



## Component 2: Infrastructure, Legislation, & Related Policies



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## Introduction

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Component 2 focuses on the complex and multifaceted literacy infrastructure within the state, which serves as the foundation for developing the Wyoming Language and Literacy Plan (WLLP). This infrastructure includes a broad array of governing bodies, such as the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), the governor's office, State Board of Education (SBE), and legislative committees. It also incorporates public-private partnerships, community organizations, institutions of higher education (IHEs), and representatives from commerce and industry. Collectively, these entities form a robust framework that supports literacy initiatives across Wyoming, ensuring that all stakeholders are actively engaged in the process.

Much like Wyoming's unique and varied road networks that connect its towns, cities, and remote areas, the literacy infrastructure in the state links diverse stakeholders and resources. These roads, though varied in design and purpose, create pathways that ensure everyone—whether in urban centers or rural communities—can access the necessary support and opportunities. Just as some roads are paved and well-traveled while others are more rugged and less frequently used, the literacy infrastructure caters to the different needs and circumstances of Wyoming's varied communities. Similarly, Wyoming's literacy infrastructure serves as a connective network, guiding and supporting literacy efforts across the entire state. Whether urban or rural, the infrastructure ensures that no community is left isolated, providing access to the resources and opportunities needed for literacy growth and development.

## Purpose

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Component 2 ensures that the WLLP is as sturdy and far-reaching as Wyoming's infrastructure, capable of supporting the literacy needs of every community across the state. This component emphasizes the alignment of infrastructure, legislation, and policies that support literacy initiatives at all levels. Establishing a strong foundation is essential for the effective implementation of the plan's goals and strategies. By carefully coordinating and reinforcing these foundational elements, the WDE developed a comprehensive approach to address the diverse literacy challenges faced by different communities.

By examining existing state legislation, educational policies, and the broader literacy infrastructure, the WDE ensures that the WLLP aligns with current laws and policies while identifying areas where updates may be necessary. This thorough analysis provides a clearer understanding of the current landscape and highlights critical gaps that need attention. Ensuring this alignment fosters a cohesive and supportive environment for literacy improvement efforts, strengthening the plan's strategic foundation. Ultimately, this comprehensive approach will enable the development of effective literacy initiatives that can adapt to the evolving needs of the state's population.

## State Legislative Actions Driving Literacy Reform

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Over the past decade, state legislatures across the nation have taken increasingly proactive steps to address literacy from early childhood through high school. Recognizing the foundational role of reading proficiency in long-term academic success, states have enacted policies aimed at strengthening literacy instruction, improving teacher preparation, and ensuring accountability. These efforts reflect a broader movement toward establishing a national literacy infrastructure that integrates state-level initiatives with federal priorities, ensuring that literacy policies are well-funded, evidence-based, and scalable. Key components of this infrastructure include legislation, funding mechanisms, and policies that guide curriculum standards, teacher preparation, and early intervention programs.

Legislative actions at the state level have focused on several key levers, including funding for literacy programs, teacher training requirements, curriculum mandates, and early intervention policies. A major trend in recent years has been the widespread adoption of the science of reading—a research-based approach emphasizing phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Since 2013, 38 states and Washington, D.C., have passed laws requiring evidence-based reading instruction aligned with the science of reading (National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL, 2024). This wave of legislation has accelerated, with 17 states enacting new literacy laws in 2023 alone, many of which mandate substantial changes in how reading is taught and supported (NCSL, 2024). These efforts align with federal literacy initiatives, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which emphasizes evidence-based interventions, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which ensures access to literacy support for students with learning disabilities.

A well-developed literacy infrastructure also requires sustainable funding and systemic policies that ensure consistency in implementation. States are increasingly embedding long-term funding commitments into legislation to support professional development, high-quality instructional materials, and early screening programs. Federal initiatives, such as the Comprehensive State Literacy Development (CLSD) grant program and pandemic-era relief funding, have provided additional resources to expand literacy interventions at the state level. However, while funding provisions help drive implementation, accountability measures and governance structures remain essential to ensuring that these policies lead to measurable improvements in student outcomes.

As states refine their literacy policies, it is critical to examine how infrastructure, legislation, and related policies at the national level shape these efforts. The following sections explore how states are leveraging laws and policies to address key areas, including teacher training, curriculum mandates, early literacy screening, student support, funding allocations, and certification requirements. By understanding how these initiatives fit within the broader literacy framework, states can strengthen their approaches and drive meaningful improvements in reading proficiency across all student populations.

The landscape of literacy reform in the U.S. remains uneven. States that mobilized early and invested in proven strategies are seeing better reading outcomes, while those that have delayed or enacted minimal reforms are facing greater challenges. This inequity has real implications, not only for students' educational trajectories but also for their future earning potential and civic participation. Moreover, it has regional economic consequences, as a less literate workforce can hinder a state's growth. The encouraging news is that many states that have historically underperformed are now recognizing the urgency of literacy reform

and beginning to make changes. The gap is starting to close in some places, as seen in Mississippi's rise. However, significant disparities in literacy performance persist, and addressing them will require continued commitment to sharing best practices and ensuring that all states, particularly those with historically lower achievement, receive the support and resources needed to implement effective literacy programs.

As states continue to advance literacy reform, the integration of state-specific policies, legislation, and infrastructure plays a critical role in shaping these efforts. Understanding how states like Wyoming are leveraging their own literacy frameworks—through collaboration across various sectors and the alignment of state-level policies with national priorities—offers valuable insights into the ongoing evolution of literacy support systems. Exploring these state-level efforts provides a clearer picture of how infrastructure, funding, and legislation work together to drive progress in literacy across diverse student populations.

## Wyoming Literacy Infrastructure

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The literacy infrastructure in Wyoming is supported by a complex and collaborative network of state governing bodies, including the Governor's Office, the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), the Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS), the Wyoming Department of Health (WDH), the State Board of Education, the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Board, and the Joint Education Interim Committee. Additionally, literacy-focused public and private partnerships, legislative committees, advisory committees, community organizations, institutions of higher education, and members of commerce and industry all play vital roles.

Each of these entities is essential in shaping and advancing literacy policies and initiatives across the state. Their combined efforts ensure that literacy education remains comprehensive, evidence-based, and responsive to the diverse needs of Wyoming's educators and students. Furthermore, oversight of early childhood education, a foundational element of literacy development, is managed by various state agencies and programs, ensuring a cohesive and systematic approach to early learning.

