



# Early Literacy and Beyond:

## A Recommendations Report

**submitted to** Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) Superintendent Carlton Jenkins and  
University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Education (UW-SoE) Dean Diana Hess  
by subcommittee members of the Joint MMSD and UW-SoE Early Literacy and Beyond Task Force

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## **Early Literacy and Beyond Task Force**

*Co-Chair:* John B. Diamond, Professor of Education and Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education, Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, UW–Madison

*Co-Chair:* Lisa Kvistad, former Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, MMSD

*Back-up MMSD Co-Chair:* Carletta Stanford, Chief of Elementary Schools, MMSD

### **Subcommittee 1**

Lisa Hepburn, Bilingual Resource Teacher, Randall Elementary School, MMSD

Angie Hicks, Principal, James C. Wright Middle School, MMSD

Mark S. Seidenberg, Vilas Research Professor and Donald O. Hebb Professor, Psychology, UW–Madison

Beverly Trezek (*subcommittee lead*), Associate Professor and Tashia F. Morgridge Chair in Reading, Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education, UW–Madison

### **Subcommittee 2**

Ana Gabriela Bell Jiménez (*subcommittee lead*), Director of Literacy and Humanities, MMSD

Jaelyn Smith, Principal, Gompers Elementary School, MMSD

Chan Stroman, Founding attorney and principal of Landlord Counsel LLC

Ashley L. White, Assistant Professor, Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education, UW–Madison

### **Subcommittee 3**

Mariana Castro, Deputy Director of Wisconsin Center for Educational Research, UW–Madison

Jorge Covarrubias, Chief of Leadership Development, MMSD

Dawnene D. Hassett, Professor, Curriculum & Instruction, UW–Madison

Melinda Leko (*subcommittee lead*), Professor, Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education, UW–Madison

### **Staff**

Data Analyst: Donald Dantzer, Jr., Survey and Research Specialist, Research, Accountability, and Data Use, MMSD

Project Manager: Jen Schoepke, Director of Forward Madison Partnership, MMSD and UW-SoE

## A Note from the Task Force Co-Chairs

What a joy it has been to work with the Early Literacy and Beyond Task Force during the Spring Semester 2021. This Task Force, composed of experts from MMSD and UW-Madison, kept students at the center, critically examined multiple data sources, put politics and ideology aside, and focused on what high-quality, antiracist, and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning really looks like. The Task Force members' dedication and enthusiasm resulted in a report that provides focus and direction for both MMSD and UW-SoE.

Yet focus and direction alone is not enough. Task Force members are committed to seeing action in each of the recommendation areas leading to real impacts on teaching and learning and real change in literacy outcomes. The Task Force recommendations are focused on literacy in its broadest sense—based on research, empirical evidence, and practical experience—and seek to disrupt educational inequities while enhancing Madison students' learning and UW-Madison preservice teachers' preparation. We are convinced that these recommendations will shape interactions among young people, teachers, faculty, and preservice teachers in ways that improve literacy instruction, while joining hands with families and community members to develop a culture of literacy in homes, schools, communities, and throughout Madison.

In addition, with these recommendations we intend to elevate the voices, experiences, and home languages that all students and families bring to their classrooms and communities. Every home language and dialect is an asset to be seen, uplifted and woven into the fabric of building academic and social language skills. In turn, we must realize that students who speak other languages than English or dialects at home will need built-in transition time to “bridge” between languages and make meaning in two languages. Students must retain their home language through the course of their time in MMSD and as they experience post-secondary opportunities.

This report incorporates publicly available data. The data were retrieved from WISEdash, which is the data portal used by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). When an asterisk is used within a data set, this signals that data were unavailable for a particular demographic group. This is consistent with the data that DPI has provided.

As the Task Force examined the multiple data sets in this report, it became very clear that expanding data literacy is a critical need if we are to truly improve outcomes for students. Building an understanding of instructional data and supporting teachers and families as they interpret the data is a pressing matter of social justice. Each data point represents a child and no one data point tells the entire story. We must find and utilize our best data to drive instruction and next steps vs. using data in ways that are punitive or evaluative. We are organizations of teaching and learning, and we need to use reliable and accurate evidence as we make decisions that support equitable student outcomes.

We all learned from one another over the past several months. The level of dialogue about needed anti-racist, linguistically, and culturally relevant changes was inspiring. We worked together relentlessly to seek the truth through examining research and current practices. We participated in intellectual debates about literacy instruction and evidence-based and practice-informed recommendations. We are excited for the work ahead as we move from this written report to real action. We are grateful to each member of the Task Force and believe we are better scholars and educators because of this group. Most importantly, we look forward to seeing all our children become better readers and writers who are prepared for success after graduation and positioned to thoughtfully and meaningfully contribute and transform our interconnected global society.

We are thankful for the leadership and wisdom from MMSD Superintendent Dr. Carlton Jenkins and UW-Madison School of Education Dean Dr. Diana Hess. Their collective leadership to create this Task Force and assemble the cast of talented and thoughtful experts with whom we worked, is an excellent

example of the power of district and university partnership. Dean Hess and Dr. Jenkins' guidance throughout this process has been clear, motivating, and student- and equity- centered. We thank them for their vision and for instilling their faith in our ability to serve as co-chairs for this outstanding group of scholars and practitioners.

Finally, we wish to thank the two Task Force support staff members. Donald Dantzler served as the Task Force Data Analyst, providing the team with data support to understand K-12 literacy outcomes in the district and tell the story the data pointed us to. Dr. Jen Schoepke served as the Task Force Project Manager, meticulously keeping us focused and on track while providing her systems-thinking expertise and knowledge of both organizations to our work.

