

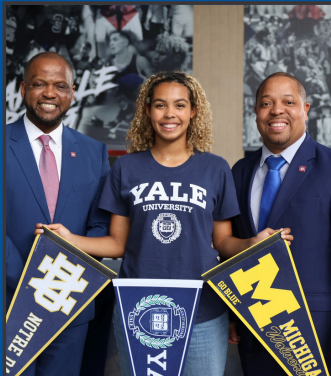


Duncanville ISD

EARLY LITERACY HANDBOOK



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The Duncanville **IMPACT:** Our Why

Importance of the Early Literacy Handbook

In light of the alarming deficits in reading proficiency at the national and state levels, Duncanville Independent School District is committed to prioritizing early literacy in PK-2 to enhance student achievement by addressing equity gaps to ensure the success of all students, supporting teachers in the use of effective, high-quality materials, and fostering strong partnerships with district and community stakeholders as we invest in long-term educational success.

Duncanville Independent School District embarked on the creation of the Early Literacy Plan to articulate a shared vision of what literacy is and should look like in our schools and community. Collaborating with educational advisors, content experts, and district leaders, the district has created a plan grounded in evidence-based research, instructional best practices, and district priorities—designed to make a meaningful impact on student outcomes and transform the future of literacy in Duncanville.

Our Educational Partners

In Duncanville ISD, we are excited to work with leaders in the educational space. We have committed to academic excellence, and are proud to partner with the following:

- Region 10 ESC
- SustainEd
- The Commit Partnership
- Instruction Partners
- Curriculum Associates
- Reading Horizons/Esperanza



**"IF WE HOPE TO ELIMINATE ILLITERACY IN
OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND, THEN WE
MUST START AT THE FOUNDATION -
TEACHING CHILDREN TO READ AND WRITE."**

Erica Reyes

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
DUNCANVILLE ISD**

Mission, Vision, and Values

Duncanville ISD envisions being a premier district whose students possess the skills to be effective communicators, readers and writers. They will become confident communicators who advocate for themselves and others as productive members of society. Our vision for literacy is that all students will receive high-quality and engaging instruction with equitable opportunities and authentic learning experiences to promote the application of literacy skills. We are a district focused on effective core literacy instruction that leads to sustainable success. As a district we are committed to supporting literacy instruction that provides our students with cross-curricular, culturally-diverse, and complex texts that will guide them in their future to become analytical thinkers and problem-solvers.

Component 1: LITERACY AS A Lifeline

Understanding Literacy Deficits

Imagine struggling to read food labels at the grocery store, filling out a job application, or even helping your child with homework. This is the reality of millions of illiterate people in the United States today. Low literacy isn't just an isolated issue impacting only one person. It penetrates families, communities, and even society as a whole and perpetuates cycles of poverty as a cause and a consequence. At a national level, in 2024, 21% of adults in America had low literacy, 54% had a literacy below 6th grade level and 20% were below 5th grade level according to the National Literacy Institute. At the state level, Literacy Texas reports that Texas has one of the highest proportions of adults who did not complete high school ranking 49 out of 50 among states in the percentage of the adult population with a high school education. Equally alarming is that 43% of adults with the lowest levels of literacy live in poverty compared to only 4% of those with the highest literacy skills, and 1.7 million Texas children live in poverty. This data highlights the critical importance of not just a personal but a shared/community responsibility of breaking cycles of low literacy and paving the way to future success by having a strong foundation in early literacy.



"THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL IS NOT JUST TO TEACH STUDENTS. THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL IS TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS ARE LEARNING."

Dr. Samuel Nix

**CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER
DUNCANVILLE ISD**

Literacy, as defined by Literacy Texas, is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen, use technology and apply numeracy, with enough skill and confidence to express and understand ideas and opinions, make decisions and solve problems, achieve goals, and participate fully in society. Achieving literacy is a lifelong learning process and the foundation for opportunity; without it, doors to growth and success remain closed. It isn't simply about learning to read and write or advancing to the next grade—it's a lifeline; a "matter of dignity and human rights" that breaks generational poverty and creates opportunities for a better tomorrow. According to the educational documentary, Teach Us All, America's schools continue to represent the key battleground of the civil rights movement. Ensuring all students have equitable educational access is a civil and social justice issue, and Duncanville ISD seeks to rectify the disparities in access by developing an early literacy plan that targets students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through 2nd grade.

With 93% of the students in Duncanville ISD being Hispanic (52.4%) or African American (40.5%), it is necessary to highlight and consider the national research that reflects the educational experiences of students who share similar backgrounds to our students. Schools and society do not operate independent of each other. During the 1990s, many schools began implementing zero tolerance policies. This policy began with the war on drugs in the 1980s that led to the mass incarceration and criminalization of black and brown communities. This zero tolerance then transferred to schools and led to mandated suspensions for minor infractions such as chewing gum, not taking off a hat, or cursing. This process, known as the school to prison pipeline, disproportionately impacted black and brown students and put them on a path toward the criminal justice system (National Education Association). A disproportionate number of black and brown students being suspended for minor offenses leads to a disproportionate number of black and brown students receiving inadequate instruction. The Department of Justice states, "The link between academic failure and delinquency, violence, and crime is welded to reading failure. Over 70% of inmates in America's prisons cannot read above a fourth grade level." Likewise, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy reports that 2/3 of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of the fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare. With that in mind, literacy, and more specifically early literacy, is an urgent civil matter that Duncanville ISD takes seriously and is addressing head on.

