

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework

September 2010

255 Capitol St. NE Salem, OR 97310 ♦ Phone (503) 947-5600 ♦ Fax (503) 378-5156 ♦ <http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/literacyframework>



Literacy: A Critical Skill

Literacy skills are fundamental in today's society. Achieving literacy is the key that unlocks possibilities and opens the door to opportunity and dignity. We know more about literacy—particularly reading—than any other subject in education. In the past 30 years, researchers have amassed an extensive amount of information about how children become literate, and the strategies we can use to help them succeed in literacy development and achievement.

The Literacy Leadership State Steering Committee (LLSSC) began focusing on literacy in 2005. The LLSSC coordinates Oregon's efforts to improve literacy pre-kindergarten through grade 12 and its members are appointed jointly by the Governor and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Guided by Dr. Michael Kamil, a Stanford University researcher on early reading and adolescent literacy, the LLSSC wrote the "Oregon Literacy Plan," a design for a complete comprehensive reading model for Oregon.

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is the culmination of that earlier design. In 2007, the Center on Teaching and Learning (CTL) in the College of Education at the University of Oregon began working on the Framework documents and a series of resources to support school and district efforts to increase student reading achievement. The guidance in the Framework provides a step-by-step approach to the state, districts, and schools on how to use evidence based literacy instruction to ensure that all students read well.

Reading and the Oregon Diploma

December 4, 2009: **The Oregon State Board of Education adopted the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework as a tool to support the Essential Skill of Reading, a requirement of the Oregon Diploma.**

The most important responsibility of public education is to prepare all students for meaningful postsecondary opportunities. These opportunities include postsecondary education, meaningful employment, and lifelong learning and citizenship. Reading, while not the only key skill necessary to access these opportunities, is the first that must be mastered for success in school and beyond. Students learn about themselves and their world through reading; reading enriches the human experience and opens doors. While reading has always been a paramount focus of education, proficiency in the Essential Skill of Reading is now required to earn an Oregon Diploma.

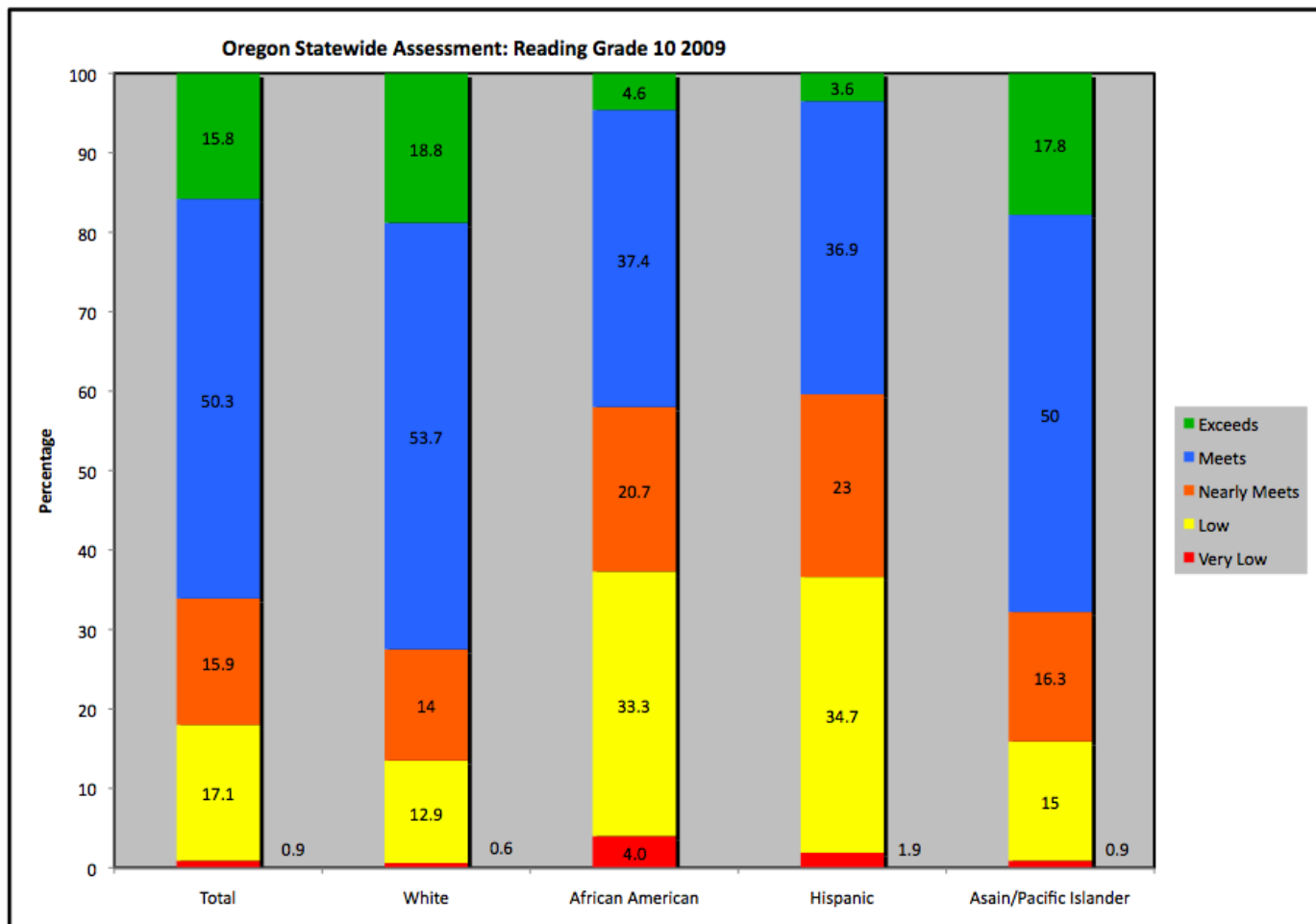
The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework provides a network of support to help our schools, our districts, and our state fully embrace a collaborative, comprehensive approach to literacy. Reading is not just an elementary issue, nor is it simply a language arts issue. Literacy is an issue that demands the focus and dedication of all educators regardless of what they teach.

- Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Castillo



Oregon Literacy Facts

It is important to note that in Oregon—and across the country—an achievement gap appears in kindergarten, and widens as children continue through secondary and postsecondary education. The following graph shows how well students in grade 10 are able to read on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (OAKS) for Reading/Literature. Overall, about **34% of students read below grade level** (from the three combined categories, Nearly Meets, Low, and Very Low). This means that 34% of grade 10 students do not have the fundamental reading skills necessary to read grade-level textbooks with proficiency. This information is more alarming when the performance of students from specific racial and ethnic groups is examined. Among African American students, 58% are not reading at grade level, and among Hispanic students, nearly 60% are not at grade level.



There is no national reading test for all students in public schools. The closest thing is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Every two years, grade 4 and grade 8 students across the U.S. take the NAEP reading assessment. This test provides the best opportunity to examine how well Oregon students perform when compared to other students outside of Oregon. On the NAEP, student scores are divided into four categories: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. If the “Below Basic” category is taken to mean students reading below grade level, the performance of Oregon students on the 2009 NAEP validates concern regarding the state of reading proficiency in Oregon, particularly for students of color. **Overall, one third of Oregon’s fourth graders and one quarter of Oregon’s eighth graders scored at the lowest achievement level on the NAEP.**

Taken together, OAKS and NAEP reading assessments provide strong evidence that Oregon schools need to do much more in K-12 to prepare stronger readers.

K-3 Literacy

Early literacy experiences set the stage for later academic success. It is critical that children learn to read at grade level prior to grade 3; if they do not, the chances are reduced that they will learn to read at grade level, and great that they will fall further behind each year (Juel, 1988).

Effective early literacy instruction begins prior to kindergarten and continues through grade 3. Students who read at grade level early in school substantially improve their opportunities for long-term success both inside and outside of formal school settings (Finn, Gerber & Boyd-Zaharias, 2005).



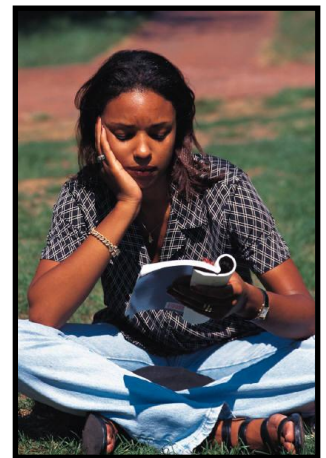
For those students who are not successful readers by grade 3, it will be more difficult for them to direct their academic attention on developing reading comprehension strategies or on using their reading skills to develop subject-area knowledge. **After grade 3, the odds are against students becoming grade-level readers without intense intervention.** Therefore, what schools do to teach children to read in the early years of schooling matters greatly.

4-12 Literacy

In grades 4-12, the most important measurable goal associated with continued reading growth and development is for students to learn reading strategies for understanding texts and other materials at increasing levels of difficulty across instructional areas.

After grade 3, educational content becomes increasingly more text-based, and the ability to read becomes ever more critical to student success. Students who don't read at grade level are at a greater disadvantage, and increasingly likely to experience underachievement and failure. **Poor literacy skills** - which prevent students from keeping up with the curriculum - **are cited as one of the most common reasons for student dropout** (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2003).