Building a strong literacy infrastructure in Wyoming requires a unified, collaborative effort across multiple levels of government, education, and community sectors. This synergy between state agencies, governing bodies, educational programs, and community organizations ensures that literacy initiatives are comprehensive and responsive to the diverse needs of Wyoming's population. Through coordinated efforts, Wyoming is developing a system that addresses literacy from early childhood through K-12 education and beyond. Central to these efforts are the CLSD grant and the WLLP, which provide a strategic framework for advancing language and literacy across the state.

The following section highlights the key entities and initiatives that shape and support Wyoming's literacy framework, ensuring that all students have access to evidence-based educational opportunities.

## Education Governance

In state education governance, the roles of the Governor and the State Superintendent are pivotal in shaping the direction and success of education systems. Both positions hold significant authority and responsibility, with the Governor providing overarching leadership and the State Superintendent serving as the chief education officer, directly influencing policy and implementation at the ground level. Together, they form the key leadership team that drives educational priorities, reforms, and funding decisions. Their collaboration is vital to shaping both short-term improvements and long-term success in the state's education system. These roles work in tandem to ensure a cohesive and responsive approach to addressing the diverse needs of students and communities.

The Governor is typically the highest-ranking official in state government and plays an influential role in education governance through policy formulation, budgetary decisions, and executive actions. Governors often set the educational agenda for the state, prioritizing areas such as school funding, curriculum standards, teacher quality, and educational equity. They work closely with legislators to advocate for laws that support educational reforms and improvements and may influence the state's response to national and regional educational trends. Governors also have the power to appoint members to state education boards and commissions, further shaping the direction of educational policies. This broad authority allows the Governor to have a profound impact on both the legislative and operational aspects of education.

Governor Mark Gordon has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to transforming Wyoming's educational landscape through innovative and student-centered approaches. Central to his vision is the Reimagining and Innovating the Delivery of Education (RIDE) initiative, launched in 2021. RIDE seeks to modernize Wyoming's K-12 education system by prioritizing student-driven learning experiences, competency-based progression, and expanded career and technical education (CTE) pathways. Moving beyond traditional seat-time requirements, the initiative encourages schools to implement flexible, mastery-based models that allow students to advance based on their demonstrated skills and knowledge. The overarching goal is to create engaging, personalized learning environments that prepare students for success in both higher education and the workforce.

Governor Gordon's education strategy also emphasizes collaboration between students, parents, educators, and communities to ensure that Wyoming's education system remains responsive to workforce demands and the evolving needs of students. His administration has actively encouraged school districts to pilot innovative instructional models, expand access to mental health support services, and integrate real-world learning opportunities that connect classroom instruction to career readiness. As of 2024, nine school districts have begun piloting these approaches, with plans for further expansion. By fostering a more adaptive and future-focused education system, Governor Gordon aims to position Wyoming as a national leader in education innovation and workforce preparation. His focus on collaboration ensures that education is aligned with real-world needs and helps ensure students are prepared for both academic and career success.

The State Superintendent serves as the chief executive officer of the state's department of education, with a direct focus on the implementation of educational policies, programs, and services. Often an elected or appointed position, the Superintendent oversees the day-to-day operations of public education and acts as a bridge between the Governor's office, state policymakers, and local school districts. The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that the state's educational policies are carried out effectively, managing educational funding, and overseeing the assessment and accountability systems. Additionally, they play a key role in advocating for educational priorities, guiding teachers and administrators, and collaborating with state and



local leaders to address challenges such as student achievement gaps and access to resources. Their position is integral to the alignment of state education goals with district-level efforts to improve student outcomes.

State Superintendent Megan Degenfelder's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan is a prime example of how the role of the Superintendent directly influences educational priorities in Wyoming. The plan focuses on several key areas, including parental empowerment, workforce alignment, civics education, teacher support, and early literacy, all of which contribute to the broader framework of education governance in the state. These priorities reflect a holistic approach to education that encompasses student success, family engagement, and workforce preparedness. Each area is designed to address both current educational needs and long-term aspirations for Wyoming's students. The plan also sets a clear pathway for the continued evolution of the state's educational landscape.

A major priority of the plan is fostering parental empowerment, which emphasizes transparency and open communication between schools and families. By providing parents with access to curricular materials, the plan ensures that education remains academically focused, free from political bias, and encourages collaboration between parents and schools. This approach seeks to build a community-driven model for student success. It also provides parents with the tools to support their children's learning at home. This strong partnership between parents and schools strengthens the overall educational ecosystem and fosters a sense of shared responsibility.

Another priority is aligning K-12 education with workforce needs, with a focus on expanding career and technical education (CTE) programs and increasing access to apprenticeships. The plan aims to strengthen partnerships between schools, businesses, and postsecondary institutions, ensuring that students acquire practical skills for a competitive job market, bridging the gap between education and employment. This alignment ensures that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the evolving workforce. It also supports economic development by preparing a skilled workforce for local industries. These efforts are critical in creating pathways for students to enter the workforce directly after graduation or pursue further education in technical fields.

The plan also includes an emphasis on civics education, aiming to develop engaged and responsible citizens who understand civic responsibilities, government processes, and historical context. This initiative ensures that students are prepared to participate in democratic processes and contribute meaningfully to society. By prioritizing civics education, the plan fosters an informed electorate that values civic duty. It also helps students understand the importance of government and the role they can play in shaping it. This foundational knowledge is essential for fostering active and engaged citizens in the future.

Additionally, the plan highlights the importance of valuing and supporting teachers, recognizing their critical role in student success. It includes initiatives to improve teacher retention, expand professional development, and offer classroom support, ensuring that educators are well-prepared to deliver high-quality instruction. Teacher support is essential for maintaining a stable, skilled workforce in education. By addressing these needs, the plan helps create an environment where teachers can thrive. These efforts ensure that educators are equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students and are continuously improving their practice.

Finally, a cornerstone of the plan is enhancing early literacy. The plan seeks to expand access to evidence-based reading instruction, provide teacher training in the science of reading, and increase early interventions for struggling readers. These initiatives reflect a proactive approach to ensuring that all students

develop strong foundational reading skills. Early literacy is a critical predictor of future academic success, and the plan places a strong emphasis on early intervention and support. By addressing literacy gaps early, Wyoming aims to close achievement gaps and improve long-term educational outcomes.