Component 1: LITERACY AS A Lifeline

Current State and Aspirations

Dual Language Education

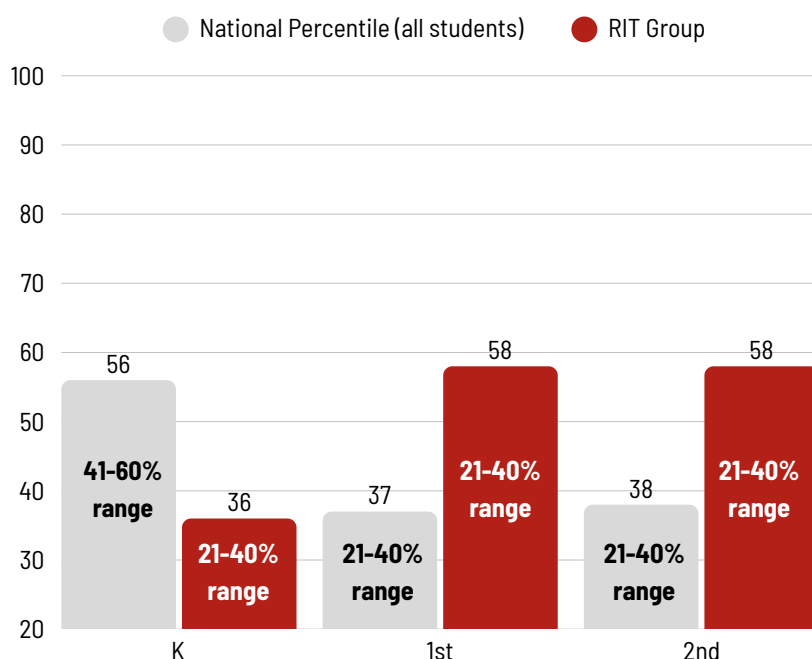
Duncanville ISD is committed to supporting the diverse academic, linguistic, and cognitive needs of our emergent bilingual students to help them become productive members of our society. The goal of our Dual Language program is for participating students to develop bilingualism and biliteracy in English and Spanish within five to seven years. All of our emergent bilingual students benefit from the early literacy practices outlined in this manual with the addition of foundational skills instruction and resources that incorporate authentic Spanish language practices as recommended by evidence-based biliteracy researchers and Texas Reading Academies.

2024 -2025 PreK - 2nd Grade Diagnostic Measures

Our diagnostic assessments, CLI, MAP, and iReady, provide insightful data on student progress. After Wave 2 of the CLI, 85% of Pre-K 4 students are on track for kindergarten readiness, successfully meeting targets in vocabulary, letter names, and spelling. While this is a significant achievement, MAP and iReady data reveal a pressing need for improvement, as gaps in foundational skills are affecting student performance in later grade levels. A closer look at these assessments highlights key trends and the urgent need to strengthen K-2 foundational skills instruction at the Tier I level.

- Kindergarten MAP Growth: Students scored in the 56th percentile nationally, while 36% of those students fell within the 21-40th percentile range compared to nationwide peers with the same starting RIT score.
- 1st & 2nd Grade MAP Growth: Students scored in the 37th and 38th percentiles, with 58% of students falling in the 21-40th percentile range compared to nationwide peers with the same starting RIT score.

MAP GROWTH DATA



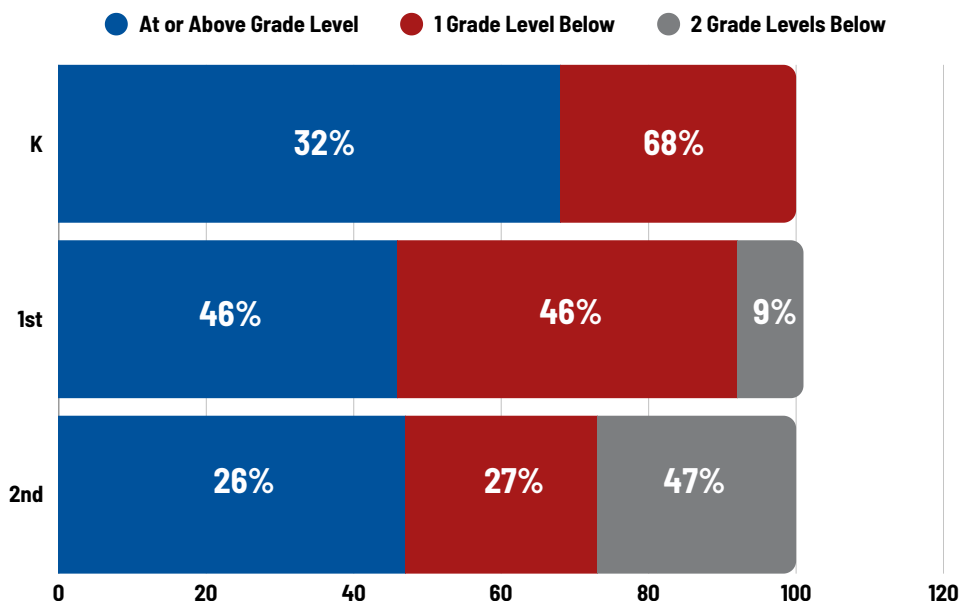
Component 1: LITERACY AS A Lifeline

Current State and Aspirations

2024-2025 iReady (EOY) Results:

The iReady End-of-Year (EOY) Diagnostic shows that 32% of kindergarteners, 55% of 1st graders, and 53% of 2nd graders are performing below grade level in phonics. In 3rd and 4th grades, 20% and 27% of students, respectively, are three or more grade levels behind. This data highlights a need for urgent intervention in early grades and continued phonics support in upper elementary. Without targeted instruction, these foundational gaps will likely create obstacles in overall reading success.

iReady EOY Phonics Grade Level Placement Data



2024 STAAR - 3rd and 4th Grade

Based on the 2024 STAAR results, 47% of third-grade students in Duncanville ISD demonstrated a proficiency level of not meeting grade level in RLA by the end of the school year. This suggests that a large portion of students entered 4th grade without fully mastering 3rd grade reading skills. Additionally, 32% of 4th grade students completed the 2023-2024 school year not meeting grade level and entered 5th grade without full mastery of 4th grade reading skills. This data shows the need to prioritize building a strong foundation in early literacy from Kindergarten to 2nd grade so that all students are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in the grade levels to come and ultimately in life. Without a strategic focus on foundational skills, STAAR scores will continue to decline, widening the achievement gap.

Component 1: LITERACY AS A Lifeline

Current State and Aspirations

The Correlation

As mentioned, MAP and iReady scores have a direct correlation to 3rd and 4th grade STAAR results. Lower performance at this level also impacts secondary EOC outcomes, contributing to 78% of students failing to meet grade level on the English I EOC and 80% on the English II EOC taken in December of 2024. Therefore, strengthening foundational skills instruction in Pre-K through 2nd grade is essential for lasting success in grade 3 and beyond.

