



## Component 4: Alignment to State Literacy Initiatives



**Wyoming Department of Education**

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## Introduction

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The alignment of literacy initiatives within the Wyoming Language and Literacy Plan (WLLP) is like the merging of rivers that carve Wyoming's rugged terrain, shaping the land over time. Just as small tributaries join to form powerful currents, each literacy initiative contributes to a larger, more forceful movement toward educational progress. When these waters flow in harmony, they erode barriers, nourish growth, and create lasting change—just as a well-coordinated literacy system removes obstacles, strengthens foundational skills, and fosters long-term success for all students. A fragmented system, like disconnected streams, lacks the force to create meaningful change, but when properly aligned, these efforts gain momentum and reshape the educational landscape. By channeling various initiatives into a cohesive system, the WLLP focuses energy and resources on the shared goal of improving literacy outcomes statewide.

## Purpose

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Component 4 of the WLLP emphasizes this convergence by ensuring that state literacy initiatives flow together into a unified, strategic approach. Rather than existing as isolated efforts, each program is woven into a larger system that maximizes impact, avoids duplication, and directs resources efficiently. The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) plays a key role in this process, conducting a comprehensive inventory of existing programs to identify opportunities for synergy and collaboration. Through this process, the WDE strengthens cross-agency partnerships, integrates research-backed strategies, and aligns local and state initiatives for greater coherence. By ensuring all literacy efforts work toward a common purpose, the WLLP creates a system that is both sustainable and transformative for Wyoming's students.

By integrating the WLLP with existing programs and resources, the plan strengthens statewide efforts, ensuring sustainable improvements in reading and writing skills for all Wyoming students. A well-integrated system ensures that students, educators, and families have access to high-quality literacy instruction and interventions at every stage of development. The WLLP provides a coordinated framework that leverages best practices, evidence-based resources, and targeted professional learning to ensure consistency across the state. Just as Wyoming's rivers carve enduring pathways across the landscape, the WLLP establishes a lasting literacy framework, ensuring that literacy initiatives evolve in response to student needs. Through systemic alignment and strategic implementation, Wyoming is building a literacy foundation that is resilient, adaptable, and designed for long-term success.

Ensuring that literacy efforts are aligned and well-integrated is only one component of a successful statewide initiative. To create lasting improvements, literacy initiatives must be structured within a sustainable framework that meets the diverse needs of students and educators. A strong literacy system incorporates evidence-based instructional practices, targeted interventions, and supports for Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and students with unique literacy challenges. Research highlights that effective initiatives extend beyond core instruction, addressing social-emotional learning, equity, and oral language development to create inclusive and responsive learning environments. By examining how other states structure their literacy efforts, Wyoming can continue to refine and strengthen the WLLP, ensuring that it remains comprehensive, equitable, and impactful.

## Effective and Sustainable Literacy Initiatives

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State literacy initiatives achieve meaningful outcomes when anchored in comprehensive frameworks designed to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Research underscores the importance of integrating key elements such as social-emotional learning, equity, oral language development, and support for multilingual and diverse learners into these frameworks. For instance, Oregon’s Early Literacy Framework exemplifies how aligning these components can establish a cohesive plan that guides implementation across varied contexts (Overstreet, 2023). Addressing these dimensions of literacy is critical, as it fosters environments that support the growth of every learner. By embedding these elements into literacy frameworks, states can ensure that their initiatives promote inclusive and effective learning experiences.

Leadership is a cornerstone of effective literacy initiatives, guiding and sustaining the implementation of evidence-based practices. The National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) emphasizes the critical role of leadership in managing change processes, making decisions, providing guidance, and supporting organizational functioning (NIRN, 2015, 2016). Effective literacy leaders combine instructional expertise with strategic planning skills, enabling them to navigate complex educational landscapes. By prioritizing leadership development, states ensure that educators receive the support needed to apply high-quality instructional strategies consistently. Well-prepared leaders cultivate cultures of continuous improvement, bridging the gap between strategic planning and classroom execution, which is vital for sustaining literacy initiatives over time (Overstreet, 2023).

Evidence suggests that literacy initiatives require a long-term perspective to yield measurable improvements in student outcomes. Programs often falter when launched with initial enthusiasm but lack sustained investment or realistic timelines. Ensuring continued investment in professional development, instructional materials, and literacy coaching is essential for maintaining the impact of literacy programs. Ohio’s success in aligning legislative mandates with robust funding mechanisms demonstrates how financial and policy support plays a crucial role in advancing literacy (Overstreet, 2023). This long-term commitment enables literacy initiatives to be implemented effectively and to produce lasting educational outcomes.

Collaboration with stakeholders—including educators, researchers, administrators, families, and communities—is another vital ingredient in successful literacy initiatives. Broad engagement fosters trust, builds shared ownership, and drives the sustainability of literacy efforts. Research consistently highlights the importance of stakeholder buy-in for fostering systemic change and improving literacy outcomes over time (Moore, Mascarenhas, & Bain, 2017). Literacy leaders play a pivotal role in facilitating these collaborations, ensuring alignment between state goals and local implementation strategies. This alignment not only enhances the reach and impact of literacy initiatives but also creates a unified approach to addressing the diverse needs of students (Shanahan, 2023).

State literacy initiatives are most effective when they integrate comprehensive planning, strong leadership, adequate resource allocation, and collaborative engagement with stakeholders. Grounding these efforts in evidence-based practices ensures that states can address the needs of all learners, ultimately paving the way for transformative educational outcomes. Effective literacy initiatives require strategic planning, strong leadership, and sustained investment to drive meaningful change. Wyoming’s commitment to high-quality literacy instruction relies on aligning efforts across multiple levels of the education system. The next section examines Wyoming’s existing literacy initiatives, highlighting their role in advancing statewide literacy goals.

## Inventory of Literacy Initiatives

Wyoming is committed to ensuring that every child has access to high-quality literacy instruction that is grounded in evidence-based practices. The state recognizes that language and literacy development is a continuous process that begins in early childhood and extends through high school. To support this vision, Wyoming has implemented a comprehensive set of initiatives designed to enhance literacy instruction, provide targeted interventions, and strengthen professional learning opportunities for educators.

This State Inventory of Literacy Initiatives serves as a comprehensive guide to the key programs and strategies driving literacy improvement across Wyoming. Each initiative outlined in this inventory plays a crucial role in advancing the state's commitment to the WLLP by addressing various aspects of literacy development, from early learning and kindergarten readiness to adolescent literacy and leadership capacity-building. The initiatives also reflect a collaborative approach, engaging educators, administrators, policymakers, and families to create sustainable literacy improvements that will benefit generations of learners.

By documenting these efforts in a single inventory, Wyoming provides stakeholders with a clear overview of the state's literacy landscape, allowing for greater alignment, coordination, and continuous improvement. The following initiatives represent Wyoming's ongoing commitment to literacy excellence, ensuring that all students, regardless of background or ability, have the opportunity to develop strong language and literacy skills essential for academic and lifelong success.

The following initiatives represent Wyoming's commitment to literacy excellence. They provide targeted resources, professional development opportunities, and systemic strategies that enhance literacy outcomes statewide. From foundational early learning programs to advanced instructional frameworks, these initiatives collectively build a strong literacy ecosystem that empowers students, educators, and communities.