The Governor and State Superintendent's leadership sets the strategic direction for Wyoming's education system, focusing on the essential areas of teacher support, early literacy, and workforce alignment. Their collaboration ensures that educational reforms are both forward-thinking and responsive to the needs of students, educators, and families. As these leadership efforts take shape, it is equally important to recognize the roles of various state agencies that support the implementation of these priorities. These agencies provide vital resources and services that reinforce the state's educational objectives, from early childhood education to K-12 support, creating a robust infrastructure for the state's educational success.

## Agencies

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) is responsible for overseeing public education in Wyoming under the leadership of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The WDE is organized into several key divisions, each focusing on different aspects of education. The Policy Group includes the Accountability and Standards and Assessment Divisions, which manage state and federal programs such as State Accountability, School Accreditation, College and Career Readiness, and the Hathaway Scholarship Program. The Academic Group comprises the School Support Division and the Special Education Program Division, overseeing federal grants under Titles I, II, III, IV, and McKinney-Vento for at-risk students, Career and Technical Education, School Nutrition, Distance and Virtual Education, Teacher and Leader Evaluation Systems, Special Education, and Student and Teacher Resources.

The Operations Group, which includes the Finance and Information Management Divisions and Human Resources, handles fiscal responsibilities, such as managing the Wyoming funding model for public schools, and data collection and reporting required under various state and federal laws. Additionally, the Communications Division supports internal and external communications for the WDE and the State Superintendent and media support to the Wyoming State Board of Education. Together, these divisions collaborate to implement educational policies and programs across the state, supporting over 93,000 students and approximately 17,000 education professionals.

Wyoming's early childhood education system is bolstered by multiple agencies that provide critical services and resources. The Wyoming Department of Family Services (DFS) administers childcare assistance and licensing, ensuring families can access high-quality early learning environments. The Wyoming Department of Health (WDH) offers developmental preschool services for children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (NIEER, 2023). Programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) support early childhood education by funding evidence-based preschool and prekindergarten services for children at high risk of school failure due to poverty. Additionally, the Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council (ECSAC) fosters collaboration among early childhood programs, promoting statewide coordination and evaluation of services (NIEER, 2023). Together, these agencies create a strong foundation for early learning.

Beyond agency oversight, additional initiatives enhance Wyoming's early childhood education system by providing targeted support for children, families, and educators. Wyoming Quality Counts (WQC) promotes high-quality early care and education through resources, training, and professional development. The Developmental Preschool and Early Intervention Program ensures that infants and toddlers with



developmental delays receive timely support. The Wyoming Children's Trust Fund (WCTF) finances programs that prevent child abuse and neglect, helping to build strong family foundations essential for early literacy. These programs collectively reinforce early learning by addressing both educational and familial needs.

Collaborative efforts further strengthen Wyoming's early childhood education landscape. The Wyoming Head Start Collaboration Office ensures alignment between Head Start programs and state early learning initiatives, promoting school readiness for children from low-income families. The Wyoming Early Childhood Professional Learning Collaborative (WEPLC) provides professional development for early childhood educators, aligning training with evidence-based practices to improve instructional quality. The Wyoming State Library (WSL) Early Literacy Programs extend literacy support beyond classrooms by engaging families and communities through public libraries. These initiatives foster a culture of literacy that reaches beyond schools and into homes and communities.

Further reinforcing these efforts, the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program provides home-visiting services that support early learning, parent education, and child health. The Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) strengthens early childhood systems and expands access to high-quality learning programs, particularly for underserved populations. The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program ensures early identification and intervention for hearing loss, supporting language and literacy development from infancy. These integrated supports address health, education, and family needs, laying a strong foundation for literacy.

These programs and initiatives create a comprehensive, collaborative, and sustainable early childhood and literacy infrastructure in Wyoming. By aligning state agencies, early childhood programs, and community organizations, Wyoming ensures that children enter school with strong foundational skills and receive high-quality literacy instruction throughout their academic journey. This coordinated approach strengthens literacy outcomes and reinforces Wyoming's commitment to evidence-based, equitable, and sustainable literacy education for all students.

The focus of Wyoming's educational agencies is to provide a comprehensive, coordinated approach to education and literacy development. These agencies also foster collaboration among early childhood programs, professional development for educators, and services that address health, education, and family needs. The emphasis is on creating a strong foundation from infancy through early education, ensuring that all children have access to the resources necessary for long-term academic success.

### **Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant**

Building on this strong foundation, the CLSD grant plays a critical role in advancing literacy across Wyoming. The CLSD grant focuses on improving literacy instruction from birth through grade 12, with a particular emphasis on underserved populations. The grant supports evidence-based practices in literacy, providing professional development for educators, enhancing instructional materials, and creating systems-level changes that ensure sustainable literacy improvements. The goal of the CLSD grant is to ensure that all students, regardless of background or ability, have the skills and support needed to succeed in reading and writing. Through targeted strategies and resources, the CLSD grant aligns with Wyoming's broader educational priorities, including early literacy, equity, and workforce readiness, ensuring that students are prepared for success in both academics and life.

The goal of the Wyoming Believing in Literacy Together (WY BILT) Grant is to enhance literacy outcomes for children from birth through grade 12. As part of CLSD initiative, the grant is administered by the Wyoming WDE and focuses particularly on students from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those living in poverty, multilingual learners, and children with disabilities. The grant supports a coordinated, evidence-based approach to literacy instruction, ensuring alignment with the latest research in the science of reading. By fostering a comprehensive strategy, WY BILT aims to improve literacy outcomes for all students across the state.

The key objectives of WY BILT are designed to create a systematic and integrated approach to literacy improvement. First, the plan focuses on developing a Comprehensive State Literacy Plan, which involves collaborating with stakeholders to create a unified strategy that aligns early childhood education, K–12 education, and teacher preparation programs. This ensures that literacy instruction is cohesive and consistent statewide. Second, the plan aims to implement a Tiered System of Literacy Support, establishing a multi-tiered support system that provides foundational training for all Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and early childhood education providers, with targeted assistance for those serving students who are reading below grade level. Finally, the grant seeks to allocate subgrants to high-need LEAs, enabling districts in areas with the greatest need to participate in professional development, hire literacy coaches, implement evidence-based literacy programs, and access content experts and improvement specialists.

Together, these objectives form the core of the WY BILT CLSD Grant, ensuring a structured and evidence-based approach to improving literacy across Wyoming. The following sections provide a deeper exploration of each objective, outlining the strategies and implementation efforts that drive Wyoming's commitment to language and literacy excellence.