DESTINATION 2030

By 2030, Duncanville ISD is committed to producing results that create literate students ready to take on an ever-changing world. As a result of true literacy, we also commit to higher standardized test scores making Duncanville ISD an elite choice for public education. The targeted areas of improvement are: Student Academic Success, Professional Development, and Student, Family, and Community Connections.

Student Academic Success

Priority 1: Implement High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for Targeted Foundational Skills

Instruction: To build a strong literacy foundation and ensure the consistent use of high-quality instructional materials across all early childhood classrooms.

- **Goal:** Ensure 100% of Pre-K through 2nd grade classrooms consistently use high-quality instructional materials for Tier 1 instruction. Fidelity of implementation will be supported and monitored through ongoing calibration walks, classroom visits conducted by instructional coordinators, and walkthroughs conducted by campus leadership.
- **Goal:** Achieve a minimum of 10% annual growth over five years in the number of students demonstrating progress in foundational literacy skills, as measured by CLI and iReady Diagnostic data.

Priority 2: Strengthen Phonemic Awareness & Phonics Instruction: Developing students' ability to decode and manipulate sounds is essential for reading success. This priority focuses on intentional instruction and intervention in phonemic awareness and phonics.

- **Goal:** Achieve a 10% annual increase over five years in the number of Pre-K through 2nd grade students demonstrating mastery of grade-level phonemic awareness and phonics skills, as measured by CLI and iReady Diagnostic benchmark assessments.

Component 1: LITERACY AS A Lifeline

DESTINATION 2030

Personal and Professional Development

Priority 3: Increase Teacher Capacity Through Professional Development: Foundational skills training will increase teacher knowledge and expertise are central to effective instruction. Educators will be equipped with the tools and understanding needed to deliver high-quality foundational skills instruction.

- **Goal:** Provide intentional, research-based foundational skills training to 100% of Pre-K through 2nd grade teachers across the five-year period. This training will support the effective implementation of HQIM and is expected to result in a 50% cumulative increase in student achievement in foundational literacy skills, as evidenced by CLI and iReady Diagnostic data.
- **Goal:** Ensure teachers are equipped with practical tools such as lesson internalization support, sound walls, manipulatives such as letter tiles, and progress monitoring resources to support the effective implementation of HQIM, resulting in a measurable increase in instructional quality as evidenced by observations, implementation rubrics, and student growth on CLI and iReady Diagnostic assessments.
- **Goal:** Engage 100% of Tier 2 Pre-K through 2nd grade teachers in at least one instructional coaching cycle and consistent classroom observations with feedback per semester and 100% of Tier 3 Pre-K through 2nd Grade teachers in at least 2 instructional coaching cycles and consistent classroom observation with feedback per semester, as tracked through coaching logs, observation rubrics, and teacher reflection tools, to promote continuous improvement in the delivery of foundational skills instruction.

Sustaining Literacy in Practice - Grades 3+

While this handbook is geared toward Early Literacy in grades PK-2, it must be noted that literacy in grades 3+ remains a focus for Duncanville ISD. This focus is on reading comprehension that leads to mastery of RLA skills in daily reading performance, reading and writing fluency, and standardized testing. Students in grades 3+ receive instruction in both phonological awareness and phonics as well as reading comprehension skills. Students reading below grade level receive intervention services aimed at grade-level reading proficiency.

“ —

*Our team has extensive experience supporting leaders to implement high-leverage practices that enhances the quality of **teaching** and **learning** for all students.*

-Sustained Leaders

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 1: Explicit and Systematic Instruction (Strategic Plan Priority #1)

Early literacy skills are a clear indicator of future reading success and should be explicitly and systematically taught. Direct, explicit, and systematic instruction has been recognized as an essential strategy for teaching reading and writing. The Florida Center for Reading Research defines these terms as follows:

- **Direct Instruction:** The teacher defines and teaches a concept, models the learning process, guides students through its application, and arranges for extended guided practice until mastery is achieved.
- **Systematic Instruction:** The goal of systematic instruction is one of maximizing the likelihood that whenever students are asked to learn something new, they already possess the appropriate prior knowledge and understanding to see its value and to learn it efficiently. The plan for instruction that is systematic is carefully thought out, builds upon prior learning, is strategic building from simple to complex, and is designed before activities and lessons are planned.
- **Explicit Instruction:** Explicit instruction involves direct explanation. Concepts are clearly explained and skills are clearly modeled, without vagueness or ambiguity. The teacher's language is concise, specific, and related to the objective. Another characteristic of explicit instruction is a visible instructional approach which includes a high level of teacher/student interaction. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work.

Mastery of foundational literacy skills which lead to word reading and writing supports long-term educational achievement. In order for a child to fully grasp the act of reading, a series of scientific connections must be made in the brain. When you provide high-quality explicit and systematic phonics instruction, you are developing your students' orthographic mapping. Orthographic mapping is the mental process we use to store words for immediate, effortless retrieval. It requires phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge, as well as the ability to make connections between phonemes and graphemes in words. These connections are the result of systematic, explicit instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness and phonics. As discussed earlier, literacy success is the foundational cornerstone for success for the whole student, and Duncanville ISD is committed to literacy excellence, focused on the foundational and formative years in the public school classroom.



"LITERACY IN THIRD GRADE IS A GREAT PREDICTOR OF STUDENT SUCCESS THROUGHOUT THE TRAJECTORY OF THEIR SCHOOL YEAR. WE'RE LOOKING TO FORMALIZE OUR LITERACY PROGRAM SO THAT WE ARE EVEN LOOKING AT STUDENTS BEING LITERATE BY SECOND GRADE."

