



Here's How

State Sustainability Strategies

State Literacy Plans

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Writing State Literacy Plans that Sustain Your Evidence-based Reading Model

A number of state education agencies (SEAs) have developed statewide literacy plans over the last eight to ten years. These plans can play a number of important roles in sustaining evidence-based reading programs—from (1) engaging a wide range of stakeholders, to (2) creating a cohesive, unifying framework, to (3) extending principles of reading instruction across the grade levels.

Examples of State Literacy Plans

This resource presents the results from an analysis of a sample of state literacy plans and highlights important literacy plan components. The plans discussed are a sample of convenience selected because they contain features worth noting.

Arizona's AZ READS was developed in 2001 and was the basis for Arizona's first statewide reading initiative. It focuses on improving reading achievement in grades K-3. With the passage of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the state worked to align

the plan with the Reading First section of the law.

Louisiana Literacy Plan: Literacy for All, published in September 2006, sets forth objectives for student achievement from pre-K through adult education. It describes the required components of an instructional program both generally and for specific grade levels. It spells out key infrastructure components, as well as state action steps and policy considerations.

Washington State K-12 Reading Model Implementation Guide, published in January

2005, presents a **three-phase action plan** aimed at strengthening literacy instruction at all grade levels. The plan addresses: (1) the use of standards and data from related assessments, (2) instruction and intervention built on the foundation of the five essential components of reading and the three-tier instructional plan, (3) the roles and responsibilities of district and school leaders, and Tier I, II, III, Core and Content Area teachers, and (4) system-wide commitments and endeavors.

Who needs to be involved?

In general, the Chief State School Officer and/or the State Board of Education are presented as those that identified a priority need for a literacy plan.

All state leaders involved in initiating planning efforts recognize that the planning process needs to involve representatives from all the key constituencies they want to involve in the implementation of the plan. The plans vary in the detail with which they described who is involved. At the most general level, they discuss involving: (1) educators, such as superintendents, principals, teachers, reading specialists, professional associations, and institutions of higher education, (2) government officials, such as staff from the governor's office, leaders of key legislative committees, leaders from other education-related governmental offices, and staff from key literacy-related units in the SEA, (3) community and business leaders,

(See WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED?, Page 2)

Sustainability is the ability of a program to operate on its core beliefs and values (its reading culture) and use them to guide essential and inevitable program adaptations over time while maintaining improved outcomes.

Adapted from Century and Levy, 2002

State leaders involved in initiating planning efforts recognize that the planning process needs to involve representatives from all the key constituencies they want to involve in the implementation of the plan.

Who needs to be involved? (Cont.)

(4) parents, (5) private organizations, (6) the media, (7) leaders of significant racial/ethnic communities, and, sometimes (8) students.

Few of the plans talk about how such groups

are involved in the planning. Generally, one would expect that the planning task force/workgroup would use a variety of strategies to draw input from all group members as it develops. Some strategies could

include surveys, interviews, focus groups, invitations to submit formal testimony, or position papers. Such methods could be used several times during the planning process, as the plan evolves through several iterations.

Why a literacy plan?

What purposes are served by state literacy plans?

A literacy plan can address a high priority goal or problem.

One reason that states develop a literacy plan is that their leaders are confronted by disappointing student achievement data. For example, the Louisiana plan made this explicit by presenting accumulated data on how many students were *not* developing needed literacy skills to succeed in school and work.

Literacy plans can assist in taking control over a 'messy' situation.

The Arizona plan describes the results of the first administration of the Arizona Instrument to Measure the Standards (AIMS) in the late 1990s. Results showed such "dismal passing rates" that what followed was "an ongoing heated debate...over a realistic and appropriate timeline to implement this new requirement." To gain con-

trol of this situation, the new Superintendent of Public Instruction proposed a plan to build K-12 capacity by postponing the AIMS graduation requirement date until 2006. In its place, attention was focused on raising the reading achievement of young children in Arizona, and on a collaborative and comprehensive effort to prepare students for academic success and reduce the State's unacceptable dropout rate.

A literacy plan can make sense of multiple policies/laws/regulations that address a common topic.

As noted above, Arizona took the initiative to plan a program to improve reading achievement of young children and to obtain its legislature's support. This was taking place just before the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the No Child

Left Behind Act of 2001. In this context, Arizona chose to craft its literacy plan so that it described explicitly how its own program and the Reading First requirements and resources could be aligned and coordinated.

Literacy plans can summarize the knowledge and beliefs that should inform educational practices.

All of the state plans reviewed allocated space to summarize what they currently understood about improving students' reading achievement. Also, the state plans described the systems or components of systems that needed to be developed or strengthened in order to help instructional staff apply this knowledge in the classroom.

A literacy plan can set forth a framework to organize efforts at all levels.

Why a literacy plan? (Cont.)

What purposes are served by state literacy plans?

Though all plans addressed the topics of infrastructures and types of leadership required to implement the plans (and make progress toward achieving their goals and objectives), New Hampshire developed a content-rich graphic to communicate succinctly their vision of how the components and systems needed to be affected to achieve those goals and objectives.

A literacy plan can present an action plan and appropriate timeline for achieving literacy goals.

The plans varied in how detailed they were in describing the activities and tasks that would need to

be undertaken to implement the plans.

The *2002 Arizona State Literacy Plan* became the introduction to Arizona's application for Reading First funds.

The *Louisiana Literacy Plan* is most specific with respect to state action steps, who would be responsible for each step, and by when each step would be accomplished.

The *Washington State Guide* set forth a three-phase comprehensive action plan for districts and schools. The plan details the actions to be taken, the staff that should be responsible for seeing that the action is done, and relevant resources for each action step.

Addressing the Components of Reading First

In the case of the three states' literacy plans (see page 1), all of them, in their own way and style, highlight the components of Reading First. What is most interesting is not the attention these plans pay to the Reading First components, but the ways in which they extend and refine these components. This includes making them relevant for the grades beyond third, and the ways in which their descriptions suggested ownership and institutionalization of the components.

For example, Louisiana used the *State Policymakers Literacy Checklist* by The National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) Study Group on

Middle and Secondary Literacy as guidance in the development of their state literacy plan. Louisiana lists the six key steps identified by NASBE and describes the action steps they will take to address each step. In addition, Louisiana's plan includes the critical elements of an evidence-based reading model such as researched-based strategies, ongoing assessment, data analysis, and the use of interventions for struggling readers at all grade levels.

In general, these plans do not present the components in isolation to Reading First, but discussed them as critical for *statewide* implementation to improve students' reading and understanding of increasingly complex texts.



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Present Your Literacy Plan in a Brief Format

While many state literacy plans can run 80 to 100 pages, it is possible to present a substantial plan in under 20 pages.

For example, the New South Wales, Australia [State Literacy Plan for 2006-08: Equitable Literacy Achievements for All Students](#)¹⁰ is presented in 12 pages.

- **Introduction** includes what it "promotes," "reinforces," focuses on, "recognizes," "emphasizes," "requires," and "strongly supports."
- **Action Areas:** seven strategic action areas include (1) Statewide coordinated approach, (2) Whole-school planning, (3) Identification of and support for literacy needs, (4) Professional learning, (5) Teaching and learning, (6) Home, school, and community partnerships, and (7) Assessment and reporting.
- **Graphics:** a chart presents for each strategic area: (1) what schools will be doing to improve literacy achievement, (2) how the regional education offices will support schools in their endeavors, and (3) how the State office will support both schools and regions.
- **Indicators:** The plan concludes with a succinct list of indicators that the K-12 Education Directorate will use for monitoring and reporting on plan implementation and on any change in student achievement.