## Comprehensive State Literacy Plan

The WY BILT initiative was charged with creating the WLLP to create a cohesive framework that aligns early childhood education, K–12 instruction, and teacher preparation programs. Rooted in the science of reading, the WLLP draws on over five decades of interdisciplinary research to inform evidence-based literacy instruction., as The Reading League (2022) defines it:

“A vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it derives from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading is derived from research in education, special education, literacy, psychology, neurology, and more. It provides an explanation of how proficient reading and writing develop, why some have difficulty, and how we can most effectively assess and teach to improve student outcomes.”

This research spans cognitive psychology, which examines how mental processes like memory and reasoning influence reading, and developmental psychology, which tracks literacy growth over time. Communication sciences explore the role of language in reading and writing, while education research identifies effective instructional methods. Special education contributes strategies for supporting students with learning difficulties, and linguistics analyzes language structure in relation to literacy. Neuroscience reveals the brain mechanisms involved in reading, while school psychology offers targeted interventions to support struggling readers.

This statewide framework provides guidance for implementing structured literacy practices that support all students, particularly those with significant literacy needs. By fostering a systematic approach, the plan

ensures that literacy instruction is consistent, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with Wyoming's long-term education goals. Districts and educators are encouraged to integrate these practices into daily instruction, ensuring sustainability beyond the grant period.

### **Tiered Literacy Support**

A statewide system of tiered literacy support has been established to ensure that all LEAs receive foundational literacy training. Additionally, targeted assistance is provided to LEAs serving higher percentages of students reading below grade level. This differentiated support model allows for scalable and sustainable literacy improvement across diverse learning environments. The tiered approach ensures that each district receives the level of support necessary to improve student outcomes while allowing for flexibility based on local needs.

The grant also prioritizes investment in high-need LEAs by providing competitive subgrants to districts with the greatest literacy challenges. These funds enable districts to implement evidence-based literacy programs, hire literacy coaches, and access specialized training and instructional resources. Through these investments, schools can build their capacity to provide structured literacy instruction that meets the needs of all students. The goal is to equip Wyoming schools with the tools and knowledge necessary to deliver high-quality literacy instruction and interventions consistently.

### **Implementation Highlights**

The WY BILT grant emphasizes professional development to build the capacity of educators, literacy coaches, and school leaders. Through high-quality training, participants learn to implement structured literacy practices aligned with the science of reading. This professional learning is designed to be ongoing, with a focus on deepening educators' understanding of literacy instruction at all levels. Additionally, the training provides educators with strategies to address the needs of struggling readers, ensuring that interventions are targeted and effective.

A critical component of the initiative is the focus on evidence-based interventions for students who are reading below grade level. Schools receiving WY BILT funding are expected to implement intensive, explicit, and systematic literacy instruction that follows a structured approach. The goal is to accelerate student progress by providing consistent, data-driven instruction tailored to individual learning needs. This structured support ensures that students receive high-quality instruction that aligns with state literacy goals and best practices.

Additionally, family literacy programs are integrated into the initiative, recognizing the essential role of parents and caregivers in supporting children's literacy development. WY BILT invests in expanding access to adult and family literacy resources to encourage literacy-rich environments beyond the classroom. Family engagement efforts include workshops, home-based reading initiatives, and access to high-quality literacy materials that support reading at home. These efforts are designed to build strong literacy habits that extend beyond the school setting and into daily life.

### **Impact and Reach**

Since its implementation, 25 out of 48 Wyoming school districts have received CLSD grant funding through the WY BILT initiative. These funds have played a pivotal role in enhancing district-level reading programs, with a particular emphasis on early literacy development. Research indicates that achieving reading proficiency by the end of third grade is a critical milestone for long-term academic success, making early literacy support a key priority. The initiative aims to bridge literacy gaps by ensuring that struggling readers receive early, targeted intervention before they fall significantly behind their peers.

The WY BILT grant reflects Wyoming's commitment to improving statewide literacy outcomes through structured, research-based strategies. By fostering a comprehensive literacy system, strengthening district and school leadership, and expanding access to high-quality literacy instruction, WY BILT ensures that Wyoming students have the skills necessary for lifelong learning and success. The initiative's structured approach to literacy ensures that all Wyoming students, regardless of background, have access to evidence-based instruction that supports their academic growth.

## Key Relationships and Intersections

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A state's literacy infrastructure is a complex system composed of state governing bodies such as the WDE, the governor's office, state boards of education, literacy-focused public-private partnerships, state-level legislative committees, and literacy-focused advisory committees. It also includes existing policies, practices, and legislation, community organizations, IHEs, and members of commerce and industry. These critical relationships and intersections are necessary to develop a comprehensive and effective state language and literacy plan.

This literacy infrastructure is part of a broader literacy ecosystem, encompassing the interconnected systems, structures, relationships, and resources supporting literacy development. It includes governing bodies, policies, funding mechanisms, educational institutions, community organizations, public-private partnerships, and the practices, tools, and frameworks that guide literacy instruction and program implementation. A strong literacy ecosystem infrastructure ensures that all components work cohesively to address the diverse needs of learners, promote equitable access to literacy resources, and sustain long-term improvements in literacy outcomes. Collaboration, alignment of goals, and the integration of evidence-based practices are essential to creating a supportive and effective environment for literacy growth.

Key relationships within Wyoming's literacy infrastructure are essential to the successful implementation and sustainability of literacy programs. These relationships include collaborations between the WDE and LEAs, community organizations, and partnerships with higher education institutions. Each of these connections plays a vital role in enhancing literacy outcomes. For example, the WDE collaborates with LEAs to ensure statewide initiatives are effectively implemented, reaching every part of the state. Community organizations offer valuable support and resources to students and families, broadening the impact of these initiatives beyond the classroom. At the same time, higher education institutions contribute by preparing future educators, coaching, professional development, and conducting research that informs best practices in literacy instruction.

By integrating these key relationships, Wyoming will ensure that literacy initiatives are well-coordinated and effectively address the diverse needs of students across the state. This collaborative approach strengthens the literacy infrastructure, paving the way for sustained success and improved outcomes for all Wyoming students. Just as the peaks of Wyoming's majestic mountains form a strong and unified range, these partnerships create a solid foundation for literacy growth. Through these combined efforts, Wyoming is poised to build a more effective literacy environment that benefits every student.

Wyoming's literacy initiatives are aligned with federal and state legislation to support these efforts further, ensuring that policies, practices, and implementation strategies are comprehensive and compliant with

national standards. This alignment provides a critical framework for advancing literacy outcomes while maintaining consistency with evidence-based practices and legal requirements. By aligning with federal guidelines, Wyoming ensures its literacy programs are effective and sustainable, leveraging national resources and frameworks to enhance local efforts. This connection between state and federal priorities strengthens Wyoming's ability to meet the diverse needs of its students while maintaining accountability and transparency.