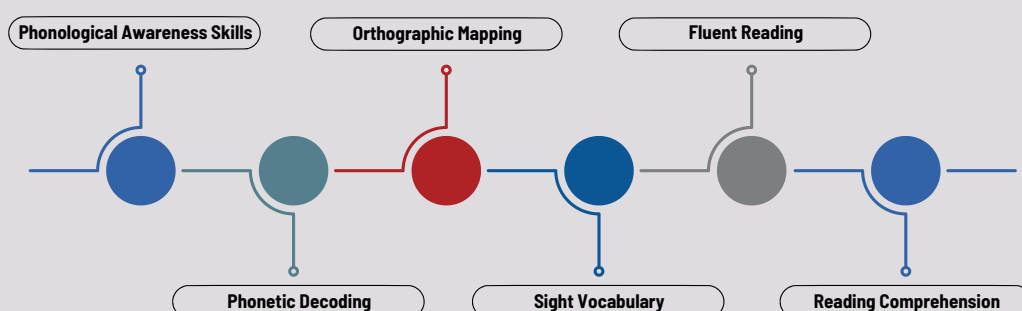
Dr. T. Lamar Goree

**SUPERINTENDENT
DUNCANVILLE ISD**

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 2: Foundational Skills (Strategic Plan Priority #2)

Foundational skills are fundamental for word reading, which ultimately leads to reading comprehension and full literacy. In order to read words on a page, a student must be instructed in phonological and phonemic awareness **and** phonics. These foundational pieces cannot be overlooked when teaching students to read as there is a continuum for learning to read that must be followed in order to assure that students are academically literate and high functioning. According to the Texas Reading Academies, the continuum for learning to read is as follows:



Armed with this understanding, it is the job of school districts to ensure that all students are receiving foundational skill instruction that moves from sound-only instruction (phonological and phonemic awareness) to word reading instruction (phonics) to instruction that aims to help students understand the text they are reading (reading comprehension). It is this knowledge that helps adults, whether they are parents, community members, or educators, better understand that, without a strong foundation in phonological awareness, students will struggle to make full sense of the words they are learning to read. These reading processes are interwoven and interconnected. Instruction in only one or some of these areas will create gaps in learning that are difficult, if not impossible, to overcome in the long run.

With this knowledge, Duncanville ISD is committed, through the use of high quality instructional materials and with highly qualified staff, to daily foundational skills instruction that creates strong word readers ready to take on the daunting task of learning to interpret and decipher what those words mean.

Foundational skills expectations, calibrations, and training will be outlined, planned, monitored, and measured as the department seeks to formalize policy and procedure around foundational instruction within the early literacy classroom.

“Foundational reading skills must work together – it is the integration of the skills that provide an entry point to **complex** literacy.

Heidi Anne E. Mesmer

Literacy Professor and Author

Virginia Tech University

Component 2: **FOUNDATIONAL** Skills

Guiding Principle 2: Foundational Skills Explanations

Skill	Definition	Example	Non-Example
 Phonological Awareness	The ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. This skill incorporates sound only; no letter usage.	Saying a word and asking a student to identify the first SOUND they heard in the word. Example: dog - /d/	Saying a word and asking a student to identify the first LETTER they heard in the word. Example: dog - letter d
 Phonics	Teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning the phonetic value of letters, letter groups, and especially syllables.	Asking students to read or write words based on the sounds they hear. Example: Please write the word you hear me say: tug. Student writes t-u-g.	Asking students to listen words read aloud and identify sounds within those words. This is a non-example because phonics MUST incorporate written letters and words.
 Print Formations	The development of understanding about how print works and how it is organized, including the way in which letters are formed.	Asking a student to use lined paper correctly when writing, moving left to right and using the full length of the line.	Allowing the student to write at will, just so long as they are participating in the writing task.
 Letter-Sound Correspondence	The relationship between the letters of the alphabet (graphemes) and the sounds they represent (phonemes). This is a fundamental aspect of reading and writing, teaching individuals that each letter (or combination of letters) corresponds to a specific sound or set of sounds.	Understanding that a specific sound is assigned a specific letter or letters in order to adequately spell. Example: Understanding that the sound /o/ and /aw/ sound the same, but are spelled differently in octopus and saw .	Letter-sound correspondence is a complex skill that varies from simple (cat starts with 'c') to complex (ph in phone says /f/). Letter-sound correspondence is NOT simply matching a single letter with a single sound.
 Hands-On Learning	A learning approach where individuals actively engage with materials, tools, and tasks to acquire knowledge and skills	One example is: Students moving plastic chips into Elkonin boxes to represent the sounds they hear within words.	A teacher in front of the classroom explaining a skill with no interaction, discourse, or involvement on the part of the student.

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 2: Foundational Skills Calibrations and Training

Calibration

Using the Tier 1 Observational Tool (TOT), PK - 2nd Grade classrooms will be observed each nine weeks and teachers tiered. Based on the instructional tiering, professional development will be provided for teachers to increase their content knowledge in the space of:

- Classroom management and pedagogy
- Foundational skills instruction including TEKS

District-level calibration training will occur with all those observing classroom spaces in order to ensure that everyone is tiering instruction in the same way. Campus Administrators should use this calibration process in conjunction with T-TESS as outlined in the Administrator's Guide.

First Nine Weeks

- District level team* calibrates using Tier 1 Observational Tool (TOT)
- Minimum of 1 classroom observation per PK-2 teacher
- Teachers tiered 1/2 or 3/4 based on data analysis

Second Nine Weeks

- Minimum of 1 classroom observation per PK-2 teacher
- Teachers reevaluated and tiered using the TOT
- Professional Development (PD) provided to teacher based on tiering system

Third Nine Weeks

- Minimum of 1 classroom observation per PK-2 teacher
- Teachers reevaluated and tiered using the TOT
- PD provided to teacher based on individualized tier.

Fourth Nine Weeks

- Minimum of 1 classroom observation per PK-2 teacher
- Teachers reevaluated and tiered using the TOT
- PD provided to teacher based on individualized tier.

**The district level calibration team is comprised of specialists, coordinators, directors, and/or executive directors.*

Guidance Documents

Campus and District leaders will have various resources at their disposal in order to make the implementation of the Early Literacy Handbook effective and impactful. As previously mentioned, PK-2nd Grade classrooms will be observed each nine weeks.

- The [Tier 1 Observational Tool \(TOT\)](#) will be used to determine if teachers are accurately and rigorously implementing PK-2nd Grade Reading curriculum.
- The [Administrator Guide](#) gives an overview of the what and how of the Early Literacy Handbook. In addition, specific expectations for classroom, campus, and district-level roles are outlined.