Adolescents often demonstrate a range of literacy needs. By adolescence, most students can read words accurately, but many fail to comprehend what they read. Other students demonstrate basic comprehension skills for simple literacy tasks, but lack the ability to utilize various strategies to understand diverse and complex texts. Still other students, an increasingly growing group in Oregon, are English language learners. These students' literacy abilities may be doubly challenged, as many are wrestling with the complexities of learning a second language, in addition to possessing limited first language literacy skills or learning disabilities.

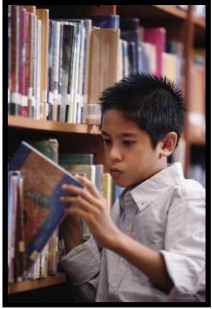


The research on adolescent literacy, as compared to early literacy, is still emerging. The Center on Instruction, in their practice brief entitled "Effective Instruction for Adolescent Readers," defines adolescent reading as occurring between grades 4-12 and as separate from beginning reading (Boardman, et al., 2008). They note that the essential elements of reading instruction for older readers differ slightly from those of beginning readers. These essential elements include: word study, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and motivation.

Why a Focus on Reading

Traditional definitions of literacy target specific subject areas, particularly the ability to read and write. Expanded definitions sometimes include reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Moats, 2000). More recent definitions, which also frequently incorporate additional literacy areas such as quantitative literacy and technology literacy, emphasize the application of literacy skills for personal and social purposes.

All definitions of literacy include the ability to read and write. The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework focuses specifically on reading development for two primary reasons. First, the purpose of the framework is to delineate variables directly under the school’s control (e.g., group size, instructional time, or materials) for the development of student learning and outcomes. Second, the framework provides clear guidance for how schools, districts, and the state can use scientific evidence to teach students the literacy skills they need for advanced education.



The reality is that much more scientific evidence exists about what schools can do to teach students the literacy skills they need in reading than all other areas of literacy combined. In reading, we know what to teach and when to teach it. We know what strong reading instruction looks like in the classroom and we know how to support teachers to provide that instruction. We know how to measure reading outcomes as well as critical indicators of those outcomes. Of course, our knowledge of how schools can provide effective reading instruction will continue to expand and improve as scientific evidence expands. But the knowledge base is sufficiently mature in reading right now to provide clear direction in the six fundamental components that organize this framework.

The most important reading goal for every Oregon school should be to ensure that **ALL** students read at grade level or higher each academic year, as soon as possible after they enter school, and that they progress at grade level or higher in reading across the instructional areas throughout their school career.

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework

The purpose of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework, is to ensure that

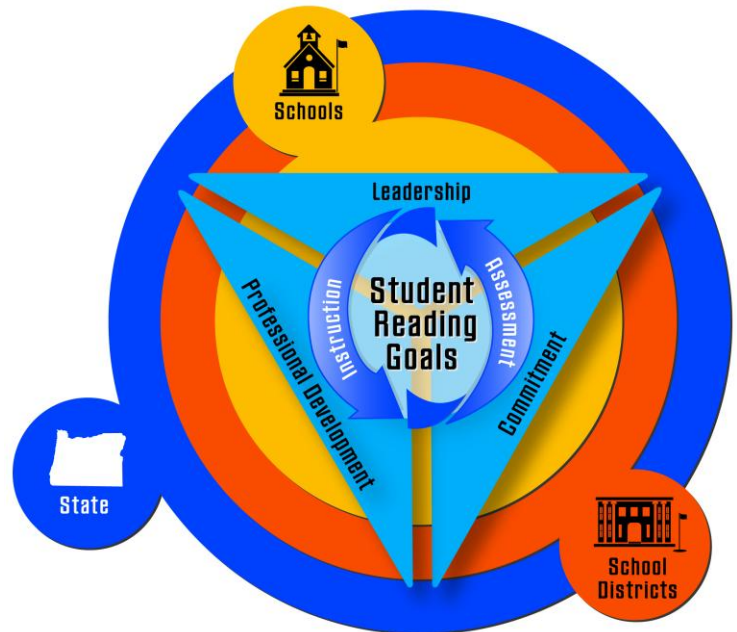
- All students read at grade level or above as soon as possible after entering school
- All students continue to advance in grade-level reading skills each year across instructional areas in grades 4-12
- All students reading below grade-level receive the strongest reading instruction and interventions possible to help them read at grade level.

To this end, the LLSSC designed the framework as a support for all levels of our education system—**state, district,** and **school**—to work together to enable all students to demonstrate proficiency in the Essential Skill of Reading.

Major Components of the Framework

The following **six components** form the structure of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework for each of the three levels—state, district, and school:

- Goals
- Assessment
- Instruction
- Leadership
- Professional Development
- Commitment



These six components are systemically connected and the connections are easy to understand. In the accompanying figure, understanding the connection begins in the center with student reading **goals**. Without measurable reading goals that anchor the framework, it will be impossible to achieve consensus on what is and is not working in providing effective reading instruction, what should be maintained and firmly established, and what should be revised and closely monitored.