## Federal Alignment, State Legislation, Policy Implementation

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The success of these initiatives depends on a seamless collaboration between federal alignment, state legislation, and local policy implementation. Each level of governance plays a distinct yet interconnected role in shaping literacy reform. Federal guidelines establish the overarching framework and funding mechanisms, state legislation tailors these directives to address local needs, and policy implementation ensures that evidence-based strategies are applied effectively in classrooms and communities. Together, these components create a cohesive system that drives continuous improvement and enables all students to achieve literacy success.

Effective literacy reform requires a seamless alignment between federal guidelines, state legislation, and on-the-ground policy implementation. Federal initiatives provide a broad framework and funding mechanisms to support literacy education, while state legislation tailors these directives to address local needs and priorities. Policy implementation bridges the gap between these levels, ensuring that evidence-based strategies are effectively applied in classrooms and communities. Together, these components create a cohesive system that will drive continuous improvement, enabling all students to achieve literacy success. The [Education 101 infographic](#) shows how federal, state, and local levels influence education policy.

### Federal Alignment

The CLSD Grant Program is a federally funded initiative designed to support states in implementing evidence-based literacy instruction from birth through grade 12. Administered by the U.S. Department of Education, CLSD provides competitive grants to states, which then distribute subgrants to high-need LEAs and early childhood education providers. The overarching goal of CLSD is to improve literacy outcomes by ensuring that students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to high-quality literacy instruction grounded in the science of reading.

CLSD policies emphasize the use of evidence-based literacy practices, requiring states to align their literacy initiatives with scientifically validated approaches to instruction and intervention. States receiving CLSD funding must demonstrate how their literacy plans will improve language and literacy skills, support professional development for educators, and promote family and community engagement. Additionally, CLSD mandates ongoing data collection and evaluation to measure student progress, ensuring accountability in meeting literacy goals.

A key component of CLSD policies is the tiered funding structure, which directs at least 15% of grant funds to early childhood programs, 40% to K-5 education, and 40% to grades 6-12. This structure ensures that literacy initiatives span the entire developmental continuum, providing sustained literacy support at all levels of education. CLSD also encourages collaborative partnerships between state education agencies, institutions of

higher education, and community organizations to strengthen literacy implementation.

Through CLSD, the federal government establishes a clear framework for literacy improvement, reinforcing the importance of state and local leadership in sustaining literacy initiatives beyond the grant period. By requiring states to integrate high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), structured professional learning, and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), CLSD policies create long-term, scalable improvements in literacy education.

### **Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

ESSA is a comprehensive federal law governing K-12 education policy in the United States, with a significant focus on literacy. The act requires states to implement evidence-based literacy interventions to support students who struggle with reading, including adolescents. ESSA's provisions emphasize the importance of foundational literacy skills, ensuring that early interventions are in place to address reading difficulties from a young age. However, it also mandates ongoing support for older students, recognizing that literacy challenges can persist into adolescence. The MTSS and other frameworks provide targeted help to students at different levels of need. These frameworks are designed to ensure that students struggling with literacy receive the appropriate level of intervention, whether in elementary, middle, or high school. The law includes provisions for developing comprehensive literacy programs from early childhood through grade 12, ensuring continuity in literacy support.

### **Literacy Education for All, Results for the Nation (LEARN) Program**

This program, authorized under ESSA, continues to provide competitive grants to states to improve literacy instruction, focusing on high-need districts. The LEARN program ensures that literacy instruction is effective across all grade levels, from early childhood to high school. This includes specific support for struggling adolescent readers, ensuring they receive the help they need to improve their literacy skills and succeed academically.

### **National Center on Improving Literacy (NCIL)**

The NCIL, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, supports literacy outcomes for students, particularly those with disabilities such as dyslexia. The center emphasizes the importance of foundational literacy skills in the early grades while providing resources and guidance for addressing the needs of older students who struggle with reading. Its research highlights the importance of early, intensive, and sustained support, but it also acknowledges the necessity of continued intervention for adolescents who may still face challenges with literacy.

### **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is a federal law that ensures students with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE) tailored to their unique needs. IDEA requires schools to provide individualized services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP), which includes goals and supports to address academic, social, and developmental challenges. IDEA mandates early identification of reading disabilities and evidence-based interventions, ensuring access to accommodations, specialized instruction, and assistive technology as needed. This legal framework is essential for addressing the literacy needs of students with disabilities, including those with language-based learning disorders or reading difficulties such as dyslexia.



## State Legislation

At the state level, governors, legislatures, state chiefs, and state boards develop standards, assessments, and policies that address state-specific priorities while adhering to federal guidelines. They oversee the implementation of these policies and ensure accountability through monitoring school improvement and data collection. Wyoming has taken significant steps to enhance literacy education at the state level through various legislative actions. These efforts aim to complement federal requirements while addressing the unique needs of Wyoming's communities. State legislation ensures that literacy programs are accessible, effective, and aligned with the latest educational research grounded in reading science. The following legislative actions demonstrate Wyoming's commitment to improving literacy outcomes.

### House Bill 297 (2019)

House Bill 297 requires school districts to implement a reading screening program to measure K-3 student reading progress using WDE-approved screening instruments that provide standardized, statewide longitudinal data. The proposed bill updates these requirements, mandating districts to adopt and implement a reading assessment and intervention program that identifies reading difficulties and includes evidence-based interventions applied with fidelity. It also revises reporting requirements to include student performance data, intervention methods, and progress achieved. Additionally, the bill introduced stricter improvement plan requirements for districts where fewer than 85% of third graders are reading on grade level.

### Wyoming Statute 21-3-401 (Amended in 2022)

In 2022, the Wyoming Legislature amended Wyoming Statute 21-3-401 through SF0032, enhancing the K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention Program to strengthen early literacy efforts across the state. This act mandates that school districts assess students in kindergarten through grade three at least three times per year to screen for reading difficulties and monitor progress. Additionally, the State Superintendent is required to establish criteria for identifying appropriate screening instruments and monitoring tools, with Section 4 of the act authorizing an immediate study of these criteria to support implementation.

To further strengthen early literacy outcomes, this act requires school district employees providing instruction in kindergarten through grade three to undergo professional development in literacy instruction and the identification of students with reading difficulties. This professional development must occur at least once every three years. The State Superintendent is tasked with reviewing and adopting these professional development requirements through established rulemaking processes. These legislative measures create a structured framework to ensure students with literacy challenges receive timely and effective support.