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 2: Foundational Skills Calibrations and Training Documents

Professional Development (Strategic Plan Priority #3)

With emphasis given to the TEKS and the skills therein, professional development will seek to help teachers become more efficient reading instructors, not more proficient resource users. As a result of the calibration observations, teachers will be tiered and offered professional development each nine weeks based on their individual level of proficiency.

Teachers tiered 1/2

Training may include but is not limited to:

- Classroom management practices
- Understanding the TEKS
- Literary terms and skills
- Principles for the Science of Reading

Teachers tiered 3/4

Training may include but is not limited to:

- In-depth TEKS analysis
- Literary small group(s) and stations
- Advanced Foundational Skills
- Intervention for the Struggling Reader

The Professional Development graphic is a general overview of training that will be provided through various modalities throughout the school year. This plan is living and may change based on need as classrooms and teachers are observed.

Tier 1/2 Teachers

- 1**
- Classroom Management
 - Systems and Procedures

- 2**
- Understanding RLA TEKS
 - Using District RLA resources

- 3**
- The STR Approach
 - Literary Terms & Skills

- 4**
- TEKS Deep Dive
 - Literary small groups and stations

Tier 3/4 Teachers

- 1**
- The STR Approach
 - Literary Terms & Skills

- 2**
- TEKS Deep Dive
 - Literary small groups and stations

- 3**
- Advanced Phonological Awareness Instruction and Resources

- 4**
- Advanced Phonics Instruction and Resources
 - Literary Intervention

RLA
Professional Development

*Each of these trainings can be provided within the PLC setting, during a campus staff meeting, in a small group setting, or at the TLC. These trainings can be both face-to-face or in virtual format. It is only necessary that tiered teachers be grouped together for the right trainings.

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 3: Comprehension Skills and Fluency (Strategic Plan Priority #1)

“
Reading comprehension is essential for **success** in school and in life. It’s the foundation for learning in all other subjects.” -The National Reading Panel

Comprehension is, by definition, the process of making meaning. Comprehension is the reason for reading. If readers can read the words but do not understand or connect to what they are reading, they are not really reading. Good readers are both purposeful and active, and have the skills to absorb what they read, analyze it, make sense of it, and make it their own. Strong readers think actively as they read. They use their experiences and knowledge of the world, morphology, vocabulary, language structure, and reading strategies to make sense of the text and know how to get the most out of it. They think about the text structure as they read. They know when they have problems with understanding and what thinking strategies to use to resolve these problems when they pop up. These elements enable a skilled reader to create a mental model of the text as they read.






Reading comprehension instruction requires more than lessons on isolated skills. Effective comprehension instruction involves content-rich classroom environments in which students read, write, speak, listen, and think deeply about topics in science, math, social studies, and other content areas. The literacy knowledge and experiences students bring to any text help them comprehend it more deeply and fully. This literacy knowledge includes print awareness, word meanings, text features (like format and bolded words), genre features, author’s purpose, and the author’s decisions about crafting effective texts - each of these skills is identified and taught within the scope of the TEKS. It is important to note that a reader’s ability to decode written texts does not ensure a reader will comprehend that text. There are many interconnected strands that work together to develop language comprehension, background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge.

There is strong evidence that specific strategies improve reading comprehension. These strategies are interwoven into the TEKS, and are expected to be taught within the context of a high-quality instructional material. These metacognitive strategies are essentially for creating well-rounded, literate students.



Component 2: **COMPREHENSION** Skills

Guiding Principle 3: Comprehension Skills and Fluency (Strategic Plan Priority #1)

Skill	Definition	Example	Non-Example
 Establishing a Purpose	To define why you are reading a particular text and what you hope to learn or gain from the reading.	"Today, we will read <i>The Recess Queen</i> to better understand the way that characters interact with each other."	Asking students to listen to or read a text with no discussion about what they may learn or gain from the reading.
 Activating Background Knowledge	Drawing on what a reader already knows to help them make meaning of new information read or heard.	"Before we begin our reading today, turn and talk to your partner and tell them what you know about the five senses."	Reading aloud to students without stopping to make connections to previous learning or common societal understandings.
 Questioning	Actively reading and engaging with a text by asking questions about its content, the author's message, and their own understanding	"The author stated that only in recent years have the Beluga Whales become endangered. I wonder what is causing the whale population to decrease?"	Allowing students to read independently, or reading aloud to students and then simply asking, "Do you have any questions?" after reading.
 Monitoring, Clarifying, Adjusting	<p>A trio of comprehension strategies that help readers actively engage with text and improve understanding.</p> <p>Monitoring involves checking for understanding, while clarifying involves resolving confusion.</p> <p>Adjusting refers to modifying reading pace or approach to improve comprehension.</p>	When reading aloud, a teacher might say, "When I read that sentence, I was confused. I think I need to slow down and reread to get a better understanding of the text." Then, the teacher proceeds to model the rereading process as a means for stronger comprehension.	Having students reread the story or article simply because the text is complex without actually knowing who needs to reread due to lack of comprehension. This may also look like having students who are finished reread in order to fill time.
 Predicting	Using information from the text and a reader's existing knowledge to anticipate what might happen next or what the text is likely to be about.	"The text said that Colton was nervous about the Talent Show. Maybe he will take singing lessons before the big day to make sure he is ready!"	Making unfounded guesses without actually reading the text. For example , "He must be a doctor," simply because a character is wearing a white coat.

