challenges in literacy, more than anything else, they chose more time for teachers to collaborate with other educators facing similar challenges. Sixty percent of teachers and 65% of literacy consultants believe additional time with colleagues can ensure the greatest challenges in literacy are addressed. All other needs respondents pointed to fall into the categories of assessments and interventions, access to materials, and professional development.

- When it comes to teacher preparation programs, a minority of respondents—only 40%—say that they are equipping today's educators with the skills they need for effective early reading instruction. Those who work closest with students and their families feel most strongly about the need for improvements to teacher preparation programs. Only 27% of pre-K–12 administrators agree that teacher preparation programs are adequately preparing teachers, followed by teachers (34%), literacy consultants (36%), and higher education professionals (54%). This wide range suggests a significant disconnect between the people who are training the next generation of educators and educators themselves.

- Issues related to reading instruction are among the greatest challenges in literacy, with the biggest hurdles including supporting students reading below grade level (48%), supporting English learners (37%), and teaching students how to read (20%). To help level that playing field, 50% of literacy professionals say the support they need is academic interventions for students who require them, while 31% say they need diagnostic assessment tools and expertise in using them. The topic of differentiating instruction is also among the top challenges, with 40% citing the greatest challenge as designing specific differentiated

literacy instruction and 29% pointing to managing multiple small groups of instruction.

- Professional development and/or a greater understanding of ways to differentiate instruction is identified by 50% of respondents as a support that is needed to address literacy challenges.

- Access to books in general is viewed by respondents as a top barrier to equity in literacy. Given this, it's not surprising that 42% of literacy professionals say more support is needed in getting access to high-quality instructional materials and 32% say more support is needed in gaining access to more authentic texts.

- ILA's Children's Rights to Read (2020a) states that children deserve access to the education, opportunities, and resources needed to read. ILA has developed the following ten rights (ILA, 2020a):

  1. Children have the basic human right to read.
  2. Children have the right to access texts in print and digital formats.
  3. Children have the right to choose what they read.
  4. Children have the right to read texts that mirror their experiences and languages, provide windows into the lives of others, and open doors into our diverse world.
  5. Children have the right to read for pleasure.
  6. Children have the right to supportive reading environments with knowledgeable literacy partners.
  7. Children have the right to extended time set aside for reading.
  8. Children have the right to share what they learn through reading by collaborating with others locally and globally.
  9. Children have the right to read as a springboard for other forms of communication, such as writing, speaking, and visually representing.
  10. Children have the right to benefit from the financial and material resources of governments, agencies, and organizations that support reading and reading instruction.

- The International Literacy Association (2019a) published a Literacy Leadership Brief titled Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction, which outlines the importance of explicit and systematic phonics instruction and describes seven key characteristics of effective phonics instruction:
  - Readiness skills
  - Scope and sequence
  - Blending
  - Dictation
  - Word Awareness
  - High frequency words
  - Reading connected text

- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through Age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research. They advance a diverse, dynamic early childhood profession and support all who care for, educate, and work on

behalf of young children. The association comprises nearly 60,000 individual members of the early childhood community and more than 50 Affiliates, all committed to delivering on the promise of high-quality early learning. Together, we work to achieve a collective vision: that all young children thrive and learn in a society dedicated to ensuring they reach their full potential.

- National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL) Resource Repository - NCIL is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and provides access to evidence-based approaches that can be used to screen, identify, and teach students with literacy-related disabilities.

- The National Council of Teachers of English's (2008) policy brief, Writing Now, addresses the notion that writing, a necessary skill, cannot be taught by applying a single approach due to the diverse backgrounds and knowledge and learning styles of learners. NCTE applies the outlines the following:
    - Writing is holistic and instruction should be integrated.
    - Writing is authentic and allows writers to think about ideas and understand new information
    - Writing is varied and so are writers

- NCTE – Equity and Early Childhood Education: Reclaiming the Child (2016) is a research brief which states that equitable early childhood education is achieved when strength-based views of children are foundational, when local and family knowledge is revered, when children are assessed in authentic ways and in fair amounts, and when differences among children's racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, class, sexual orientation, family structure, physical/mental ability, etc. are recognized, understood, and leveraged (NCTE, 2016). Additionally, equitable early childhood education is achieved when young children are taught to notice, name, and interrupt unfair practices around race, ethnicity, language, class, ability, sexual orientation, etc.