### Embracing Literacy Conference

The Embracing Literacy Conference is an annual event designed to provide educators with professional development aligned to the latest literacy research and best practices. Sessions cover a broad range of topics relevant to the P-12 continuum, including leadership pathways, MLLs, language development, and the science of reading. Attendees engage with national experts and participate in hands-on workshops that strengthen their instructional approaches. This conference serves as a vital professional learning opportunity for Wyoming educators, literacy leaders, and administrators seeking to deepen their knowledge and refine their literacy practices.

### Governor's Summer Reading Challenge

The Governor's Summer Reading Challenge is an annual initiative aimed at promoting reading engagement during the summer months. This statewide challenge encourages students to maintain and strengthen their literacy skills when school is not in session, reducing the risk of summer learning loss. Schools, libraries, and families actively participate in the challenge, fostering a culture of reading across Wyoming. At the end of the summer, outstanding student readers and schools with high participation rates are recognized by state leaders, further motivating students to develop lifelong reading habits.

### K-3 Literacy Guidance Framework: Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention

The Wyoming K-3 Literacy Guidance Framework is a foundational document developed by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) in collaboration with technical content experts and the Region 11

Comprehensive Center. This framework provides educators with structured guidance on early literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention, ensuring alignment with Wyoming’s K–3 Reading Assessment and Intervention Rules (W.S. § 21-3-401, Chapter 56). By incorporating evidence-based practices, the framework helps districts and schools support literacy development in young learners, ensuring they achieve reading proficiency by the end of third grade.

### **K–3 Reading Assessment and Intervention**

Mandated by Wyoming Statute 21-3-401, the K–3 Reading Assessment and Intervention initiative requires schools to screen all K–3 students for potential reading difficulties and provide targeted interventions as needed. This initiative ensures that struggling readers receive the necessary support to develop foundational literacy skills critical for academic success. By systematically identifying and addressing reading challenges at an early stage, the initiative seeks to improve Wyoming’s literacy outcomes and prevent students from falling behind in later grades.

### **Language and Literacy Leaders Symposium Event**

The Language and Literacy Leaders Symposium is an exclusive, invitational event for Wyoming’s literacy and education leaders. This event convenes Systems Leaders from the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Subgrantee District Literacy Teams, Principal Leadership Academy participants, Principal Mentor/Mentee Teams, Wyoming Superintendents, District and School Leaders, Early Childhood Center Directors, WDE officials, University of Wyoming faculty, legislators, and key stakeholders. The symposium provides an opportunity for systems leaders to learn from national literacy experts while collaborating on strategies to advance language and literacy initiatives across the state.

### **LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) Option**

LETRS is a professional development program designed to equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to implement evidence-based literacy practices effectively. Rooted in the science of reading, LETRS provides educators with a deep understanding of how proficient reading and writing skills develop, why some students struggle with literacy, and how to assess, instruct, and intervene to support student success. Wyoming educators receive comprehensive training through this program, ensuring high-quality literacy instruction across the state.

### **LETRS for Administrators Option**

LETRS for Administrators is a specialized professional learning program designed to guide state, district, and school administrators in strengthening literacy structures and outcomes within their educational systems. The program focuses on equipping leaders with the necessary knowledge and tools to support evidence-based literacy instruction. Through LETRS for Administrators, educational leaders gain a deeper understanding of literacy development and effective instructional leadership strategies, ensuring that their schools foster a culture of literacy improvement and student achievement.

### **LETRS—Early Childhood: Training for Early Childhood Educators Option**

Wyoming supports LETRS training tailored specifically for early childhood educators working with the state’s youngest learners. This professional development program provides educators with foundational knowledge in evidence-based literacy practices, emphasizing early language development, phonological awareness, and print knowledge. By equipping early childhood educators with the skills to support pre-literacy development, this initiative strengthens the language and literacy foundations that are critical for kindergarten readiness and long-term academic success.

### **Reimagining and Innovating the Delivery of Education (RIDE) Pilot Option**

The Reimagining and Innovating the Delivery of Education (RIDE) Pilot was established by Governor Gordon to explore and implement bold ideas for transforming Wyoming's education system. This initiative brings together educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to develop innovative solutions that enhance educational delivery and improve student outcomes. The RIDE Pilot focuses on rethinking traditional instructional models, integrating technology, and addressing the diverse needs of Wyoming's student population.

### **WY BILT Literacy Initiative-Five Year Grant**

The WY BILT (Wyoming Believing in Language and Literacy Together) Literacy Initiative is a statewide effort funded through the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant. This initiative involves 25 districts that have received targeted funding to improve literacy outcomes through evidence-based practices, professional development, and community engagement. WY BILT prioritizes systemic change, ensuring that literacy instruction is aligned with research-backed methodologies to support all learners.

### **Wyoming Kindergarten Transition**

The Wyoming Kindergarten Transition initiative recognizes that preparing for kindergarten is an ongoing process that begins well before the first day of school. This initiative provides families, caregivers, and educators with resources and guidance to support children's smooth transition into formal schooling. By fostering collaboration among early childhood providers, schools, and families, the initiative ensures that young learners are equipped with the skills and confidence needed for kindergarten and beyond.

### **Wyoming Quality Counts**

Wyoming Quality Counts is a statewide initiative designed to improve the quality of early learning environments through professional development and resources for early childhood educators. This program provides training on best practices in early literacy instruction, equipping educators with the tools to support young children's language and literacy development. By emphasizing high-quality instruction in the early years, Wyoming Quality Counts plays a key role in preparing children for success in school and beyond.

### **Wyoming's Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) State Framework**

Wyoming's comprehensive MTSS framework is designed to drive system-level change and continuous improvement in schools and districts. MTSS provides students with targeted academic and behavioral support, ensuring each child has opportunities to maximize achievement. The Wyoming MTSS Center, in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research, offers high-quality training, coaching, and resources to local educators, helping them effectively implement MTSS strategies and improve student outcomes statewide.

Collectively, these initiatives represent Wyoming's commitment to fostering a comprehensive and evidence-based literacy ecosystem that supports students from early childhood through high school. By integrating evidence-based instructional practices, targeted interventions, and professional learning opportunities, Wyoming ensures that educators are equipped with the tools necessary to meet the diverse literacy needs of all learners. Additionally, these initiatives reflect a collaborative approach, engaging schools, families, policymakers, and community partners in advancing literacy excellence across the state. As Wyoming continues to build on these efforts, these programs will serve as critical drivers in achieving sustained language and literacy success for all students.



Wyoming's literacy initiatives reflect a commitment to a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that supports students from early childhood through high school. These efforts ensure that educators have the necessary tools to provide high-quality instruction and targeted interventions. Collaboration among schools, families, policymakers, and community partners strengthens the impact of these initiatives. As the state refines its approach, these programs will continue to drive literacy success and improve outcomes for all students. The next section explores how Wyoming incorporates commonalities and differences among literacy initiatives to create a cohesive statewide strategy.