This Task Force is an example of antiracism and culturally relevant and responsive practices<sup>1</sup> in action. Every child has a right to read in a school district where teachers know the evidence behind their practices, have the ability to translate that knowledge into effective instruction, find institutional support for continuous growth and improvement, and know the benchmarks of success along the way. We are going to make this happen, and we are counting on our educators, families, students, and community members to work together and hold each other accountable for results as we move forward toward our collective goals.

With gratitude,

John B. Diamond and Lisa Kvistad

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, we highlight the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) in approaches to literacy teaching and learning.

## Executive Summary

The Early Literacy and Beyond Task Force was established in December 2020, charged with analyzing promising approaches to literacy education and making recommendations to Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and the teacher education programs at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education (UW-SoE) to improve literacy outcomes and reduce gaps in MMSD student's opportunities and outcomes. The Task Force members met between February and June 2021 to address the charges listed below.

1. Review and become familiar with the best evidence about the most effective ways to teach literacy in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12, and how to best develop future teachers who can better teach literacy in schools.
2. Identify how literacy, especially early literacy, is taught across MMSD, and analyze achievement data for MMSD students with respect to literacy.
3. Examine how literacy, especially early literacy, is taught to teacher education students at UW-SoE and analyze what these future teachers are learning about literacy.
4. Recommend steps that strengthen literacy instruction in the Madison schools and UW-Madison teacher education programs.

The Task Force included 14 members, seven each from MMSD and UW-Madison who were experts in literacy and equity - the central foci of the effort. The project was managed by Dr. Jen Schoepke who holds positions in both organizations. Task Force members worked collaboratively as a whole group focused on the fourth charge listed above and in three subcommittees focused on the first three charges. To facilitate cross-fertilization and leverage our collective knowledge, each subcommittee included representatives from MMSD and UW-Madison.

Task Force members kept children and equity at the center of our work and our recognition that behind every data point was a child and a family with aspirations for success. The Task Force focused on the demand for social justice and the ways that reading can empower young people with the opportunity to create a more just future.<sup>2</sup> Several things were abundantly clear through Task Force dialogue: (1) student's opportunities and outcomes need to be more equitable; (2) all of our children need improved literacy outcomes, and (3) it is our collective responsibility to put systems, processes, and pedagogy in place that allows the excellence within our children to shine.

Building on a long-standing culture of collaboration across MMSD and UW-SoE, this report was developed through a true partnership, with an explicit focus on literacy instruction as an equity strategy. Task Force members agree that we need urgent change grounded in reflective, evidence-based practice. This report is meant to spur such transformation in MMSD and UW-SoE so we can realize the moral imperative to get all of our children to read successfully and at high levels. The Task Force submits this report to MMSD and UW-SoE leadership for their consideration, knowing that its recommendations are just the beginning of the work that needs to be done. This task force report represents the collective work of the Task Force members, not perspectives or viewpoints of any one individual.

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<sup>2</sup> In this report, we highlight the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) and culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018) in approaches to literacy teaching and learning.

## Charge Component 1: Evidence-Based Research to Develop Literacy

### Necessary Components to Becoming a Reader

- Knowledge of spoken language
- Knowledge of the world
- Knowledge of print and the mapping between written and spoken forms of words

Basic research suggests that instruction can be made more efficient and effective for more children by taking advantage of an important property of the three types of knowledge: *they are highly interrelated.*

The body of research addressing the most effective ways to develop literacy in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 is extensive and contains divergent pedagogies. This report focuses on major findings for which there is a relatively high degree of consensus. These findings specify factors that influence young people’s progress in literacy, emphasizing the role that teacher education, instructional practices and materials, and formative and summative assessments play in the process.

Based on theoretically-grounded empirical studies, reports of nationally convened panels, and evidence-based practice guides, Task Force members agreed that there are three components to becoming a reader: (1) Knowledge of spoken language, or the ways language is used to communicate; (2) Knowledge of the world, or the things we use language to communicate about; and (3) Knowledge of print and the mappings between written and spoken forms of words. Whereas reading works essentially the same for everyone, the paths to gaining the necessary knowledge and skills vary because learning depends on experience, and children’s experiences vary greatly. Likewise, research in cognition and neuroscience indicates that human learning involves explicit and implicit learning, suggesting that instruction can be made more efficient and effective for more children by seeing explicit learning, implicit learning and learning opportunity as interrelated.

In relation to pre-kindergarten literacy, there should be an emphasis on developing receptive and expressive oral language abilities and building skills associated with concepts about print, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and the relations between spoken language and print. These abilities and skills are reflected within the Language Development and Communication subdomain of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (DPI, 2017b) and are organized into three categories—Listening and Understanding, Speaking and Communicating, and Early Literacy.

The building of the three types of knowledge generally occurs during two broad periods. According to National Reading Panel (2000), and extended by additional scholarship, the “learning to read” phase of development (Kindergarten to Grade 5), involves essential elements of instruction including (1) phonemic awareness; (2) phonics; (3) fluency; (4) vocabulary instruction; and (5) text comprehension instruction. For students in Grades 6-12 the evidence around adolescent literacy recommends providing explicit vocabulary instruction, direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction, and extended opportunities for students to discuss and interpret the meaning of texts.