Reliable and valid **assessments** are used to determine if students have met key reading goals. For students who have met reading goals, **instruction** is provided that keeps them on track and accelerates their reading development. For students who have not met reading goals, instruction is provided that will allow them to reach these goals and to further enhance their reading achievement.

Perhaps the essential aspect of the framework is providing a comprehensive system of support—state, district, and a school—that will enable teachers to provide the reading instruction students need to meet key reading goals. **Leadership** and **professional development** are the mechanisms for providing this support. How all of the pieces fit as a comprehensive system is articulated in the **commitment** made to provide the instruction students need to meet reading goals.

The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework is a roadmap for improving literacy outcomes for students in grades K-12 through the coordinated effort of the state, districts, and schools.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Implementing the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework means implementing a framework fully aligned with Oregon’s Response to Intervention Initiative (Or-RTI). Or-RTI integrates high-quality instruction, assessment, and intervention in a way that allows schools to match the level of intensity and instructional support to student needs in reading and in reading across the instructional areas.



The major features that need to be in place in an RTI framework can be found throughout the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework. Important highlights are:

- Using scientifically-based programs and practices in the general education classrooms
- Developing a multi-tiered support system that incorporates prevention and early intervention services
- Implementing a reliable and valid comprehensive assessment system
- Using student data for making a range of instructional decisions, including student responsiveness to instruction and intervention.

Getting Started

With its adoption of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework, the State Board of Education has made clear its commitment to reading. While the framework is not required, it offers the state, district, and schools the tools they need to develop a comprehensive system of reading for Oregon students.

The state and district documents, “State Support for the Essential Skill of Reading” and “District Support for the Essential Skill of Reading,” are designed for strategic planning at the state and district levels respectively; a main feature of each includes the formation of leadership teams—the State Leadership Team and District Leadership Teams.

The comparable school-level document entitled “School Support for the Essential Skill of Reading” functions as a **school self-audit**. It also provides electronic links directly to the explanatory narrative and resources within the six chapters of the school-level portion of the Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework.

Moving Forward

Making sure **all** students read as soon as possible after they enter school, and that they continue to read at grade level or higher each year of school, is critical because **reading well increases the likelihood that students will do well in school**. What that means for our students, our education system, and our state is significant beyond what we've experienced. To that end, the framework provides structures to ensure that students will read well, succeed in school, and be prepared to access opportunities after high school.

Getting all students to grade level and higher requires focus and coordination from educators at every level. **Grade K-3** teachers provide timely and critical reading foundations and interventions. Intervening early to bring students to grade-level is the most helpful to students because being a grade-level reader or higher positively impacts students' lives and their school career. **Grade 4-5** teachers continue foundational reading instruction and also transition students to subject-specific textbooks. **Grades 6-12** teachers provide reading instruction specific to subject-area texts. While they do not teach the foundations of reading, they are the only teachers of reading specific to grade-level text. It is their efforts across the instructional areas that support students' growth in reading skills year by year during the second half of their K-12 schooling.

The **state** needs the commitment and the capacity to support districts as they strive to effectively support all of the schools under their direction. The ongoing work of **districts** includes establishing an integrated system of support to structure, deliver, and sustain effective reading instruction in every school. Consequently, **it is the three levels working in concert—state, district, and school**—that create the conditions necessary for effective reading instruction to take place in every Oregon classroom so that all students are able to develop the reading skills they need to do well in school, earn an Oregon Diploma, and succeed in their next steps.

Literacy Links and Resources

- The Oregon K-12 Literacy Framework www.ode.state.or.us/go/literacyframework

K – 3

- Big Ideas in Beginning Reading website <http://reading.uoregon.edu>
- Snow, C. E., Burns, M. S., & Griffin, P. (1998). *Preventing reading difficulties in young children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

4 – 12

- *Time to Act: An Agenda for Advancing Adolescent Literacy for College and Career Success* 2010, Carnegie Council on Advancing Adolescent Literacy
- Doing What Works: Research-based Education Practices Online, US Department of Education, http://dww.ed.gov/topic/?T_ID=23
- *Reading next: A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy*
• <http://www.all4ed.org/files/ReadingNext.pdf>

ODE Contact Information

Julie Anderson, English Language Arts Specialist

Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE, Salem, OR 97310
503-947-5613, julie.anderson@state.or.us

It is a policy of the State Board of Education and a priority of the Oregon Department of Education that there will be no discrimination or harassment on the grounds of race, color, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability in any educational programs, activities or employment. Persons having questions about equal opportunity and nondiscrimination should contact the State Superintendent of Public Instruction at the Oregon Department of Education, 255 Capitol Street NE, Salem, Oregon 97310; phone 503-947-5740; or fax 503-378-4772.