## Policy Implementation

At the local level, teachers, principals, district superintendents, and school boards focus on implementing these policies in classrooms and communities. They deliver instruction and apply evidence-based strategies to meet the needs of students. This level is critical for translating state and federal policies into meaningful outcomes for learners. Wyoming has developed a robust policy framework to ensure that its literacy initiatives are implemented effectively and consistently across the state. These policies include specific rules, professional development requirements, and data collection processes to support literacy instruction and intervention. The finalized Chapter 56 Rules include several pivotal provisions.

## **Chapter 56 Rules**

The Chapter 56 Rules set criteria for screening instruments that detect signs of reading difficulties and authorize their use statewide. They ensure that districts provide evidence-based interventions and curricula focused on foundational early reading skills, creating a consistent approach to addressing literacy challenges. Furthermore, the rules mandate that guardians are informed of screening results and, if necessary, that individual reading plans are developed to support students. Additionally, these rules outline the minimum professional development requirements for educators involved in reading assessment and intervention and the submission of district professional development plans to the WDE.

### **Data Collection and Reporting**

Data collected from the approved screening processes must be reported to the WDE, focusing on predictive areas such as phonological awareness, phonics, decoding words and nonwords, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. This data is critical for monitoring progress and ensuring that interventions are effective. The WDE is committed to supporting schools and districts in achieving their improvement plan goals through professional development, evidence-based literacy instruction, and early identification of reading difficulties.

### **Professional Development Support**

To assist with implementing these requirements, the WDE offers live informational webinars and office hours. These sessions have also been recorded and are available on the WDE Professional Development Portal under the K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention Informational Webinars and Office Hours course. Educators can register for this course through the K-3 Reading Implementation Guidance Canvas Course, where they will receive ongoing updates, including scheduled office hours and other K-3 Reading informational opportunities.

### **K-3 Literacy Modules**

In partnership with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), Wyoming has developed a robust series of ten K-3 Literacy Modules to deepen the implementation of evidence-based early literacy instruction. This professional learning series is grounded in the science of reading and equips early reading teachers and early education professionals with essential knowledge and instructional practices across key components of early literacy, including phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The modules also include foundational content on oral language development and strategies to support diverse learners. This training series fulfills portions of the professional learning competencies outlined in Wyoming's K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention standards supporting educators in advancing high-quality instruction and intervention efforts statewide.

The module sequence aligns with Wyoming's key competency skills for early literacy, providing a structured and intentional content progression. The series begins with two overview modules (Modules 1-2) that establish foundational knowledge, introduce explicit instruction and structured literacy, and set the stage for the following content-specific modules. These modules are grounded in reading science and the National Reading Panel's (2000) five pillars of reading, with additional emphasis on spelling and writing.

The Word Reading Skills modules (Modules 3-7) focus on how phonological and phonemic awareness skills support phonics instruction, ultimately leading to fluent decoding. Within this sequence, the phonics modules (Modules 4-6) systematically and sequentially present concepts along a developmental continuum, ensuring clarity and coherence. These modules provide educators with the tools to teach decoding skills effectively, which are critical for early reading success.

The Language Comprehension Skills modules (Modules 8-9) address vocabulary, morphology, and comprehension strategies, providing essential tools for understanding and interpreting text. These modules emphasize the importance of building background knowledge and teaching strategies that help students make meaning from what they read. Writing instruction (Module 10) follows the comprehension modules, illustrating how writing reinforces and deepens comprehension. This final module highlights the interconnectedness of reading and writing, ensuring that educators can simultaneously support students in developing both skills.

Each module includes essential topics based on reading science, integrating critical content knowledge with pedagogical strategies. Through embedded activities and assessments, participants explore assessment, instruction, differentiation, and intervention, allowing them to gauge their progress and apply their knowledge meaningfully. For additional information, educators can visit the Wyoming Department of Education's K-3 Reading Training Modules webpage (Wyoming Department of Education, n.d.).

In summary, the "Education Policy 101" infographic effectively illustrates the distinct roles and responsibilities of federal, state, and local governance in advancing literacy reform. By highlighting these differentiated functions, it reinforces the importance of coordination across all levels of the system. No single level of governance can achieve literacy success alone; rather, it requires the combined efforts of federal, state, and local entities to create a cohesive and effective system. Federal guidelines provide the foundational framework, funding, and accountability measures to support large-scale initiatives. State legislation tailors these directives to address the unique needs of communities, while local implementation translates policies into actionable strategies that directly impact students.

This interconnected structure fosters a continuous improvement cycle, where each level informs and strengthens the others. Federal oversight ensures consistency and equity across states, while state-level flexibility allows for targeted, responsive solutions. Local educators and leaders bring policies to life by applying evidence-based practices to meet the diverse needs of students and communities. Together, these interactions create a system that is both coherent and adaptive.

This highlights the critical need for intentional alignment to achieve sustainable literacy reform. When federal, state, and local stakeholders work together toward a shared vision, the system becomes more than the sum of its parts. This coordination drives measurable improvements in student outcomes and ensures that all learners—regardless of background—have access to high-quality language and literacy instruction. Effective collaboration equips students with the skills to read, write, and communicate with confidence—essential competencies for academic success, career readiness, and active citizenship in a complex world.

## Impact on Literacy

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### Wyoming's Literacy Policy Implementation Score and Implications

ExcelinEd's [Early Literacy Policy Implementation Analysis Rubric](#) evaluates states across 18 fundamental principles related to early literacy policies. [Wyoming's score of 8 out of 18 highlights](#) areas where progress has been made while also identifying significant opportunities for improvement. The rubric categorizes implementation into four levels: full implementation, partial implementation, future implementation, and principles not adopted. Wyoming's performance indicates a mix of partial adoption and gaps in key areas.

## Key Strengths Identified

Wyoming has made progress in several key areas critical to improving literacy outcomes. One area of advancement is the implementation of a universal reading screener to identify students at risk for reading failure. While this requirement has been partially implemented, achieving full effectiveness will require statewide standardization, including clear guidelines for screening timelines and protocols (ExcelinEd, 2024). Research by Catts et al. (2015) highlights the importance of universal screeners in the early identification of reading difficulties, noting that consistent and standardized screening practices are essential for timely interventions. Mississippi and Tennessee have successfully improved literacy outcomes by implementing statewide universal screening systems with clear protocols (Spear-Swerling, 2019).