The major considerations which arise from research evidence are presented below. Although not an exhaustive list, it includes many potential opportunities for improving literacy outcomes within the three components of becoming a reader. For more information on how these considerations translate into our local context of MMSD and UW-SoE, see the *Local Considerations for Bridging Evidence-Based Research and Local Context* section.



**Consideration 1.** Reading begins with the acquisition of foundational reading skills. These skills are critical in order to engage with text in more advanced ways. Benefiting from more advanced instruction is predicated on having acquired foundational skills.

**Consideration 2.** Knowledge is learned. Learned knowledge and mental operations that support skilled reading are clearly identified in the research literature.

**Consideration 3.** Whereas reading works essentially the same for everyone, the paths to gaining the necessary knowledge and skills vary because learning depends on experience, and children's experiences vary greatly. These differences have not been adequately accommodated in curricula and practices.

**Consideration 4.** Reading depends on the knowledge of spoken language. The type of instruction used influences whether it is effective, where effectiveness depends on teachers' abilities to respond and understand children's varied language backgrounds, influencing the way they teach children.

**Consideration 5.** Research in cognition and neuroscience indicates that human learning involves at least two distinct mechanisms, explicit and implicit learning, and instructional practices need to maximize both learning mechanisms through providing opportunities to learn and experiences that result in learning.

**Consideration 6.** Instruction can be made more efficient and effective for more children by seeing explicit learning, implicit learning, and learning opportunity as interrelated.

**Consideration 7.** A major opportunity for improving literacy outcomes is to utilize curricula and instructional practices that are effective regardless of the availability of specific resources beyond the classroom.

**Consideration 8.** Social/emotional factors modulate student progress. Success is highly motivating, whereas failure is a disincentive to effort and engagement. Improving school and classroom climate and creating environments that communicate that the child's culture and experiences are valued and integral to learning are important steps that will promote learning.

**Consideration 9.** Expectations about progress in gaining literacy are codified in state standards and incorporated into curricula and assessments, and children are expected to reach normative yearly milestones. Attaining good foundational skills is so crucial to the child's educational experiences that policies and practices must enable children to succeed.

## **Charge Component 2: MMSD Context**

To describe how literacy is taught across MMSD and student outcomes data in literacy, the Task Force examined the history of literacy in MMSD, reviewed selected organizational contexts which impact district literacy efforts, and explored reading outcomes for K-12 MMSD students. MMSD's most recent K-12 Literacy Program Evaluation was released a decade ago and many of the challenges identified in that report persist. The district has worked to provide coherent literacy instruction through adopting curricular approaches, creating professional learning opportunities, utilizing various forms of assessment, and adopting new tools and materials for teachers. An infrastructure was created to support these efforts, which relies heavily on instructional coaches to support teachers as they implement core practices at the school level. Other organizational contexts which contribute to the district's current state of student literacy outcomes were also reviewed by the Task Force. Finally, it is of note that under the leadership of Dr. Carlton Jenkins, MMSD is using literacy at every level as an equity strategy to ensure all MMSD students receive high-quality, grade level instruction.

The Task Force analyzed students' literacy outcomes at key data points across the student lifecycle. We focused on the English Language Arts (ELA) portion of the Wisconsin state-mandated annual

screeners or assessments from 2015-16 to 2018-19: (1) the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) used in grades 4K-2; (2) the Forward Exam used in grades 3-8; and (3) the ACT Statewide test administered in grade 11. Within each of these three tools, we examined student literacy outcomes by race, special education status, socio-economic status, and language status (e.g., student's classification in English Language Learner (ELL)).

The evidence presented in this report paints a relatively consistent picture of literacy outcomes in MMSD. In analyzing the student outcomes across selected student demographic groups some troubling patterns are evident, presented below as three considerations:

**Consideration 1.** There are stark race and ethnicity differences in students' outcomes in literacy from early elementary through high school. In particular, Black and Hispanic students' level of proficiency and college readiness lags behind that of their White and Asian counterparts. Given their share of the population, White students are overrepresented among students who test as both proficient/advanced and college ready.

**Consideration 2.** As with race/ethnicity, there are also troubling outcome disparities across ELL and non-ELL students, low-income and non-low-income students, and special education and non-special education students that are consistent in each of the years measured.

**Consideration 3.** The overall patterns of grades 2, 4, 8, and 11 from year-to-year do not show significant increases in proficiency rates, indicating a need to strengthen core instruction for all students and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

### **Charge Component 3: UW-SoE Context**

UW-SoE offers 14 teacher education programs, of which 11 require literacy education classes. The literacy education classes are housed within two departments: Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) and Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education (RPSE). All literacy courses in the teacher education programs endorse a student-centered approach and take a view of reading and literacy that stresses cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, psychological, cultural, socioeconomic, political, and historical factors. Preservice teachers learn how people acquire and use different forms and styles of oral and written language for different practices and purposes, with SoE literacy courses focusing on scientific reading research, the foundations of early literacy success, as well as the wider processes of literacy and language development starting early in life and developing further throughout the school years and across the lifespan. Common in all SoE teacher education programs is a stated commitment to social justice, and SoE aims for preservice teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills for teaching and learn to undergird their practice by getting to know their students' cultures and languages.

SoE teacher education in literacy is presented in this report by grade bands (4K-2, 3-8, and 9-12) and further divided into two sections each to represent the dual prongs of the charge: examine and analyze (1) how literacy is taught; and (2) what preservice teachers learn in SoE's teacher education programs. Data were gathered from course syllabi, course assignments, certification program plans, pass rates on state mandated licensure assessments, observations of course instruction, and interviews with professors, instructors, and preservice teachers.