## **Incorporating Commonalities and Differences**

### **Commonalities**

Wyoming's literacy initiatives share a strong commitment to ensuring that all students receive high-quality, evidence-based instruction that supports their language and literacy development from early childhood through high school. Grounded in the science of reading, these initiatives align with research-backed instructional strategies to equip educators with the tools necessary to improve literacy outcomes. Programs such as the K-3 Literacy Guidance Framework, LETRS training, and the Embracing Literacy Conference provide professional development opportunities that strengthen instructional practices and deepen educators' understanding of effective literacy instruction. By investing in ongoing learning for teachers, administrators, and literacy leaders, Wyoming ensures that its education system remains aligned with best practices in reading and language development.

A critical component of Wyoming's literacy approach is its emphasis on early literacy. Recognizing that strong language foundations begin before kindergarten, initiatives like the Wyoming Kindergarten Transition program, and Wyoming Quality Counts focus on preparing young learners for academic success. These programs provide structured guidance and resources to educators and caregivers, ensuring that children develop essential pre-literacy skills such as oral language, phonological awareness, and vocabulary growth. Furthermore, targeted interventions such as the K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention initiative systematically identify and support struggling readers, preventing students from falling behind in later grades.

Wyoming's commitment to literacy also extends to systemic change and sustainability. The WY BILT Literacy Initiative and Wyoming's MTSS focus on building capacity at the district and school levels to ensure long-term improvements in literacy instruction. These initiatives promote a structured, data-informed approach that enables schools to continuously refine their strategies and provide differentiated support to students based on their needs. By integrating High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM), assessment systems, and intervention models, these efforts create a lasting impact that strengthens Wyoming's overall literacy landscape.

A strong emphasis on community and family engagement further reinforces the state's comprehensive literacy efforts. Programs such as the Governor's Summer Reading Challenge, Wyoming Quality Counts, and the Wyoming Kindergarten Transition recognize the vital role that caregivers and families play in supporting literacy development. By fostering a culture of reading beyond the classroom, these initiatives encourage lifelong literacy habits and ensure that learning extends into homes and communities. Additionally, collaborative efforts such as the Language and Literacy Leaders Symposium bring together key stakeholders, including educators, administrators, policymakers, and university faculty, to align literacy strategies and ensure statewide coordination.



Equity and access remain at the core of Wyoming's literacy vision. The state is dedicated to ensuring that all students, regardless of background or ability, receive high-quality literacy instruction and the necessary supports to succeed. This includes initiatives designed to meet the needs of MLLs and students facing reading difficulties. Wyoming's approach also fosters continuous innovation and improvement through programs like the RIDE Pilot, which explores new instructional models and strategies to enhance educational outcomes.

### **Differences**

While Wyoming's literacy initiatives share a common goal of improving literacy outcomes statewide, they vary in scope, focus, and target audiences. Some initiatives are designed as annual events, options, or single-day programs, while others provide more extensive, ongoing support. Additionally, certain initiatives offer comprehensive support across the P-12 continuum, ensuring students receive evidence-based literacy instruction from early childhood through high school. In contrast, some programs focus more narrowly on early literacy, emphasizing the development of foundational skills for students in grades K-3. This distinction highlights the variances that could impact continued literacy development throughout a student's academic journey.

Several initiatives, such as the WY BILT Literacy Initiative, the Embracing Literacy Conference, and the Language and Literacy Leaders Symposium, address literacy across the entire P-12 system, supporting educators, administrators, and students at all grade levels. These initiatives emphasize systemic change by strengthening professional learning opportunities and aligning instructional practices with the science of reading. The MTSS similarly provides structured academic interventions across all grade levels, ensuring that struggling readers receive the necessary support regardless of age. Additionally, initiatives like LETRS and LETRS for Administrators equip teachers and educational leaders with research-based knowledge that can be applied from early childhood through high school.

In contrast, many initiatives focus primarily on K-3 literacy development, reflecting Wyoming's recognition that early reading proficiency is critical for long-term academic success. The K-3 Literacy Guidance Framework, K-3 Reading Assessment and Intervention, and The Wyoming Kindergarten Transition initiative are designed specifically to ensure that students develop strong reading foundations before entering upper elementary grades. These initiatives provide structured assessment systems, targeted interventions, and instructional guidance to help young learners reach proficiency by the end of third grade. Similarly, LETRS—Early Childhood extends support to pre-kindergarten educators, emphasizing the importance of oral language development, phonological awareness, and early literacy skills in preparing children for kindergarten.

Other initiatives emphasize transitions and readiness, bridging early learning with formal schooling. The Wyoming Kindergarten Transition and Wyoming Quality Counts focus on ensuring that young learners enter school with the skills and confidence necessary for success. Wyoming's investment in these programs highlights the state's belief in early preparation as a key factor in literacy achievement. Meanwhile, initiatives such as the Governor's Summer Reading Challenge and RIDE Pilot extend beyond the classroom, encouraging literacy engagement at home and exploring innovative instructional models to support student learning.

While some initiatives serve educators broadly across grade levels, others target specific professional learning needs. The LETRS for Administrators program is designed to enhance the leadership capacity of

school and district administrators, while the Language and Literacy Leaders Symposium brings together policymakers and educational leaders to advance statewide literacy strategies. These initiatives ensure that literacy leadership remains strong at all levels, reinforcing the infrastructure needed to sustain evidence-based instruction in classrooms.

Together, these differences illustrate Wyoming's multi-faceted approach to literacy. Some initiatives are designed for broad, system-wide impact across P-12, while others focus on foundational literacy development in K-3. While Wyoming's literacy initiatives provide comprehensive support for many aspects of language and literacy development, there are areas where additional focus could strengthen the overall approach. Specifically, MLLs, adolescent literacy, and birth-to-five literacy development require further emphasis to ensure that all students, regardless of their linguistic background or developmental stage, receive the support they need.

MLLs are mentioned within certain initiatives, such as the Embracing Literacy Conference, which includes sessions on language development, but there is no dedicated statewide initiative that systematically supports MLLs' literacy development across P-12. While MTSS provides tiered interventions, and the K-3 Literacy Guidance Framework may address some multilingual literacy needs, the state would benefit from an explicit strategy focused on supporting MLLs' language acquisition, biliteracy development, and culturally responsive instruction. Wyoming's literacy assessment and intervention frameworks should also consider the unique needs of MLLs, ensuring that assessments distinguish between language proficiency challenges and true reading difficulties.

Another critical area is adolescent literacy, which does not receive as much structured support as early literacy. While WY BILT, MTSS, and the Embracing Literacy Conference cover literacy across all grades, there is no standalone initiative that directly addresses secondary students' reading and writing development, content or disciplinary literacy, or interventions for struggling adolescent readers. Research underscores the importance of explicit reading and writing instruction in middle and high school, particularly for students who have not yet developed strong literacy skills. Wyoming could enhance its approach by developing a more defined adolescent literacy framework, providing targeted professional development for secondary educators, and ensuring access to HQIM specifically designed for older students.