Another area of progress is parental notification. Wyoming recognizes the importance of parental involvement in addressing reading deficiencies; however, the state lacks a fully structured and consistent timeline for informing parents, limiting this practice's overall impact (ExcelinEd, 2024). Research by Epstein (2018) emphasizes that structured parental communication and involvement are critical for supporting students' literacy development at home. States implementing clear parental notification policies, such as Florida, have seen improved collaboration between schools and families, leading to better student outcomes (Hanford, 2019).

Additionally, Wyoming has demonstrated evidence of MTSS for monitoring student progress. While MTSS frameworks are in place, the depth and consistency of these systems vary by district, leaving room for further development and uniformity across the state (ExcelinEd, 2024). Studies by Fuchs and Fuchs (2017) show that MTSS, when implemented consistently, is highly effective in identifying and addressing student needs through tiered interventions. Furthermore, research by Gersten et al. (2008) underscores the importance of progress monitoring within MTSS frameworks, linking consistent implementation to improved literacy outcomes for struggling readers.

## Areas Needing Improvement

Wyoming has opportunities to further advance literacy outcomes by fully implementing several key principles. One area for growth is the expansion of, science-based reading training for all K–3 educators. While some training programs are already in place, fully implementing systematic, required training tied to certification processes presents a promising opportunity for enhanced educator effectiveness (ExcelinEd, 2024). Research highlights the importance of such training, with Moats (2020) emphasizing that structured literacy aligned with the science of reading is crucial for early-grade educators. States like Mississippi have seen substantial improvements in literacy outcomes after introducing mandatory training as part of certification (Hanford, 2019), illustrating the potential impact of this approach.

Another promising opportunity lies in further strengthening policies around the use of evidence-based reading practices in the classroom. While policies to reduce the use of three-cueing instructional models are in place, there is an opportunity to fully eliminate these materials from classrooms to ensure all students benefit from the most effective literacy instruction. Research from Seidenberg (2017) and Kilpatrick (2015) demonstrates the value of evidence-based phonics instruction, which could greatly enhance literacy outcomes. States like Arkansas and Florida have successfully removed three-cueing systems, yielding positive results, and Wyoming has the chance to build on these successful models.

An additional opportunity for improvement is the consistent application of individualized reading plans for students with reading deficiencies. While schools are required to create and monitor these plans, there is an

opportunity to implement this practice more consistently across all districts (ExcelinEd, 2024). Studies by Wanzek and Vaughn (2007) emphasize the importance of individualized reading interventions, which, when paired with progress monitoring, lead to improved literacy outcomes. Expanding this practice across the state will provide more targeted support to struggling readers and foster stronger literacy development.

Finally, there is a valuable opportunity to secure stable, long-term funding for early literacy initiatives. Currently, many efforts rely on temporary or grant-based funding, which limits the ability to sustain and expand successful programs. Research by the Learning Policy Institute (2018) highlights that states with long-term, stable funding—such as Tennessee’s Read to Be Ready initiative—see more consistent improvements in literacy outcomes. By shifting toward more sustainable funding models, Wyoming can ensure that successful early literacy programs continue to thrive and benefit students for years to come.

### Implications for Wyoming

Wyoming’s score of 8 out of 18 highlights the need for a more cohesive and structured approach to literacy policy implementation. This score underscores significant gaps in the current literacy framework and emphasizes the importance of aligning the WLLP with best practices and evidence-based recommendations. By addressing these gaps, the state can improve educational outcomes and elevate its position in literacy education. A focused and strategic approach to policy implementation will be essential to creating a more effective literacy environment for students across Wyoming.

To make these improvements, several key steps can be taken. First, establishing statewide mandates for professional development in reading science is crucial. Setting clear, systematic requirements for all K–3 educators to complete reading science training would ensure that teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills to effectively teach reading. Wyoming currently has partial implementation in this area, but full implementation of mandatory training tied to certification processes will be a game-changer for student success (ExcelinEd, 2024). Research consistently shows that targeted professional development for educators leads to improved literacy outcomes (Institute of Education Sciences, 2021), making this step a top priority.

Next, expanding parent engagement through a consistent and structured parental notification system will foster stronger collaboration between families and schools. Ensuring that parents are regularly informed about their children’s reading progress and interventions will enhance the support network around struggling readers. The rubric emphasizes the importance of timely, clear communication with families when students are identified as having reading deficiencies. By improving parental involvement in the literacy process, Wyoming schools can create a more unified approach to tackling literacy challenges (ExcelinEd, 2024). Studies show that increased parental involvement leads to higher student achievement, making this step vital for student success (Harvard Family Research Project, 2020).

Finally, Wyoming should consider transitioning from temporary, grant-based funding to a more sustainable financial framework for early literacy initiatives. The current reliance on short-term funding limits the scalability and long-term impact of these programs. By shifting to stable, long-term funding through state budget allocations, Wyoming can ensure the continued success and expansion of literacy initiatives (ExcelinEd, 2024). The National Education Association (2023) underscores the importance of consistent funding for educational programs, highlighting that sustainable financial support is essential for the long-term success of literacy initiatives. Establishing a reliable funding stream will ensure that these vital programs continue to benefit students and contribute to improving literacy outcomes across the state.

As Wyoming works to address the gaps identified in its literacy ecosystem, it is important to connect these efforts with broader, state-driven educational strategies. These improvements will not only enhance literacy outcomes but also contribute to the state's overall educational objectives. By aligning state initiatives with evidence-based practices, Wyoming can create a more cohesive and sustainable approach to literacy development. This will allow for better integration of teacher training, parental engagement, and funding strategies, ensuring all components work together toward improved literacy. The following section will explore how these initiatives can be bridged with broader educational strategies to ensure long-term progress and success.

## **Bridging State Initiatives and Broader Educational Strategies**

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Wyoming's progress in literacy policy implementation highlights both achievements and opportunities for growth, underscoring the need for a cohesive approach that integrates state-driven strategies with evidence-based practices. As the state continues refining its WLLP, leveraging research-backed frameworks can strengthen teacher training, parental engagement, and sustainable funding. These efforts align with the broader goal of creating equitable and effective literacy systems that benefit all students, regardless of their background. Wyoming serves as a practical example of how targeted state initiatives can address gaps and improve student outcomes. By aligning policies with evidence-based practices, the state demonstrates the importance of fostering equitable access and accountability. These ongoing developments provide a clear context for examining how comprehensive literacy policies at both state and federal levels inform strategic planning and implementation.