Upon completion of their undergraduate teacher education programs at UW-SoE, preservice teachers who become licensed in 4K-Grade 5 or Grades 1-8 will have demonstrated their knowledge and ability in the ten major learning outcomes associated with literacy courses within SoE. There are many similarities to the ways in which literacy education is taught to preservice teachers for 4K-Grade 2 and how literacy is taught for Grades 3-8. The learning outcomes remain the same across teacher education programs, but are imagined, studied, practiced, and taught across grade levels.

Generally, UW-SoE teacher candidates have high achievement on standardized state licensure assessments. Future teachers within SoE are learning about foundations of reading instruction as evidenced by pass rates on the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test (WFORT). UW–Madison has the highest first-time and cumulative pass rate among all educator preparation programs in the state on the WFORT. However, similar to statewide trends, UW–Madison students of color and male students have a lower first-time and cumulative pass rate than white females. Although SoE prepares candidates for teaching positions across the state, the bulk of field placements and student teaching placements take place in MMSD. For example, in the 2020-2021 school year, MMSD clinical placements accounted for 72% of all UW-SoE placements (664 out of 921 total placements).

Preservice teachers becoming high school teachers in history, science, math, or ELA already have undergraduate degrees in their subject area and are pursuing a master’s degree in Curriculum & Instruction. Through this degree, they take classes toward an ESL/bilingual certification. Students in the secondary education programs all take a required course on literacy education, which provides an overview of literacy theories. Students are expected to connect these theories to practice occurring in field sites and/or community settings. Teacher candidates pursuing certification in Cross-Categorical Special Education are prepared to support the needs of students with disabilities Grades K-12.

Future SoE teacher education programs in 2022-23 include: (1) a new certification program in Early Childhood Special Education which will include the standard RPSE course on language and reading instruction for students with disabilities but will also include content specific to early literacy and language development (birth-Grade 3); and (2) a new certification program in Elementary Education in development will include one required literacy course and offer electives among several literacy and language courses, where the current courses taken across the four different teacher education cohorts turning into elective courses in the new program, with the expectation that preservice teachers will continue to take between three to five literacy and language courses.

The evidence presented provides an in-depth overview of the course offerings and approach to literacy education for preservice educators at UW-SoE. While faculty have varied perspectives on the best ways to teach literacy across developmental levels, there are also consistent components across coursework and expectations. Yet, foregrounding issues of social justice, race, and equity requires critical reflection and action moving forward. In that spirit, there are four aspects below for UW-SoE to consider to make its commitments real in practice.

**Consideration 1.** Strengthen the commitment to social justice. UW–Madison emphasizes social justice across its programs, as evidenced by the various readings and topics included in coursework and the comments shared by interviewed students. At the same time, the vast majority of preservice teachers are white and therefore do not represent the racial diversity that exists in the MMSD student body. Likewise, conversations related to social justice are often limited to representing diverse peoples in books or are tangential to issues of reading instruction. We recommend building on and strengthening the programs’ commitment to and practice in enacting anti-racist and socially just practices in preparing teachers at UW–Madison.

**Consideration 2.** Prepare future teachers to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers. The considerable amount of content and experiences needed to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and attitudes necessary to serve the diverse range of learners in today’s classroom require learning beyond initial teacher preparation. To extend opportunities for teacher development beyond the preservice level in collaboration with MMSD, we suggest that this consideration might entail taking two related steps. First, increasing the quantity and quality of communication between MMSD and UW-SoE related to teacher preparation in literacy and biliteracy so there is greater alignment. Second, establish teacher preparation partnerships that expand beyond traditional field placement and student teaching experiences.

**Consideration 3.** Systematically and intentionally integrate content and practice. Literacy is a multifaceted construct that includes content related to language, culture, reading, writing, speech, and literature, among others. Teaching literacy requires knowledge of instructional planning, pedagogy, assessment, and differentiation. Teaching as a practice-based profession requires teacher candidates to not only acquire knowledge of what literacy is but also knowledge of how to teach literacy. Acquiring a deep working knowledge of these multiple components is not likely to be accomplished without providing preservice teachers with multiple opportunities to learn and apply knowledge in authentic settings. Moreover, teacher candidates must become skilled in providing literacy instruction through a social justice, anti-racist lens. Bolstering preparation in this area will require multiple opportunities for authentic practice.

**Consideration 4.** Engage in continuous program evaluation and improvement. UW–Madison has established a process for programs to evaluate student outcomes annually; however, this process is not specific to literacy within UW-SoE departments which teach literacy courses. A more explicit focus on literacy-related outcomes within the UW-SoE teacher preparation programs would provide helpful information with which to make program revisions. Moreover, there is a need to that ensure literacy courses are taught with a high degree of quality and consistency, irrespective of the course instructor.

## **Charge Component 4: Recommendations to Strengthen Literacy Outcomes**

The Task Force’s charge, in its simplest terms, is to recommend steps to strengthen literacy instruction in Madison schools and in UW-SoE’s teacher education programs. The Task Force integrated the work of the three subcommittees into recommendations that center children and maintain an equity, social justice, and antiracist stance in tackling literacy. These bold, action-orientated recommendations are based on evidence, and grounded in the current context at MMSD and UW-SoE, with an eye for how piloting the activities linked to the recommendations could enhance literacy outcomes for all students.