Additionally, birth-to-five language and literacy development plays a foundational role in later academic success, yet while initiatives like the Wyoming Kindergarten Transition initiative Wyoming Quality Counts, and LETRS—Early Childhood support early learning, there is room for expanded, systematic efforts to support infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children. Research highlights the importance of early exposure to rich language environments, caregiver-child interactions, and access to high-quality early literacy experiences. While Wyoming's Kindergarten Transition Initiative focuses on school readiness, a broader Birth-to-Five Literacy Framework could ensure consistent, research-based support for early oral language and literacy development in home, childcare, and preschool settings.

By strengthening multilingual learner support, adolescent literacy instruction, and birth-to-five literacy development, Wyoming could further enhance its WLLP to provide a truly comprehensive, P-12 language and literacy system. These areas represent opportunities for future growth, ensuring that every learner—regardless of age, language background, or literacy level—has access to the instruction and resources necessary to achieve long-term literacy success.

## Strengthening Wyoming's Literacy Ecosystem

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Recognizing the commonalities and differences among Wyoming's literacy initiatives is only the first step in refining the state's approach to improving language and literacy outcomes. To maximize impact, Wyoming must identify evidence-based instruction, materials, and resources and actively engage in structured collaboration across districts, agencies, and community partners. A well-coordinated literacy system ensures that all learners—regardless of age, linguistic background, or reading proficiency—receive the instruction and support they need to succeed. By leveraging shared learning, strengthening professional development, and ensuring that all literacy efforts align with the WLLP, the state can build a more cohesive and sustainable approach to literacy improvement.

One critical area of focus is ensuring that literacy initiatives address the full P-12 continuum, particularly in areas that need further development. While Wyoming has made significant investments in early literacy, professional development, and structured interventions, adolescent literacy, multilingual learner support, and birth-to-five literacy development require additional attention. Expanding structured, research-based supports in these areas will enhance Wyoming's ability to meet the needs of all students, not just those in the early grades. The WLLP provides a framework for this work, ensuring that literacy initiatives align with evidence-based best practices while allowing for adjustments based on local needs.

A data-driven approach remains essential in refining and expanding Wyoming's literacy efforts. By continuing to analyze trends in early literacy outcomes, intervention effectiveness, and professional development participation, Wyoming can identify which initiatives are yielding the greatest impact and where additional supports are necessary. Data comparisons across districts also help pinpoint gaps in literacy instruction and intervention, guiding the continuous improvement process. This evidence-based approach ensures that decisions are not only aligned with scientific research on reading but also tailored to Wyoming's unique educational landscape.

Ensuring equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction is another critical priority. Wyoming must continue to strengthen support for students who have historically faced barriers to literacy success, including MLLs, struggling adolescent readers, and children in under-resourced communities. While some initiatives indirectly address these groups, a more explicit focus on multilingual literacy development, adolescent reading and writing instruction, and early language exposure in birth-to-five settings would reinforce Wyoming's commitment to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to develop strong literacy skills. Expanding targeted professional development and instructional materials that address the diverse needs of Wyoming learners will help districts implement more effective, inclusive literacy practices.

The WLLP's role as a living document ensures that Wyoming can adapt its literacy approach based on new research, policy shifts, and district-level needs. Creating flexible, research-aligned literacy frameworks allows Wyoming to maintain consistency in core literacy principles while providing districts with the autonomy to tailor implementation to their specific contexts. This balance ensures that literacy efforts remain aligned at the state level while being adaptable enough to meet regional and local needs.

Sustaining and scaling literacy reforms beyond grant-funded periods is also key to Wyoming's long-term literacy success. While federal and state funding supports many initiatives, Wyoming must explore opportunities to embed literacy improvements into broader state policies to ensure their longevity. This

includes strengthening public-private partnerships, integrating literacy into school improvement planning, and supporting district-level capacity building to maintain high-quality literacy instruction beyond initial implementation phases. Ensuring that literacy initiatives are deeply embedded within Wyoming's educational infrastructure will allow the state to continue its progress long after specific funding cycles end.

As Wyoming refines and expands its comprehensive literacy system, the state's ability to continuously align, evaluate, and strengthen initiatives will determine the success of its efforts. By ensuring that all literacy programs align with the WLLP, prioritizing equity and access, expanding support for MLLs and adolescent literacy, and embedding reforms into long-term policy structures, Wyoming can build a sustainable, evidence-based literacy ecosystem that ensures lasting improvements for generations of students. The next section will explore specific actions Wyoming can take to strengthen implementation and sustainability across its literacy initiatives.

Recognizing the commonalities and differences among state literacy initiatives provides a foundation for refining approaches and ensuring targeted improvements. However, achieving meaningful progress requires more than just identifying effective strategies—it necessitates intentional collaboration and alignment across multiple levels. By fostering synergy between literacy efforts, states can streamline resources, reduce duplication, and amplify the impact of their initiatives. A well-coordinated approach strengthens the ability of educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to create sustainable change. The next section explores how Wyoming and other states can enhance collaboration to build a unified literacy system that drives measurable outcomes.

## **Synergizing Efforts**

Increasing the synergy of efforts among state literacy initiatives is essential for maximizing the impact of these programs on a national scale. When states collaborate, they can leverage shared resources, align their goals, and amplify their collective voice, leading to more effective and cohesive literacy outcomes. However, achieving this level of collaboration requires intentional strategies that bring states together, encourage the sharing of best practices, and foster a unified approach to literacy education. Moreover, enhancing synergy also involves promoting cross-collaboration not only between states but also within individual states, ensuring that local districts, schools, and communities are aligned and working towards common literacy goals. By focusing on both internal and external collaboration, states can enhance the effectiveness of their individual initiatives while contributing to a stronger, more coordinated national effort. Across Wyoming, these strategies can help unify districts, schools, and communities in their literacy efforts.

Establishing cross-state networks and partnerships is a powerful way to enhance synergy among literacy initiatives. Developing formal networks and partnerships can significantly increase communication, collaboration, and the sharing of resources both within a state and across different states. These networks facilitate joint projects, the exchange of best practices, and even the development of joint funding applications to maximize the impact of literacy programs. By working together, states ensure they are not operating in isolation but are instead leveraging collective knowledge and resources to enhance literacy outcomes nationwide. Across Wyoming, establishing such networks can strengthen collaboration among districts, schools, and communities, ensuring that they work together effectively to improve literacy outcomes.

Aligning goals and objectives across different states is another critical strategy for increasing synergy. While each state may have unique needs, establishing common objectives—such as improving early literacy, supporting struggling readers, and increasing equity in literacy education—creates a unified direction for all

states to follow. When states pursue similar goals, they can more effectively share strategies, resources, and data, leading to a more cohesive and impactful national effort. This alignment helps ensure that all states are moving towards the same overarching literacy goals. Across Wyoming, aligning these goals among districts, schools, and communities can lead to a more coordinated and focused approach to literacy improvement.

Creating shared resources and platforms is also essential for fostering synergy. Developing shared resources, such as curriculum materials, professional development programs, and assessment tools, allows states to work more synergistically within their own borders and in collaboration with other states. Online platforms can be particularly effective, providing spaces for the exchange of resources, hosting webinars, and offering discussion forums. These platforms reduce duplication of effort and ensure that all states have access to high-quality tools and materials, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of literacy initiatives nationwide. Across Wyoming, shared resources and platforms can facilitate cooperation among districts, schools, and communities, ensuring that everyone has access to the best possible tools for literacy success.