Component 2: **COMPREHENSION** Skills

Guiding Principle 3: Comprehension Skills and Fluency (Strategic Plan Priority #1)

Skill	Definition	Example	Non-Example
 Evaluating Details and Determining Key Ideas	Using information from the text and a reader's existing knowledge to anticipate what might happen next or what the text is likely to be about.	We read "Exercise has many health benefits." The key idea is that exercise is helpful for the human body. The text said that exercise can improve mood, which is a detail that supports the key idea.	Using the first sentence of each paragraph as the key/main idea with no supporting evidence or connecting details.
 Inferring	Drawing a conclusion or making a guess about something that is not directly stated in the text.	The author included this line in the text - "She was sure that her kitten was gone forever." Why did the author include this line in her story?	General "guesses" that require no real thought or background knowledge. For example , "I have a towel, sunglasses, and a swimsuit. Where am I going?"
 Visualizing	Creating mental images or pictures in your mind as you read by transforming words into visual representations.	"When you read/heard 'Eric was stunned as the snowball hit his shoulder and rolled down his back' what images were created in your mind?"	Reading independently or aloud without connecting the reading to any senses or without conjuring any images.
 Summarizing and Retelling	Summarizing means reducing a text to its main points, omitting most details, while retelling means recounting the text including both main ideas and supporting details.	<p>"In your own words, tell me what the story was about."</p> <p>OR</p> <p>"Wow! That paragraph was interesting. Now I know that bears hibernate in the winter and use stored fat to stay alive while they sleep."</p>	A student or teacher includes personal opinions or thoughts when summarizing or retelling, failing to note only what was heard or read within the text.
 Connecting	The act of relating what a reader is reading to their own experiences, prior knowledge, society, or other texts.	"When I read that aloud, it reminded me of the text we read about how Native Americans were forced to leave their homes."	Making connections unrelated to reading content. For example , "I have a dog!," or "I went to school, too!"
 Synthesizing	Combining new information from a text with existing knowledge to form new insights or perspectives.	"When we began reading, I was sure that Aubrey and Tony wouldn't be friends, but after reading more, I realize that they are very similar and have a lot in common."	Simply retelling the story without any personal insights or thoughts gained from the reading.

Component 2: **LITERACY** Principles

Guiding Principle 4: Handwriting & Composition (Strategic Plan Priority #1)

Writing is a complex activity and requires both cognitive and psychomotor resources. As young children write, they integrate their knowledge of print concepts and alphabet knowledge and apply phonological knowledge to letters and words (encoding). The more comfortable and proficient young students are with the physical act of handwriting, the more attention they can give to the complex demands of composing and writing their ideas. For that reason, STR teachers integrate handwriting instruction and practice into their daily instruction. Remember, the goal is for students to represent their ideas in writing. Handwriting (letter formation, for example) is the means to an end—not an end in itself. Writing benefits reading by reinforcing the letter-sound relationships of words as well as the organization of words, sentences, and ideas into structures that make sense and communicate meaning. Reading benefits writing by imprinting patterns of language and written texts into the brain, sparking ideas for writing topics, building vocabulary, and building background knowledge.

DAILY *Handwriting* **EXPECTATIONS**

WHEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In the first 10 minutes of class time, prior to morning announcements• In the last 10 minutes of class time, prior to dismissal• During Small Group time• During WIN time
HOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-K: Handwriting Without Tears• K-2: Zaner-Bloser and applicable Bluebonnet lessons
WHAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Upper and lowercase letter identification and formation• Directionality: left to right and top to bottom• Posture, pencil grip, and paper position• Size, shape, slant, and spacing• Legible manuscript applied during all writing tasks• Letter, word, and sentence practice• Complete thoughts and ability to share content in a meaningful way• Journaling or letter writing• Narrative and/or informational text composition

Although most schools have moved toward more technology use in the classroom, there is still great value in students learning to handwrite. Research shows that handwriting improves a child's ability to read and spell. When students practice their handwriting, spelling, word processing, and sentence construction skills they begin to use these skills automatically and with little effort, creating greater composition skills. Composition, like all TEKS strands, should to be taught explicitly and systematically.

Destination 2030

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Year 1
2025-2026



In years 2+, all materials, instructional practices, and professional development will be evaluated for efficacy based on student growth and achievement data.

Priority 1: *Implement High-Quality Instructional Materials for Targeted Foundational Skills Instruction*

- Require the use of resources approved by TEA for foundational skills instruction
- Monitor the implementation of Tier 1 resources during calibration and observational walks
- Implement DRA fluency assessments at the classroom level for grades K-5

Priority 2: *Strengthen Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction*

- Purchase and require the use of curriculum specific to Phonemic Awareness
- Monitor the implementation of purchased resources during specific foundational skills observations

Priority 3: *Increasing Teacher Capacity Through Professional Development*

- Provide quarterly resource training for all PK-2 teachers to increase teacher efficacy
- Provide quarterly TEKS specific content training for all PK-2 teachers within the PLC setting

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Year 2
2026-2027

Continued
PROGRESS

Priority 1: *Implement High-Quality Instructional Materials for Targeted Foundational Skills Instruction*

- Require the use of resources approved by TEA for foundational skills instruction
- Monitor the execution of Tier 1 resources during calibration and observational walks
 - Monitor DRA fluency assessment processes at the classroom level for grades K-5
 - District-level personnel will attend material trainings in order to be informed of any resource updates or changes

Priority 2: *Strengthen Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction*

- Monitor the execution of purchased resources during specific foundational skills observations
- Model specific resource lessons for teachers in need of support

Priority 3: *Increasing Teacher Capacity Through Professional Development*

- Provide quarterly resource training for all PK-2 teachers to increase teacher efficacy
- Provide quarterly TEKS-specific content training for all PK-2 teachers within the PLC setting

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Year 3
2027-2028

Staying
THE COURSE

Priority 1: *Implement High-Quality Instructional Materials for Targeted Foundational Skills Instruction*

- Create a plan for monitoring the continued use of acquired Tier 1 materials
- Replace materials as needed due to enrollment or damage
- Continue to monitor the execution of Tier 1 resources during calibration and observational walks

Priority 2: *Strengthen Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction*

- Tier teachers based on their effective use of curriculum materials and student success on assessment(s)
- Continue observations of all RLA classrooms, with emphasis given to Tier 2 and 3 teachers

Priority 3: *Increasing Teacher Capacity Through Professional Development*

- Identify teachers who are displaying high levels of student success with the materials as potential model classrooms
- Provide quarterly TEKS-specific content training for all PK-2 teachers within the PLC setting
- Begin PD for Vertical Alignment Teams

Priority 1

Priority 2

Priority 3

Years 4-5
2028-2029 and 2029-2030

Inevitable
SUCCESS

Priority 1: *Implement High-Quality Instructional Materials for Targeted Foundational Skills Instruction*

- Remain aware of the state and national resource changes
- Replace materials as needed due to enrollment or damage
- Create mentor classrooms based on student data

Priority 2: *Strengthen Phonemic Awareness and Phonics Instruction*

- Create mentor classroom pathways for teachers with 0-3 years of experience to provide hands-on instructional learning
- Continue observational rotations specific to foundational skills

Priority 3: *Increasing Teacher Capacity Through Professional Development*

- Empower teacher-leaders to take on the task of sharing knowledge and skill with their grade-level peers
- Provide quarterly professional development centered around foundational skills TEKS

Component 3: LITERACY IN Practice

The literacy beliefs of Duncanville ISD are foundationally connected to research-based practices in our classrooms as well as the state standards, educational policies, and meeting the needs of our diverse community. We believe that a partnership between our schools, home, and the community will have a positive impact on the literacy development of our students.