Based on the research evidence and major considerations highlighted in Charge Components 1, 2, and 3, the local considerations below helped frame our conversation about how to improve literacy instruction in MMSD and preservice teachers’ preparation at UW-SoE. These local considerations are meant to guide readers through the Task Force’s thought processes and linkages the thematic recommendations with evidence-based research:

**Local Consideration 1:** Ensure children succeed in gaining foundational skills

**Local Consideration 2:** Promote spoken language development at the pre-kindergarten level

**Local Consideration 3:** Provide learning opportunities which integrate spoken and written language

**Local Consideration 4:** Promote learning for all children

**Local Consideration 5:** Integrate instruction

**Local Consideration 6:** Develop a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework

**Local Consideration 7:** Increase educator knowledge

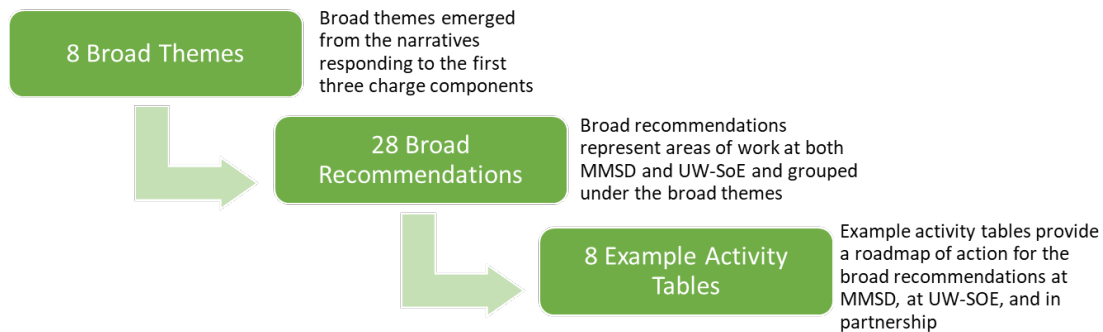
**Local Consideration 8:** Ensure preservice teachers’ foundational knowledge includes familiarity with basic literacy research including: (1) Language; (2) Scientific literacy; and (3) Cognitive science of reading, language, and learning

**Local Consideration 9:** Create institutional structures at UW and MMSD to sustain commitment to improving literacy outcomes, evaluating progress, and adjusting policies and practices as necessary

### *Themes, Broad Recommendations, and Example Activities*

The recommendations listed below are grouped into eight “broad themes” which are further grouped into 28 “broad recommendations.” Following these themes and recommendations, we outline a set of “example activities” (see Figure 1). These activities represent our initial thinking on proposed broad areas of work at both MMSD and UW-SoE and work that these organizations might do in concert. The eight broad themes and their respective broad recommendations are noted below.

**Figure 1: An Integrated Set of Task Force Recommendations**



### **Task Force Broad Recommendation Themes**

Theme 1: Ensure Anti-racist, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Equitable Education

Theme 2: Improve Instructional Coherence

Theme 3: Align Leadership for Literacy

Theme 4: Enhance Organizational Structures to Support Literacy

Theme 5: Refine Data Systems

Theme 6: Build on the Strengths of Our Students, Families, and Community

Theme 7: Collectively Grow Together Through a Commitment to Continuous Improvement

Theme 8: Enhance Implementation Efforts Through Communication and Coordination



## **Theme 1: Ensure Anti-racist, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Equitable Education**

1. Explicitly state and recognize reading as a right<sup>3</sup> for all children.
2. Create equitable educational opportunities across student demographic categories, including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language status, social class, and other categories where inequality persists, including student focal groups that are too small for data to be collected or publicly reported.
3. Provide MMSD and UW-SoE students with educational opportunities that are culturally and linguistically responsive and build upon the cultural strengths that emerge from their families and communities.



## **Theme 2: Improve Instructional Coherence**

1. Ensure that literacy curricula and practices are equally effective for all children, strengthening our commitment to social justice.
2. Focus on students attaining foundational reading and literacy skills such that they become proficient readers at the Grade 3 level.
3. Create closer alignment between how children are taught to read, spell, and write and to show evidence of how they acquire knowledge of spoken language, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of print and the mappings between written and spoken forms of words.
4. Establish/update broad organizational or multi-organizational (e.g., MMSD and UW-SoE) literacy SMART goals: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. Use longitudinal literacy goals to allow for cultural/systemic shifts and deeper literacy gains to be realized.
5. Adopt standards-aligned core instructional materials for teaching literacy/biliteracy, which aligns to instructional approaches detailed in the Charge Component 1 section and ensure effective implementation of core curriculum across classrooms and schools.



## **Theme 3: Align Leadership for Literacy**

1. Develop a shared understanding of how to best support coherent, socially just literacy practices between MMSD and UW-SoE that includes a common understanding of research/language/terminology.

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<sup>3</sup> “Reading as a right” is used in this report to describe a moral imperative and is not meant to be interpreted as a legal statement.

2. Develop and/or enhance a strong working knowledge of the core components of literacy instruction among MMSD and UW-SoE educators and preservice teachers. This knowledge should include an understanding of the connections between skills and abilities (e.g., language comprehension, word recognition), the major goals for the various stages of development, the research evidence supporting instructional practices, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities of administrative leadership in MMSD and UW-SoE to create greater coherence and communication, intentionally focusing on shared leadership and accountability for improved literacy outcomes.
4. Determine agreed upon required components and areas of flexibility for literacy instruction and teaching about literacy instruction.