Coordinating professional development across different states can significantly increase synergy as well. States can collaborate to offer joint training programs, learning sessions, and conferences that bring together educators from various regions. This approach not only enhances the quality of professional development within each state but also fosters a sense of shared purpose and community among educators across state lines. By sharing ideas and best practices, joint professional development initiatives contribute to more consistent and effective literacy instruction on a national scale. Across Wyoming, coordinating professional development efforts among districts, schools, and communities can lead to a more unified and effective approach to literacy education.

Leveraging data and research collaboratively is another strategy that can enhance synergy. By working together to collect, analyze, and share data on literacy outcomes, states can gain more comprehensive and actionable insights. Collaborative research efforts allow states to pool their data, identify trends, and develop successful strategies that can inform policy and practice. This data-driven approach ensures that decisions are based on evidence and tailored to meet the specific needs of different states, thereby improving literacy outcomes both within individual states and across the country. Across Wyoming, leveraging data collaboratively among districts, schools, and communities can lead to more informed decision-making and more effective literacy strategies statewide.

Engaging in joint advocacy efforts further amplifies the impact of state literacy initiatives. When states come together to advocate for federal funding, policy changes, or national literacy initiatives, they present a unified voice that is more likely to be heard by policymakers. Joint advocacy efforts help align state and federal priorities, ensuring that literacy remains a national focus. This collective approach to advocacy can lead to more substantial support for literacy initiatives at both the state and national levels. Across Wyoming, engaging in joint advocacy efforts among districts, schools, and communities can ensure that the state's literacy needs are effectively communicated and addressed.

Finally, fostering a culture of continuous improvement within states and across different states can significantly increase synergy. This involves regularly reassessing and refining literacy initiatives based on feedback, new research, and shared experiences. States can create feedback loops where they share what is working and what needs improvement, allowing all states to benefit from each other's successes and lessons learned. A culture of continuous improvement ensures that literacy initiatives evolve and improve over time, leading to sustained and synergistic efforts that ultimately enhance literacy outcomes nationwide.

Across Wyoming, fostering this culture of continuous improvement among districts, schools, and communities can ensure that the state's literacy initiatives remain dynamic, effective, and responsive to changing needs.

The WLLP seeks to synergize efforts by aligning the goals and activities of various literacy initiatives. By fostering collaboration among different programs and stakeholders, the plan aims to create a unified approach to literacy education. This includes coordinating professional development activities, sharing best practices, and leveraging resources to support common goals. For instance, the WY BILT initiative and the Embracing Literacy Conference both focus on professional development and the dissemination of evidence-based practices.

While fostering synergy among literacy initiatives strengthens collaboration and maximizes impact, it is equally important to assess how these efforts translate into student success. Simply coordinating resources and aligning goals is not enough; states must continuously evaluate the effectiveness of their literacy strategies to ensure meaningful improvements. By identifying strengths and addressing gaps, educators and policymakers can refine initiatives to better serve diverse student populations. This process involves assessing student outcomes, scaling effective practices, and eliminating barriers that hinder literacy progress. The next section explores how Wyoming is analyzing literacy successes and gaps to ensure that all students receive the support they need to thrive.

### **Addressing Successes and Gaps**

Addressing the intersection between literacy initiatives and outcomes presents a crucial opportunity to maximize momentum and effectively close opportunity gaps. By focusing on how specific literacy strategies directly influence student achievement, educators and policymakers can identify which approaches are most successful in fostering equitable outcomes. This targeted analysis allows for the refinement of existing initiatives, ensuring that they are not only well-designed but also impactful in reducing disparities. Moreover, understanding this intersection empowers stakeholders to allocate resources more efficiently, scaling up practices that demonstrate the greatest potential for closing achievement gaps. As a result, states can drive more substantial and sustained improvements in literacy outcomes, ultimately ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed regardless of their background.

To ensure the WLLP effectively addresses the needs of students, teachers, and preservice teachers, the WDE implements a rigorous and annually recurring data analysis process. Each year, it collects and analyzes a broad spectrum of data sources, including state and national assessments, to identify areas of achievement and opportunities for growth. Annual stakeholder surveys capture valuable insights from educators, caregivers, and community members, ensuring that feedback continually informs the plan's objectives and strategies.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the WDE gathers comprehensive data on student performance, instructional practices, and resource allocation. This annual analysis highlights successes to celebrate and pinpoints areas requiring targeted strategies. These ongoing efforts enhance literacy outcomes and support the overarching goals of the WLLP, driving sustained progress across Wyoming's education system.

The WDE has conducted a comprehensive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis as part of the development of the WLLP. This strategic planning tool was employed to evaluate the



internal strengths and weaknesses of our educational system, as well as the external opportunities and threats that may influence the success of our literacy initiatives. By carefully assessing these factors, the WDE has identified key areas where we can leverage strengths, address existing challenges, capitalize on opportunities, and mitigate potential risks. This analysis emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to close literacy gaps and improve reading proficiency across all student groups in Wyoming. The following table presents the results of this SWOT analysis, providing a structured overview of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to addressing literacy needs and enhancing outcomes for Wyoming students.

Understanding the successes and challenges of literacy initiatives requires a structured approach that identifies both areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. To support data-driven decision-making, the WDE has conducted a comprehensive analysis of the state's literacy landscape, highlighting trends in student achievement and instructional practices. A key component of this evaluation is the Literacy Initiatives SWOT Analysis, which examines internal strengths and weaknesses while identifying external opportunities and threats that may influence literacy outcomes. This analysis provides a strategic framework for refining existing initiatives and developing targeted interventions. The following section outlines the key findings from this assessment, offering insights into the factors that shape Wyoming's literacy initiatives.

## Gaps in Service

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Mapping root cause indicators to high-impact domains in the Wyoming Literacy Needs Assessment offers a detailed crosswalk between critical areas for enhancing overall literacy achievement, addressing achievement gaps among student subgroups, supporting disadvantaged and underserved students, and implementing targeted interventions to combat persistent stagnancy and performance declines. This approach aligns high-impact domains in literacy improvement with the specific needs of literacy leaders, teachers, preservice teachers, and students based on qualitative and quantitative literacy data. It provides a breakdown of how each group's needs correspond to these domains.

### Literacy Leader Needs

A literacy leader champions the advancement of language and literacy skills by guiding systems, supporting instructional practices, fostering professional learning, and driving systemic improvement. These leaders, whether they are superintendents, administrators, principals, assistant principals, or directors, play a critical role in shaping educational environments that prioritize evidence-based strategies to improve student outcomes. Through collaboration, mentorship, and strategic decision-making, literacy leaders serve as catalysts for change, fostering a culture of continuous growth and achievement in literacy across schools and districts.

Literacy leaders are pivotal in driving successful literacy initiatives. To effectively support and guide these efforts, they require a deep understanding of research-based practices. Their role demands the ability to foster innovation and collaboration within their teams, ensuring that literacy improvement strategies are both forward-thinking and rooted in evidence. Additionally, literacy leaders must possess the skills to critique and apply research effectively, enabling them to make informed decisions that align with the overarching goals referenced in the the Wyoming Literacy Needs Assessment.