Practice Connected to State Standards

Texas House Bill 3: requires all kindergarten through third-grade teachers and principals to attend the Texas Reading Academies designated a "teacher literacy achievement academy."

*While the state has required that K-3 teachers and principals attend, TEA has granted Local Education Agencies the freedom to require that additional staff members attend Texas Reading Academies. In Duncanville ISD, we have been specific and purposeful in including staff members who significantly impact student reading instruction.

Texas House Bill 1605: established an expanded process for the State Board of Education (SBOE) to approve high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), increased funding for HQIM, supported parent transparency with instructional materials, created clear teacher protection guidelines for planning time, and provided new requirements for Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) review and revision.

Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills: the state standards for what students should know and be able to do in each subject and grade level. In the TEKS, literacy is a set of interconnected skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) that focus on a student's ability to understand, analyze, and communicate through various text genres effectively using proficient academic language in the educational setting.

High Quality Instruction Materials: provide educators with a full set of instruction materials which ensure full coverage of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), align with research-based instructional strategies (RBIS), and support all learners.

Research-Based Instructional Strategies: a set of practices based on how students learn that should be present in classrooms despite the instructional materials. The Texas Education Agency has identified 4 Research-Based instructional Strategies (RBIS) considered essential for providing high-quality, rigorous lessons: Foundational Skills, Text Complexity, Knowledge Coherence, and Text-based Responses.



"LITERACY ISN'T JUST ABOUT LEARNING TO READ OR WRITE. IT'S HOW WE COMMUNICATE, LEARN AND MAKE SENSE OF THE WORLD TOGETHER. EACH FAMILY IS UNIQUE, AND LITERACY PRACTICES CAN BE, TOO. WHAT'S IMPORTANT IS FINDING ACTIVITIES THAT FEEL NATURAL TO YOUR FAMILY, CREATING MOMENTS TO LEARN AND CONNECT."

Dr. Kelly C. Johnston

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
BAYLOR UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Component 3: LITERACY IN Practice

Recommended Daily Instructional Time Allocation

When broad parameters are given for a literacy block, the components of that block tend to be deemed as optional. It is essential that components of an early literacy block are specific and intentional with adequate time being devoted to allow exposure to key elements for reading success.

	PK	Kinder	1st grade	2nd grade
Foundational Skills	Phonological Awareness	15 minutes	15 minutes	10 minutes
	Phonics	15 minutes	20 minutes	20 minutes
	Fluency	N/A	15 minutes	25 minutes
	Print Concepts	10 minutes	10 minutes	20 minutes
Total # of Foundational Skills Minutes		40 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes
Comprehension Skills		20 minutes	60 minutes	60 minutes
Total RLA Minutes		60 minutes	120 minutes	120 minutes

60

Minimum number of instructional minutes spent daily in Foundational Skills in K-2

Key Considerations:

Phonological Awareness is a critical component of reading development as it enables students to decode unfamiliar words. The time dedicated to phonological awareness is essential in early grades but should decrease as students become more proficient readers. Subsequently, the time in 2nd grade and beyond should be reallocated to allow students more time engaging in phonics (reading the words on the page) and comprehension (understanding the words on the page) instruction as their focus shifts to the patterns and meaning of language rather than the individual sounds in words.

Component 3: LITERACY IN Practice

Practice Within the Instructional Setting

PK-2nd Grade Literacy Instruction	
Reading Practices	Writing Practices
Foundational Skills - 60 minutes	
Phonological Awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling of the flexibility of sounds/syllables within words Lessons involving sounds only Interactive lessons surrounding manipulation of sounds Phonics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling of letter-sound relationships Modeling of decoding process Interactive lessons using both phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters) Fluency 	Letter formation and handwriting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling of proper letter formation for all upper and lower case graphemes Monitoring of student letter formations Modeling of written words, sentences, and paragraphs with proper sentence structure and boundaries Print Concepts
Comprehension Skills - 60 minutes	
Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling of reading process and strategies with teacher think-aloud using authentic, culturally relevant, and cross-curricular texts within a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole group experience, or Skill/Strategy Focus lesson focusing on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> author's purpose and craft genre focus vocabulary 	Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modeling of the writing process with teacher think-aloud Shared or interactive writing Skill/strategy/craft focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sentence structure, punctuation, grammar, capitaliation, parts of speech, spelling
Small Group Options *minutes embedded within Foundational Skills & Comprehension Skills*	
Small Group instruction Small group instruction can take the form of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guided Reading Strategy groups Comprehension skills groups Literacy intervention/extension Reading fluency assessment Literacy Work Rotations or Stations Authentic reading activities are designed to support reading based on student needs. Including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABC/Word Work Vocabulary Reflective Journaling Technology Applications Comprehension/Retelling Fluency Listening 	Small Groups Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated instruction based on student needs Writing Work Rotations or Stations Authentic writing activities are designed to support writing based on student needs. Including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising Editing Sentence combining Partner writing
Independent Work Options *minutes embedded within Foundational Skills & Comprehension Skills*	
Conferring with Readers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher meets with students to set goals and discuss individual reading progress Independent/Partner Reading Students must apply newly taught concepts to independent reading in the current genre of study. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student response to reading (orally and in writing) Book clubs/literature circles 	Small Groups Instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differentiated instruction based on student needs Peer Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students work in peer groups to provide feedback on writing for revisions and editing. Conferring with Writers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher meets with students to set goals and discuss individual writing progress Independent Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students write consistently and regularly on self-selected topics and teacher-assigned topics, effectively moving through the writing process
Grade Specific Note → In 2nd grade and higher, short and extended constructed responses (SCR/ECR) are expected within the scope of the week.	