## Theme 4: Enhance Organizational Structures to Support

### Literacy

1. Strengthen and enhance organizational structures that prioritize foundational literacy skills and social justice in and across MMSD and SoE.
2. Strengthen the commitment to instruction that puts students' languages, abilities, and cultures first, reinforcing literacy through a culturally and linguistically relevant lens, and challenging various forms of power (e.g., race, class, gender, heteronormativity) in how literacy is taught to 4K-12 students and future teachers to support literacy development for all students.
3. Create and enhance organizational structures and processes at MMSD and SoE that encourage instructional practices which allow students to meet proficiency in literacy within the target goal of the first 6 weeks of first quarter, prioritizing Grades 4K-3.



## Theme 5: Refine Data Systems

1. Use integrated formative and summative data systems (qualitative and quantitative) to better describe, monitor, and act upon organizational and student-level literacy goals in order to create socially just outcomes in MMSD and UW-SoE.
2. Establish, maintain, and use accessible integrated data systems for internal organizational stakeholders that examine all student and staff data which combines *multiple demographic categories* and *utilizes cohort analysis as appropriate* to provide a more nuanced understanding of areas of strength, areas of improvement, and more targeted interventions across literacy instruction.
3. Establish more robust and accessible data repositories that capture literacy data longitudinally to provide a historical contextualization; ensure timely dissemination to stakeholders.



## **Theme 6: Build on the Strengths of Our Students, Families, and Community**

1. Use an asset-based approach to leverage and enhance connections with families, students, and communities.
2. Elevate and listen closely to student, family and community voices in order to create a teaching and learning environment that is culturally and linguistically responsive and recognizes the brilliance that all students bring to the classroom.
3. Emphasize family involvement and input in the data-based problem-solving process and provide comprehensive information to parents routinely about their student and how they can support their student and continue to communicate with the teacher and school-based administrators/staff.



## **Theme 7: Collectively Grow Together Through a Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

1. Enhance a supportive culture rooted in openness to change, collective responsibility and accountability for socially just outcomes, ongoing learning through formative feedback, and lifelong learning.
2. Develop culturally and linguistically responsive professional learning opportunities that are rooted in research on reading, language, learning, development and effective practices.
3. Strengthen coherence between MMSD and SoE to support current and future educators around literacy instruction and student learning.
4. Develop targeted, explicit literacy goals, strategies, and organizational practices to guide ongoing work.



## **Theme 8: Enhance Implementation Efforts Through Communication and Coordination**

1. Nurture relational trust within and across MMSD and SoE that centers children and advances equity in all aspects of literacy work.
2. Establish project management structures between MMSD and SoE, removing barriers to collaboration, leveraging resources, and managing the approach to Task Force recommendations.
3. Create or use existing organizational groups in MMSD and SoE to routinely review organizational policies and practices that relate to literacy recommendations proposed in this report; modify policies/procedures as needed and appropriate.



## **Concluding Thoughts**

Task Force members believe that working on literacy is a journey, not an event. The recommendations are part of a large suite of activities to address literacy efforts across MMSD and UW-SoE. The Task Force stresses that the effort to improve literacy is not about blame, ideology, or politics, but rather it is an ongoing process of using evidence to do what is best for our youth. As the Literacy Task Force concludes the writing of this report, the process of implementation begins. This report, above all, serves as a living document that centers the work that MMSD and UW-SoE will do together to improve literacy outcomes for our children.

## Charge Component 1

Review and become familiar with the best evidence about the most effective ways to teach literacy in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12, and how best to develop future teachers who can better teach literacy in schools.

The body of research addressing the most effective ways to develop literacy in pre-kindergarten through Grade 12 is extensive and contains divergent pedagogies. Our subcommittee’s report focuses on major findings for which there is a high degree of consensus. These findings specify factors that influence children’s progress in literacy, which teacher education, instructional practices and materials, and assessments must incorporate.

### Sources of Information

Theories are how researchers predict, explain, and summarize findings. Because literacy is a large topic, theories in the field focus on important subparts. We drew on several of these in structuring our review of the literature and in formulating our conclusions and recommendations. These theories span several decades and include Jeanne Chall’s Stages of Reading Development (1983), the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), the Interactive Activation Model of Reading (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1981), the Four-Part Processor (i.e., Seidenberg & McClelland’s 1989 “triangle model” of reading), Ferreiro’s (1990) model of written language development, Ehri’s (1995) phases of sight word reading, Scarborough’s Reading Rope (2001), and others. Later publications expanding and critiquing older theories (e.g., Simple View of Reading) were also considered (e.g., Francis et al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2020).

In addition, we relied on the reports of nationally convened panels charged with evaluating existing research evidence and recommending best practices for teaching children to read, including the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) and National Early Literacy Panel (NELP, 2008). We identified numerous practice guides published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) that build on the findings of the NRP and NELP, provide succinct summaries of research evidence, offer recommendations for practice, and report the level of evidence (e.g., strong, moderate, minimal) for each recommendation. In essence, because the information summarized in each guide provides important links between research and practice, the guides serve as major sources of evidence informing our work. They reflect what was known at the time they were written, and so it is necessary to consider them in light of subsequent research, as summarized in review articles such as Castles et al. (2018).