Central to this work is the ability of literacy leaders to develop and articulate a shared vision that addresses



the diverse needs of all students. This visionary leadership must be informed by data and grounded in evidence-based practices to ensure it drives meaningful progress. Research highlights that leaders who focus on structured literacy approaches and align resources with strategic goals see significant improvements in student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021). By fostering collaboration and maintaining a clear focus on measurable goals, literacy leaders create a strong foundation for sustainable literacy improvement.

To achieve these outcomes, literacy leaders must also play a critical role in enhancing instructional quality. This instructional leadership requires supporting teachers with high-quality instructional tools and ensuring these resources align with current research. Structured literacy programs, which emphasize explicit and systematic phonics instruction, have been shown to improve early reading skills and close achievement gaps (The Reading League, 2022). Furthermore, embedding professional learning opportunities that allow for collaboration and growth strengthens educators' collective efficacy and fosters a culture of continuous improvement (Mortensen, 2022).

While instructional improvements are critical, operational leadership provides the framework necessary to sustain these initiatives. Leaders must ensure that resources are allocated effectively, instructional schedules prioritize literacy, and early intervention systems are robust. Implementing tools such as curriculum-based measures (CBMs) for universal screening allows schools to identify at-risk readers early and intervene with research-based strategies, significantly reducing the percentage of struggling readers (Lyon, 2003). Strategic scheduling and resource alignment ensure that teachers and students have the time and tools necessary to meet literacy goals (Mortensen, 2022).

Equally important is the relational dimension of literacy leadership. Relational leadership focuses on building strong, trusting relationships with educators, students, and caregivers to create an inclusive and supportive environment that enhances program effectiveness. Engaging families as partners in literacy initiatives has been shown to strengthen outcomes, while fostering a collaborative school culture encourages shared ownership of literacy success (Fullan, 2014; Mortensen, 2022). By cultivating these relationships, literacy leaders create a community-wide commitment to improving literacy outcomes.

Finally, innovative leadership remains a cornerstone of effective literacy leadership. Leaders must remain adaptable, continuously integrating new research to address evolving educational challenges. Tools such as *The Science of Reading: Defining Guide* provide evidence-based strategies that empower leaders to make informed decisions and sustain meaningful progress (The Reading League, 2022). By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and embracing new ideas, literacy leaders ensure that their initiatives remain impactful and relevant over time.

The role of literacy leaders, school administrators, principals, assistant principals, and directors, is multifaceted, requiring a balance of visionary, instructional, operational, relational, and innovative leadership. To fulfill these responsibilities, literacy leaders and principals must engage in high-quality, evidence-aligned professional learning that is comprehensive, sustained, and job-embedded. Such learning experiences should be delivered through a collaborative approach that not only enhances the effectiveness of educators but also incorporates structured mentorship for literacy leaders. Mentorship provides critical opportunities for leaders to refine their skills, gain insights from experienced colleagues, and build capacity for driving transformative change. These evidence-based practices empower leaders to drive meaningful and lasting improvements in literacy outcomes, ensuring their efforts align seamlessly with the goals of the WLLP. By embracing strategies that prioritize mentorship and collaboration, literacy leaders create the conditions necessary for students to receive the exceptional education they need to succeed and thrive.

## Teacher and Preservice Teacher Needs

The needs of teachers and preservice teachers are foundational to enhancing literacy instruction across Wyoming. These educators must be equipped with a solid foundation in research-based practices, including a thorough understanding of the reading science. Training in evidence-based practices is essential to ensure that their instructional methods are effective and aligned with current educational standards. Moreover, teachers need the skills to implement and monitor tiered interventions, allowing them to address the diverse needs of their students. Job-embedded learning opportunities and coaching protocols are vital for continuous professional growth, enabling teachers to refine their practices. Finally, familiarity with HQIM and the ability to use them effectively is crucial for delivering impactful literacy instruction.

## Student Needs

The ultimate goal of literacy initiatives is to meet the needs of students, ensuring they have the tools necessary for academic success. Students require access to effective literacy programs and evidence-based instruction that is tailored to their individual needs. Personalized support through tiered interventions is essential for addressing learning gaps and ensuring that all students, including those who are disadvantaged or underserved, receive the assistance they need. High-quality, evidence-based instructional materials play a crucial role in this process, providing students with the resources to engage with content meaningfully. Additionally, effective and aligned instruction is necessary to ensure that every student benefits from a high-quality education, ultimately closing achievement gaps and fostering overall literacy achievement. This integrated approach ensures that the specific needs of literacy leaders, teachers, preservice teachers, and students are systematically addressed, leading to more effective literacy outcomes across Wyoming.

## Broader System Literacy Needs

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A comprehensive, evidence-based literacy initiative must account for the diverse needs of all students. The WLLP is designed to ensure that every learner—regardless of ability, background, or circumstance—has access to high-quality, research-aligned literacy instruction. The integration of structured literacy principles (Spear-Swerling, 2018) and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017) ensures that all students receive instruction tailored to their specific needs, with early identification and intervention playing a critical role in success.

Findings from Component 3: Data and Root Cause Analysis highlight systemic gaps in literacy outcomes across student subgroups, reinforcing the necessity of refining instructional approaches to better serve all learners. Analysis of statewide assessment data underscores the disparities in foundational literacy skills, particularly among students with disabilities, MLLs, and those from historically underserved backgrounds. To bridge these gaps, Wyoming must enhance its literacy infrastructure by ensuring alignment between assessment data, instructional practices, and professional development—a core principle of the WLLP.

By leveraging a structured, data-driven approach, Wyoming can strengthen intervention systems by aligning instructional strategies with assessment data. This alignment ensures that students receive targeted, evidence-based interventions tailored to their specific literacy needs. Improving instructional consistency across districts fosters equitable access to high-quality instruction for all learners. Additionally, Wyoming must establish accountability measures that track student progress and adjust interventions accordingly. This commitment to refining literacy systems supports the broader goal of creating equitable learning environments where every student has the opportunity to thrive.

## Supporting Diverse Student Populations with Evidence-Based Practices

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### Students with Dyslexia and Developmental Language Disorder (DLD)

Dyslexia, a neurobiological disorder that affects word recognition, spelling, and decoding abilities, impacts an estimated 15–20% of students (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). The National Reading Panel (2000) emphasized the necessity of explicit, systematic phonics instruction in addressing dyslexia, while Kilpatrick (2015) highlighted the role of phonemic awareness and orthographic mapping in intervention. For students with DLD, instruction must also target oral language comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar (Bishop & Snowling, 2004) to bridge the gap between spoken and written language development.

Recent research by Hogan et al. (2024) further supports the integration of oral language and literacy instruction for students with dyslexia and DLD. Hogan’s work emphasizes that structured, explicit interventions focusing on phonemic awareness, morphological instruction, and syntax development significantly improve reading outcomes. Additionally, her research underscores the need for ongoing assessment and responsive adjustments to intervention strategies to ensure students develop both decoding and comprehension skills effectively. The integration of structured literacy, Scarborough’s Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001), and language comprehension interventions remains a critical approach to ensuring students with dyslexia and DLD build the foundational skills necessary for reading success.