Component 3: LITERACY IN Practice

Practice Enriched by the Home and Community

Ideas for Families:

- **Family story time** - Designate a specific time for you and your child to engage in reading a book together where all are active participants in asking questions while reading. You could try incorporating reading a bedtime in the nightly routine or spend some quiet time in the middle of the day sitting down to read.
- **Visit a library together** - Community members can sign up for a Duncanville Public Library card using their driver's license which also allows you to experience the DeSoto, Lancaster, and Cedar Hill libraries. All four libraries have monthly events ranging from book clubs to STEM activities to preschool read alouds. For information can be found at: https://www.duncanvilletx.gov/residents/education/duncanville_public_library
- **Talk about television shows and movies being watched** - These types of media all tell a story. Ask your child to tell you about what they are watching and ask questions to help them clarify their retelling and thoughts.
- **Build a reading fort/tent** - Most kids love a cozy place to snuggle in. Let them use their imagination to build a fort big enough for them to put in blankets, pillows, and some books they want to read. They could even use a flashlight while inside.
- **Use technology for audiobooks/read alouds** - Many subscription services (i.e. Spotify, Amazon Music, Apple Music) have read alouds children can listen to as they develop their listening comprehension skills. You can also use programs like Starfall for small children to hear a story while also seeing the print highlighted during the reading. Story Online is another excellent place for children to experience a read aloud from some of their favorite celebrities.
- **Be a reading role model** - Allow your child to see you engaging in literacy activities such as reading a book, writing a grocery list, and reading a menu.

Practice Enriched by the Home and Community

Ideas within the Community:

- **Start a Little Free Library** - Connect with organizations in the community, schools, and neighborhoods to be a steward for literacy by sponsoring a Little Free Library as a small book exchange. For more information, visit www.littlefreelibrary.org
- **Donate books** - This is an excellent way to clear out books you are no longer interested in and provide quality reading material to families. You can donate to any of the Little Free Libraries around the city and to public libraries.
- **Volunteer to tutor** - Connect with afterschool programs, recreation centers, public libraries, schools, and churches to spend time helping to develop a love of reading for children.
- **Participate in literacy events** - Connect with schools to get information about literacy events coming up and how you can volunteer or work with the schools to plan and promote a literacy event in the community.

Component 4: **LITERACY** Resources

Glossary of Terms

- **Phonological awareness** is a broad skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language – parts such as onsets, rimes, words, and syllables.
- **Phonemic awareness** refers to the specific ability to focus on and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound within words. Phonemic awareness has a direct and significant effect on learning to read and spell.
- **Phonics** consists of learning sound and spelling patterns in a distinct sequence that allows students to recognize the sounds letters make in print. Phonemic awareness connects directly to phonics, as students must be able to hear the sounds in order to recognize them in written form.
- **Phonemes** - Each individual unit of speech in a word that can be heard discreetly. There are 44 phonemes in the English language: 25 consonants and 19 vowels. Most consonant sounds have one phoneme (the /p/ sound in pat is the first phoneme in the word). Vowels can have more than one phoneme associated with them (consider the a in pat and the a in late). In addition, two or more letters can represent one phoneme (such as the /ch/ sound in chat or the /ng/ sound in ring).
- **Decoding** - learning to read words by recognizing and stringing together sounds
- **Encoding** - using letter sounds to write
- **Automaticity** - the act of decoding that is done so rapidly it seems the word has been recognized as a whole
- **Word Recognition** - learning words as wholes, recognizing words in the moment of reading
- **Graphemes** - letters or groups of letters that represent sounds Sound and Spelling Pattern: the phonics-based skill of focus in a scope and sequence, usually a letter, letter pair, or word part
- **One-to-one correspondence of words** - matching the printed word to the spoken word
- **Letter recognition** - visually recognizing the name of a printed letter
- **HQIM** - High quality instructional materials as recognized by the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA).

Component 4: LITERACY Resources

Current Literacy Assessments Utilized in Duncanville ISD

ASSESSMENT	GRADE LEVEL	PURPOSE	ADMINISTRATION
CPM (Circle Progress Monitoring)	Pre-K	CLI (Circle Progress Monitoring System) allows teachers to assess a student's progress in a particular skill area. Teachers can use the data to focus on lessons that target specific skills.	Beginning of year Middle of year End of year
Circle KPM (Kindergarten Progress Monitoring - Formerly TX-KEA)	Kindergarten	TX-KEA (Texas Kindergarten Entry Assessment) is a comprehensive assessment that can be used to evaluate many learning domains critical for academic success at kindergarten entry and throughout the kindergarten year. These domains include: language, literacy, math, and socio emotional	Beginning of year Middle of year End of year
DRA	K-5	Developmental Reading Assessment is a fluency assessment aimed at allowing teachers to hear their students read aloud and make adjustments to instruction based on fluency needs.	Quarterly
iReady	K-8	iReady is used to measure academic progress throughout the school year. General education students have a designated pathway that leads to customized lessons and assessments.	Beginning of year Middle of year End of year
District Benchmark Assessments	K-12	District Benchmarks are district designed assessments administered during or at the end of a unit to help teachers evaluate student understanding of the standards taught and identify areas of need.	Throughout the year
MAP	Secondary	MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) is used to measure a student's growth and achievement in reading and math skills. Provides RIT scores which indicate a student's performance relative to national norms.	Beginning of year Middle of year End of year
TELPAS	K-12	TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System) is used to assess the English language proficiency growth of only those students identified as Emergent Bilinguals in 4 domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.	Spring (Feb-Mar)

Component 4: **LITERACY** Resources

Resources

Unite for Literacy - offers a free digital library with books in many languages which children can read or listen to the narration of while turning pages as they continue to develop their print awareness.

<https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>

Scholastic - Family and Community Engagement Research Compendium for Early Literacy, [Early Literacy - Scholastic](#)

Ferst Readers - parents with children under 5 years of age can register and receive a free book and literacy resources each month. This is available to families that live in Dallas County, Collin County, Kaufman County, and Rockwall County. <https://ferstreaders.org/texas>

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Early **LITERACY** Planning

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