Research consistently demonstrates that early interventions and robust professional development lead to measurable gains in student literacy. State-driven efforts that integrate evidence-based strategies and multi-layered support systems benefit not only students but also a broad range of professionals, including administrators, educators, interventionists, and specialists who contribute to literacy development (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2015; American Federation of Teachers, 2016). Aligning state initiatives with federal guidelines ensures a more cohesive and effective literacy system, reinforcing the commitment to equitable opportunities for all learners. As Wyoming continues refining its approach, it is essential to consider how these initiatives fit within the broader landscape of national literacy policy and research-driven best practices.

A key component of effective literacy policy is the integration of accountability and continuous improvement measures. Federal and state policies require schools to monitor student progress, refine instructional strategies, and ensure that literacy initiatives remain well-funded, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs of diverse student populations (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; WWC, 2016). Embedding accountability within literacy policies promotes high standards across schools, fostering equitable access to instruction. However, accountability alone is not enough—ensuring that resources are allocated effectively is essential to maintaining consistency and supporting sustainable literacy improvements across all districts.

To create a unified and aligned literacy system, state policies establish clear expectations for districts while ensuring that funding reaches areas of greatest need. Research indicates that a shared vision and consistent standards help prevent disparities in educational quality, reinforcing equitable instruction for all students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Additionally, targeted resource allocation ensures that schools serving students with the most significant literacy challenges receive adequate support (Odden & Picus, 2018). This



approach not only maximizes the impact of available funds but also encourages collaboration among districts, allowing for the exchange of best practices and the alignment of instructional efforts. Yet, even with proper funding and system alignment, the effectiveness of literacy initiatives ultimately depends on the capacity of educators to implement evidence-based instruction, making professional development a critical investment.

Ensuring that educators are well-prepared to deliver high-quality literacy instruction requires sustained professional learning. State-led training initiatives provide educators with access to research-backed strategies that improve literacy outcomes (Desimone & Garet, 2015). By investing in ongoing capacity building, states enable educators to adapt to evolving challenges, refine instructional approaches, and implement interventions that meet the diverse needs of students. This commitment to professional growth has a direct impact on student reading proficiency and overall academic achievement (WWC, 2014). However, professional development alone is insufficient without assessment and accountability systems that measure effectiveness and drive continuous improvement.

Regular assessments provide valuable data that inform literacy initiatives and ensure accountability at all levels of education. By tracking student progress and evaluating instructional effectiveness, these assessments help educators and policymakers refine literacy programs based on real outcomes. Transparent reporting keeps parents, educators, and community stakeholders informed, fostering shared responsibility for student success (Black & Wiliam, 2018; WWC, 2009). While assessments offer insights into student performance, closing achievement gaps requires targeted support for historically underserved populations.

Equity-driven policies are essential for ensuring that all students, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities, have access to high-quality literacy instruction. By providing additional resources and specialized interventions, states can address systemic disparities and create more inclusive educational opportunities (Reardon et al., 2019; WWC, 2007). These initiatives reinforce the importance of equitable resource distribution, ensuring that literacy success is not determined by socioeconomic status. To further support equity, states must remain responsive to emerging research and adopt innovative, evidence-based practices that continuously improve literacy instruction.

Advancements in literacy research have led to new instructional strategies and technologies that enhance student learning. State-driven initiatives that emphasize continuous improvement help integrate these innovations into classrooms, ensuring that literacy instruction evolves alongside the latest findings (Biancarosa & Snow, 2016; WWC, 2008). By fostering a culture of research-based innovation, states create an education system that remains adaptable and forward-looking. However, effective literacy instruction does not happen in isolation—engaging families and communities is crucial to reinforcing literacy development beyond the classroom.

Strong literacy policies acknowledge the critical role of family and community engagement in student success. When parents and caregivers actively participate in literacy initiatives, they help create a network of support that extends learning beyond school walls (Epstein, 2018; WWC, 2012). Collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities ensure that students receive consistent support in developing literacy skills. By fostering shared responsibility, states can build a comprehensive literacy ecosystem that nurtures lifelong reading and learning.

## Conclusion and Transition to Component Three

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Component 2 outlined Wyoming's comprehensive literacy infrastructure, emphasizing the alignment of federal and state policies with evidence-based practices, particularly those grounded in the science of reading. This section highlighted the role of various state agencies, including the WDE, in supporting a cohesive and effective literacy system. It emphasized how policies designed to foster accountability, equity, and access to high-quality education are foundational to strengthening literacy outcomes across the state. By promoting scientifically-backed instructional practices, Wyoming ensures that students receive research-based literacy education, from early childhood through to high school. The importance of teacher training in the science of reading was also highlighted, emphasizing that teacher preparation and professional development must be aligned with proven, evidence-based strategies to effectively support student literacy.

Building on this strong foundation, Component 3 will shift focus to addressing the specific literacy-related needs of Wyoming's diverse populations. It will begin by analyzing the disaggregated data gathered through the Wyoming Language and Literacy Needs Assessment (WYLNA), which will be instrumental in identifying the literacy challenges faced by students, teachers, and preservice teachers. A particular emphasis will be placed on target populations such as students with disabilities, English learners, and students from high-poverty areas. Root cause analysis will be employed to uncover the underlying factors contributing to disparities in literacy achievement, helping to develop targeted strategies that address these challenges and ensure equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction for all students.

In addition to focusing on underserved groups, Component 3 will also consider the broader literacy-related needs of K-12 students, teachers, families, and students in transition programs. By analyzing successful literacy initiatives that have demonstrated effectiveness with similar target populations, Wyoming will develop strategies and goals to meet the needs of these groups. The state's focus will be on fostering inclusivity and equity by leveraging evidence-based practices, ensuring that the literacy strategies implemented in Wyoming are both effective and responsive to the unique challenges each population faces. This comprehensive approach will guarantee that all students, regardless of their background, receive the support they need to succeed academically, socially, and professionally.

Through this data-driven approach, Component 3 will serve as the foundation for refining Wyoming's literacy initiatives. By analyzing the data, identifying priorities, and addressing root causes of disparities, Wyoming will continue to build a strong, equitable literacy system that supports the academic, professional, and personal success of its students. This commitment involves ongoing collaboration among state leaders, educators, families, and community partners to ensure literacy efforts are aligned and sustained. Continuous monitoring and feedback loops will inform decision-making and allow for timely adjustments. As a result, Wyoming's literacy initiatives will remain responsive to student needs and grounded in evidence-based practices that promote long-term success.