### Students in Special Education

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates that students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, IDEA specifies that individualized education programs (IEPs) must include special education and related services based on peer-reviewed research to the extent practicable (20 USC 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV)). This provision underscores the importance of using scientifically based instructional practices that have been proven effective for students with disabilities.

Research from Swanson and Hoskyn (1998) confirms that explicit, systematic instruction tailored to individual needs leads to better literacy outcomes for students with learning disabilities. Additionally, response to intervention (RTI) and MTSS frameworks (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2017) provide targeted instruction at increasing levels of intensity, ensuring students with disabilities receive data-driven interventions aligned with their IEP goals. Effective literacy instruction for students in special education must be direct, explicit, and multisensory, incorporating systematic progress monitoring, differentiation, and alignment to the five foundational reading skills—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

### Students with Speech-Language Impairments

Language development is directly tied to literacy success (Catts et al., 2005). Students with speech-language impairments require interventions targeting phonological awareness, vocabulary, and expressive/receptive language skills (Hogan et al., 2014). Collaboration between educators and speech-language pathologists (SLPs) is essential to embed oral language instruction within literacy instruction, strengthening students’ ability to comprehend and produce written text. Research by Kamhi and Catts (2012) emphasizes the direct relationship between language impairments and reading difficulties, advocating for intensive

language-focused interventions within literacy programs. Moreover, studies by Montgomery and Moore (2018) support the integration of morphological awareness instruction, which has been shown to improve reading comprehension for students with language impairments. These findings reinforce the importance of explicit, structured, and multimodal approaches to literacy development in students with speech and language difficulties.

### **Multilingual Learners (MLLs)**

MLLs bring linguistic and cultural assets that should be leveraged within literacy instruction (Goldenberg, 2008). An asset-based approach (García & Kleifgen, 2018) recognizes students' home languages as a strength rather than a barrier. Instruction for MLs must develop academic language and literacy concurrently (August & Shanahan, 2006), with a focus on oral language, vocabulary, and phonemic awareness (Lesaux & Harris, 2015). Scaffolded instruction, strategic use of students' home languages, and structured literacy approaches help MLs develop strong reading skills without compromising content learning.

Recent research by Goodall and Webster (2024) highlights the role of explicit phonemic instruction and targeted oral language development in supporting MLLs' literacy acquisition. Their findings emphasize the importance of integrating structured linguistic supports with literacy interventions to enhance reading comprehension and vocabulary retention. Furthermore, they advocate for data-informed scaffolding methods that align with students' home languages, enabling deeper engagement with academic content while reinforcing foundational literacy skills.

### **Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

Students with ASD often struggle with social communication and reading comprehension (Randi et al., 2010). Research indicates that explicit instruction in inferencing, summarization, and perspective-taking (Whalon et al., 2009) can enhance comprehension for these learners. Additionally, structured, systematic routines and visual supports (National Research Council, 2001) improve engagement and learning outcomes.

Recent research by McClain et al. (2024) highlights the benefits of the Visualizing and Verbalizing (V/V) intervention, which emphasizes mental imagery to improve language comprehension. Their findings align with the science of reading's dual focus on decoding and language comprehension, reinforcing the need for structured, explicit instruction. Similarly, Wang et al. (2022) demonstrated that the Early Start Denver Model (ESDM), an intensive, play-based intervention, enhances cognitive and language abilities in young children with ASD. These findings support the necessity of incorporating systematic, explicit, and structured instructional strategies—hallmarks of the science of reading—to improve literacy outcomes for students with ASD.

### **Students with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

ADHD affects students' ability to maintain focus and regulate executive function, both of which are critical for literacy development (Barkley, 2015). Evidence-based strategies include clear, structured instruction, multisensory engagement, and self-regulation techniques (Dawson & Guare, 2018). Interventions that provide frequent feedback, movement breaks, and graphic organizers support literacy learning for students with ADHD.

Recent research by Mahone (2023) highlights that children with ADHD often experience deficits in working memory and processing speed, which can impede reading comprehension and fluency. These findings

suggest that structured, explicit instruction in foundational reading skills—core tenets of the science of reading—can mitigate such challenges. Additionally, research emphasizes the role of executive functions in reading development, as these cognitive processes are often impaired in individuals with ADHD, affecting their ability to decode and comprehend text effectively. Implementing evidence-based strategies that enhance executive functioning, such as self-regulation techniques and clear, structured instruction, aligns with the science of reading framework and can significantly improve literacy outcomes for students with ADHD.

### **Gifted and Twice-Exceptional Students**

Twice-exceptional students (gifted students with co-existing disabilities) require instruction that is both challenging and accommodating (Assouline et al., 2015). A differentiated approach that includes accelerated learning opportunities, project-based learning, and structured literacy interventions ensures these students develop both their strengths and areas of need. Research by Reis et al. (2000) supports individualized enrichment models to engage and challenge twice-exceptional learners effectively.

Recent research emphasizes the necessity of integrating the principles of the science of reading to effectively support twice-exceptional students. A study by Kaldenberg et al. (2015) found that students with learning disabilities benefit significantly from explicit instruction on vocabulary and the use of graphic organizers, strategies aligned with the science of reading framework. These approaches not only address the learning challenges faced by 2e students but also leverage their advanced intellectual capabilities, providing a balanced and effective instructional methodology.

Furthermore, the Ohio Department of Education (2023) highlights that all students, including those who are gifted, benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing. This comprehensive approach ensures that 2e students receive the necessary support to develop their literacy skills while also being challenged to reach their full potential. Implementing these evidence-based practices requires educators to be well-versed in both gifted education and special education strategies. Professional development focused on the science of reading can equip teachers with the tools needed to design and deliver instruction that meets the unique needs of twice-exceptional learners, fostering an environment where these students can thrive academically.

### **Students from Low Socioeconomic Backgrounds**

Students living in low socioeconomic areas benefit from additional evidence-based resources and supports to mitigate the effects of opportunity gaps. Research from Mississippi and Louisiana (Joanne Jacobs, 2024; Louisiana Department of Education, 2024) demonstrates that implementing structured, evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with the science of reading significantly improves reading outcomes for low-income students. Mississippi, for example, has led the nation in literacy gains among economically disadvantaged students by emphasizing phonics-based, explicit instruction (Joanne Jacobs, 2024). These results highlight the critical role of consistent, research-based practices in closing achievement gaps for underserved populations.

Louisiana's fourth-grade reading proficiency ranking for low-income students has improved dramatically through a focus on HQIM and teacher training grounded in the science of reading (Louisiana Department of Education, 2024). This success underscores the value of investing in curriculum and professional learning aligned with structured literacy practices. Providing access to high-quality materials, structured literacy interventions, and family engagement opportunities ensures that students from low socioeconomic

backgrounds have equitable opportunities to achieve literacy success. Sustaining these efforts across schools and districts is essential to maintaining and scaling progress over time.