- National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) - How Much Can High-Quality Universal Pre-K Reduce Achievement Gaps? Recognizing the tremendous potential for high-quality preschool to improve children's outcomes, this report considers how a universal publicly funded prekindergarten program in the United States could decrease both disparities in access to early learning and achievement gaps at kindergarten entry (Friedman-Krauss, Barnett, & Nores, 2016). Data from two nationally representative datasets and prior results from evaluations of high-quality universal pre-kindergarten were analyzed to estimate the extent to which a national high-quality universal pre-K, or UPK, program would reduce achievement gaps at kindergarten entry based on children's race/ethnicity and income.

- National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) – The State of Preschool 2019 New research finds pre-K leaders include both "Red" and "Blue" states, offering optimism for future progress. The report warns of long-term damage to pre-K from the current health and economic crisis and offers five policy recommendations to support state pre-K (NIEER, 2019, p. 173).

- National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) - The National Summer Learning Association (NSLA) is a national, non-profit organization focused on the powerful impact of one achievable goal: investing in summer learning to help close the achievement gap. NSLA uses the power of research,

advocacy, training, and policy to transform America's neighborhoods and communities, one child at a time.

- Teaching Reading is Rocket Science (2020) was published by the American Federation of Teachers and Center for Development and Learning as an update to their original piece, published in 1999. Together they acknowledge that, although some progress has been made in teaching reading effectively, too few students who are at-risk, disadvantaged, and BIPOC become proficient readers. In support of implementing the science of reading, the organizations note the importance of a core curriculum on effective literacy instruction for pre-service and in-service teachers, which includes (Moats, 2020):

  - Knowing the basics of reading psychology and development
  - Understanding language structure for both word recognition and language comprehension
  - Applying best practices in all components of reading instruction
  - Using validated, reliable, efficient assessments to inform classroom teaching.

  Additionally, the report states that educators who are equipped to ensure reading success in the vast majority of their students will feel empowered and rewarded. To achieve that goal, a range of initiatives needs to be considered (Moats, 2020):

  - Use research to guide the profession.
  - Establish core professional standards, curricula, and entry level assessments for new teachers.
  - Align teacher education curricula, standards for students, and licensing requirements for teachers.
  - Create professional development institutes for professors and master teachers.
  - Press the developers of textbooks and instructional materials to improve their products.
  - Promote high-quality professional development for teachers.
  - Invest in teaching.

- Teaching Writing to Improve Reading Skills (2020), published by the International Literacy Association (2020c), describes the reciprocal relationship between reading and writing.
  - Elementary grade students should write 30 minutes a day.
  - Students need opportunities to write for real audiences/real purposes
  - Writing facilitate comprehension of text
  - Process of writing includes planning, drafting, revising, and editing

- Third Grade Reading Laws: Implementation and Impact - Recognizing the critical importance of early literacy, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes (CEELO) have both worked intensively with states on birth through third-grade improvement strategies across literacy and other learning domains. Third-grade reading laws are one strategy that many states have employed to address early literacy challenges; at least 26 states have passed third-grade reading laws over the past 20 years (CCSSO, 2019). This brief is intended to give an overview of the current status of state third-grade reading laws and policies, with the goal of supporting states' early literacy goals. The goal of these policies is to improve

reading outcomes by bringing attention and resources to early literacy, and by recommending or requiring some combination of prevention, intervention, and/or retention.

- Prevention: Efforts to increase the overall quality of reading instruction and to build more effective systems to support early literacy and child development.

- Intervention: Efforts to identify and diagnose reading difficulties early in individual students and provide them with targeted additional supports in or out of the classroom to help them get on track for reading before the end of third grade.

- Retention: Requirements that a student not advance past third grade if her or she cannot demonstrate reading proficiency. Retention requirements are intended to create stronger incentives for schools and teachers to focus on early literacy instruction and intervention, and to ensure all students enter fourth grade with strong reading skills.

■ The Wallace Foundation Summer Learning Planning Toolkit - During the summer, low-income students lose ground compared to their wealthier peers (Wallace Foundation, 2020). But summer can also be a time to help level the playing field through high-quality, summer learning programs that research shows produce measurable benefits in math, reading, and social and emotional learning. With more than 50, evidence-based tools and resources—drawn from the work of five urban school districts and their partners, and aligned with research from RAND—the Summer Learning Toolkit helps educators deliver programs that make a real difference.

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