These practice guides reflect the work of leaders in the field of literacy and cover a broad range of topics. Several guides focus on literacy instruction for students at the elementary level, including the research base for foundational reading skills (Foorman et al., 2016), reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010), writing (Graham et al., 2012), instruction for English learners (Gersten et al., 2007), and strategies for addressing the needs of struggling readers using multitiered interventions (Gersten et al., 2009). Topics related to secondary literacy also are addressed in these guides and include recommendations for effective classroom practices to improve adolescent literacy (Kamil, 2008) and writing (Graham et al., 2016) instruction, as well as language and literacy instruction for English learners (Baker et al., 2014). A recently published guide offers a tool to support college instructors preparing preservice educators to teach foundational reading skills (Dombeck et al., 2021).

We also considered research on linguistic, cultural, and experiential differences among children that affect learning to read and the effectiveness of conventional practices (e.g., Washington & Seidenberg, 2021; Nasir, et al., 2020; Lee, 2010). Reviewing the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

(Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [DPI], 2017a), the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (DPI, 2020), and the state’s framework for equitable multilevel systems of support (DPI, 2017b) offered additional information regarding the essential components of effective literacy curriculum, assessment, and instruction across the grade levels. Converging evidence from these multiple sources of evidence supported several general principles regarding literacy learning and provided specifics to guide effective reading, spelling, and writing instruction. In the following sections, the most salient information from these sources is presented and discussed.

## Theories of Literacy Development

Several common features emerged across the theories reviewed. Notably, there is strong agreement that the development of reading, spelling, and writing relies on the interrelations of oral language abilities and word reading skills. Theorists have explained this phenomenon in various ways, including viewing reading as an interaction between bottom-up, code-related skills and top-down, language-related abilities (Chall, 1983), describing reading comprehension as the product of decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), and using a rope analogy to depict skilled reading as the weaving together of language comprehension and word recognition strands (Scarborough, 2001).

Regardless of the terminology or analogy used, these theories reflect the interconnectedness of language comprehension abilities (e.g., background knowledge, vocabulary, knowledge of language structures, verbal reasoning, literacy knowledge including print concepts and genres) and word recognition skills (e.g., phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, decoding, sight recognition of familiar words) with the development of literacy. The two are related rather than independent. Vocabulary, for example, is an element of spoken language but also affects the acquisition of word recognition skills. Another critical aspect that emerged was in relation to phases that represent a developmental sequence of skills and a shift in instructional priorities over time (e.g., Chall, 1983; Ehri, 1995; Ferreiro, 1990). These phases represent a *general* sequence of development; therefore, some degree of variability across individual children in terms of rate and patterns of performance is to be expected.

The major principles of these theories are supported by results of empirical studies. For example, research findings indicate a strong relationship between word recognition skills and reading comprehension in the early stages, with challenges in applying the alphabetic principle (i.e., relations between letters and sounds) to word reading identified as a primary barrier to reading comprehension during this phase of development. Once word recognition skills are solidified and students are able to shift greater cognitive attention to comprehending texts, difficulties with reading comprehension appear to be more closely related to language comprehension abilities, such as knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical structures (e.g., Storch & Whitehurst, 2002).

The importance of developing language comprehension abilities and word recognition skills, as well as the developmental shift in instructional priorities, is reflected in the recommendations of the NELP (2008), NRP (2000), numerous IES practice guides, and the Wisconsin academic standards. The findings of these reports, coupled with the end-of-grade expectations communicated in the standards, provide insights into core components of literacy instruction, which we summarize below. To organize this information, we use three general grade bands: pre-kindergarten, kindergarten through Grade 5, and Grades 6 through 12. These grade bands parallel the structure used within the Wisconsin academic standards (DPI, 2017a, 2020). We place particular emphasis on the early years (i.e., preschool through Grade 5), as this period is especially critical to the development of literacy skills.

## Core Components of Literacy Instruction

### *Pre-kindergarten*

The findings of the NELP (2008) arguably represent the most comprehensive review of available research evidence documenting the components of early literacy that are consistently associated with the development of later conventional literacy skills (e.g., decoding, oral reading fluency, spelling, reading, and writing). Through a meta-analysis of studies, the NELP identified six abilities that maintained medium to large predictive relations with later literacy, even when controlling for variables such as socioeconomic status and IQ: (1) phonological awareness, or the ability to detect and manipulate the sound structures of oral language; (2) alphabet knowledge, including naming letters and producing the sounds associated with them; (3) phonological memory, described as the short-term retention of spoken information; (4) rapid automatic naming of randomly ordered digits and letters; (5) rapid automatic naming of randomly ordered pictures and colors; and (6) letter and name writing.

The NELP (2008) identified five additional skills that moderately correlated with at least one measure of later conventional literacy: (1) concepts about print; (2) print knowledge, which encompasses aspects of concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, and beginning decoding; (3) reading readiness, which involves several skills such as concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and memory; (4) oral language, described as the ability to comprehend and produce the vocabulary and grammar of spoken language; and (5) visual processing, or the ability to discriminate and match written symbols.

Standards outlined within the Language Development and Communication subdomain of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (DPI, 2017b) lend further support for using assessment and instructional practices aligned with the core components identified by the NELP (2008). Standards within this subdomain are organized into three categories—Listening and Understanding, Speaking and Communicating, and Early Literacy—and emphasize developing receptive and expressive oral language abilities and building skills associated with concepts about print, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and the relations between spoken language and print.