### **Students in Foster Care and Highly Mobile Students**

Students experiencing foster care benefit from consistent, evidence-based literacy support and interventions, even as they transition between educational environments. Research from the National Institutes of Health (2024) highlights that children in foster care frequently demonstrate deficits in prereading skills, including phonological awareness, alphabetic knowledge, and oral language development. These early challenges place them at greater risk for academic difficulties and increased referrals for special education services. Without targeted intervention, these gaps may widen over time, compounding the challenges students face both academically and emotionally.

To address these needs, implementing structured literacy interventions—centered on phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—can lead to measurable improvements in reading outcomes. Ensuring continuity of services and instructional practices across placements is equally essential. Strategies may include developing portable individualized education plans (IEPs), equipping educators with trauma-informed instructional approaches, and leveraging virtual tutoring platforms to provide stable, high-quality literacy support regardless of the student's location (PMC, 2024). Collaboration between child welfare agencies, schools, and caregivers is also critical to ensure a coordinated and sustained literacy support system for every student in foster care.

### **Students Experiencing Homelessness**

Literacy initiatives should include evidence-based supports that address the challenges associated with unstable living situations, providing flexible, trauma-informed instruction and access to learning materials. Research indicates that students experiencing homelessness often exhibit lower academic proficiency and higher absenteeism rates compared to their housed peers. During the 2018–19 academic year, only 30% of students experiencing homelessness achieved proficiency in reading and language arts, compared to 38% of economically disadvantaged but housed students (Learning Policy Institute, 2024).

Implementing explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension—core principles of the science of reading—can significantly enhance literacy outcomes. Additionally, studies have found that homeless children have fewer books and receive less exposure to reading at home, contributing to delays in language and literacy development (ResearchGate, 2024). Increased funding and resources, such as those provided through federal initiatives like the American Rescue Plan Act, have been shown to improve identification of homeless students and enhance their academic outcomes (SchoolHouse Connection, 2024).

### **Students with Hearing Impairments**

Research indicates that children with hearing impairments often experience delays in literacy skills, including phonological awareness and reading comprehension. A study by Alshubrumi (2024) highlights the effectiveness of repeated reading interventions in improving reading fluency and comprehension among deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Additionally, morphological awareness—understanding the structure of words—has been identified as a critical component in reading development for these students, sometimes even more so than phonological skills (Zhang et al., 2023). Implementing structured literacy approaches that emphasize both phonics and morphological instruction can significantly enhance reading outcomes for students with hearing impairments.

### **Students with Vision Impairments**



Visual impairments can impact reading speed, accuracy, and comprehension. A systematic review by Kuper et al. (2023) found that children with vision impairments often exhibit slower reading speeds and require specialized instructional methods to support literacy development. Braille literacy, tactile learning tools, and assistive technologies are essential components of effective literacy instruction for these students. Advancements in tactile technology, such as refreshable braille displays, have further enhanced access to written content, promoting better educational outcomes (Shaw, 2023). By integrating these specialized, evidence-based strategies into literacy instruction, educators can better support the diverse needs of students with hearing and vision impairments, ensuring equitable access to literacy education.

## **A Literacy Ecosystem Rooted in Equity and Evidence**

Wyoming recognizes that literacy instruction must be tailored to the needs of all students through evidence-based, explicit, and systematic approaches. The WLLP is built on the foundation that strong literacy skills are essential for academic achievement, economic mobility, and lifelong success. To ensure that all learners—regardless of background, ability, or socioeconomic status—have equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction, Wyoming has committed to structured literacy, data-informed decision-making, and a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework.

Disaggregated data from Wyoming’s literacy assessments provide critical insights into the effectiveness of current initiatives and reveal areas requiring targeted improvement. Analysis of this data underscores persistent gaps among student subgroups, including MLLs, students with disabilities, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The findings emphasize the urgency of expanding evidence-based literacy practices to ensure that every student receives the level of support necessary to achieve reading proficiency.

Literacy disparities among historically underserved populations highlight the need for targeted interventions that address root causes, such as limited access to HQIM, inconsistent early literacy support, and variability in educator preparation. By integrating evidence-based frameworks from leading researchers—including Scarborough (2001), Shaywitz & Shaywitz (2020), and Fuchs & Fuchs (2017)—Wyoming is fostering a cohesive and research-aligned literacy system that promotes explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

Furthermore, Wyoming’s approach extends beyond the classroom by actively engaging families, caregivers, and community organizations in supporting literacy development. Research demonstrates that partnerships between schools and communities enhance literacy outcomes by reinforcing language development and reading skills in home and social environments (Neuman & Celano, 2012). Providing consistent professional development, accountability measures, and evidence-based instructional coaching ensures that educators are equipped to deliver high-quality literacy instruction that meets the diverse needs of all students.

This commitment reinforces the belief that literacy is a civil right, and all students can develop strong reading and writing skills when instruction is aligned with research and responsive to their individual needs. By continuously refining and strengthening its literacy infrastructure through data-driven evaluation and collaborative partnerships, Wyoming is building a sustainable, equity-focused literacy ecosystem that will drive student success for generations to come.

To ensure that all students develop strong reading and writing skills, Wyoming’s literacy initiatives prioritize a



structured, evidence-based approach encompassing awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These components serve as the foundation for effective literacy instruction, guiding educators in delivering systematic and explicit teaching that meets students' diverse needs. Component 4 has explored how these essential elements are embedded within Wyoming's statewide framework, reinforcing alignment across initiatives and ensuring that literacy development is supported at every stage of learning.

## Conclusion and Transition to Component 5

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Component 4 has provided an in-depth examination of Wyoming's literacy initiatives, ensuring alignment with statewide goals to establish a cohesive and sustainable literacy framework. Through a systematic review of initiatives, identification of commonalities and gaps, and application of a systems-based approach, this component has reinforced the coordination of efforts rather than isolated implementation. Building on the data analysis, root cause analysis, and SWOT analysis from Component 3, this section has highlighted strengths, opportunities, and critical service gaps that must be addressed to achieve equitable literacy outcomes.

A central focus of Component 4 has been ensuring that Wyoming's literacy initiatives effectively support all learners, including students with dyslexia, DLD, MLLs, students with disabilities, and those from historically underserved populations. This requires a multi-tiered approach that deepens literacy knowledge among system leaders, scales the use of evidence-based instructional materials, and strengthens literacy practices from early childhood through adolescence. The literacy priorities outlined in this component lay the foundation for a unified statewide vision, ensuring that all students—regardless of background—have access to high-quality language and literacy instruction.

With this analysis complete, Component 5: Goals and Activities transitions from assessing systemic needs to establishing a structured plan for action. This section defines clear, measurable objectives that will drive literacy improvement efforts across Wyoming. By incorporating SMART goals—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound, inclusive, and equitable—Component 5 ensures that Wyoming's State Literacy Plan (SLP) remains both strategic and results-driven. These goals will provide a roadmap for strengthening Tier 1 universal core literacy instruction, advancing early childhood and adolescent literacy, and supporting schools identified for comprehensive and targeted improvement. Ultimately, the goals and activities outlined in Component 5 will translate the foundational analysis from previous components into concrete actions, ensuring sustainable literacy growth across the state.