### *Kindergarten to Grade 5*

The period between kindergarten and Grade 3 represents a time of great growth in children’s literacy skills. It has been coined the “learning to read” phase of development and emphasizes developing foundational skills that enable children to transition to the “reading to learn” phase later in elementary school (Chall, 1983). Charged with reviewing the research evidence to identify components of effective reading instruction, the NRP (2000) focused on this developmental phase and identified five essential elements of instruction: (1) phonemic awareness, or the ability to detect and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words; (2) phonics, described as instruction that teaches children the relationship between letters and sounds and how to apply this knowledge to read and spell words; (3) fluency, or the ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression; (4) vocabulary instruction, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing vocabulary; and (5) text-comprehension instruction, focusing on teaching children strategies to be active and purposeful readers. Recommendations summarized in two IES practice guides reinforce and extend the NRP findings related to children in kindergarten through Grade 3, with one guide focusing on foundational reading skills (Foorman et al., 2016) and the other on reading comprehension abilities (Shanahan et al., 2010).

**Foundational Reading Skills.** The recommendations summarized in the first practice guide lend additional research support for the areas of instruction identified by the NRP (2000). Notable additions in the guide include an expanded view of vocabulary instruction and a recommendation to provide

integrated reading instruction. The authors recommend that children receive instruction that allows them to understand and use academic language, defined as “the formal communication structure and words that are common in books and at school” (Foorman et al., 2016, p. 7). They suggest that this instruction involve direct teaching of academic vocabulary and explicitly focus on developing inferential and narrative language skills. Recommendations to develop academic vocabulary through explicit instruction were also included in the guides summarizing effective practices for English learners (Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2007).

Furthermore, the authors suggest that the various foundational skills be taught in an integrated fashion. For example, instruction should be designed to create strong connections between the awareness of speech sounds (phonemic awareness) and the relationship of sounds to letters (phonics), and also include opportunities for children to apply these skills when reading connected text (fluency). Recommendations in the reading skills practice guide reflect an expanded discussion of phonics instruction, with a greater emphasis placed on teaching children to blend sounds to form words, recognize and use common sound-spelling patterns, and apply morphemic analysis (i.e., meaningful word parts such as prefixes, suffixes, base words, and roots) to read, spell, and comprehend words in both isolation and within sentences and passages (Foorman et al., 2016).

These recommended instructional practices align with end-of-grade expectations documented in the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (DPI, 2020). For example, the importance of developing children’s academic language is reflected in the K-5 Speaking and Listening and K-5 Language strands of the standards. Within the Reading Foundational Skills strand, which spans kindergarten through Grade 5, standards addressing the development of phonological and phonemic awareness skills appear in kindergarten through Grade 2, and the development of increasingly difficult skills within the domains of phonics/word recognition and fluency are included across the grade levels.

**Reading Comprehension.** The recommendations of the NRP (2000) were to provide direct instruction in comprehension strategies (e.g., comprehension monitoring, use of graphic organizers, asking and answering questions, recognizing story structure, summarizing) to foster children’s active and purposeful reading of texts. Based on more recent research summarized in an IES practice guide (Shanahan et al., 2010), these recommendations have been expanded to not only emphasize strategy and text structure instruction but also to recognize the role of text selection and student motivation, and the importance of engaging children in extended discussions of texts.

As with the recommendations for foundational reading skill instruction (Foorman et al., 2016), recommendations associated with reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010) reflect the integrated and complementary nature of various literacy skills. The authors suggest creating learning opportunities that encourage the development of a range of skills (e.g., word level skills, vocabulary and oral language abilities, broad conceptual knowledge, comprehension strategies, thinking and reasoning skills, motivation) as part of reading comprehension instruction. They also recommend that comprehension instruction begin in kindergarten, although they acknowledge that instruction will differ in the early years when children are still gaining knowledge of increasingly complex language structures and learning to decode (Shanahan et al., 2010). These recommendations for reading comprehension instruction are mirrored in the three subcategories—Key Ideas and Details, Craft and Structure, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas—of the Reading K-5 strand of the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (DPI, 2020).

**Writing.** While far more research attention has been paid to reading as compared to writing (Troia, 2007), recommendations based on a review of research evidence published in an IES practice guide (Graham et al., 2012) offer guidance for structuring effective writing instruction for elementary students.

The most important recommendation is that instructional time be dedicated to writing on a daily basis, with an equal emphasis placed on developing specific writing strategies and applying them to authentic writing tasks. In kindergarten, 30 minutes of daily instruction should be devoted to writing, increased to 60 minutes per day beginning in Grade 1. Integrating writing into reading comprehension and content area instruction is one strategy to increase the time children spend writing each day.

Additional recommendations include teaching students the elements of the writing process (e.g., planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, editing, publishing), providing scaffolded experiences in using specific strategies, and guiding students in applying the writing process to a variety of genres (e.g., essays, stories, letters, poetry), for a range of purposes (e.g., describe, persuade), and for different audiences (e.g., parents, friends, companies, newspapers). As with reading comprehension instruction, applying the writing process depends on developing foundational requisites such as spelling and sentence construction, as well as skills to support the mechanics of writing (e.g., handwriting, typing, and word processing). Several of these instructional recommendations are echoed in the three subcategories—Text Types and Purposes, Production and Distribution of Writing, Inquiry to Build and Present Knowledge—of the Writing K-5 strand of the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (DPI, 2020).

**Assessment for Differentiation and Progress Monitoring.** The end-of-grade expectations communicated in the Wisconsin Standards (DPI, 2017a, 2020), which are closely aligned with the best evidence summarized above, provide guidance for determining whether students are progressing toward grade-level goals. However, a more systemic approach can ensure that all students, especially those who struggle, receive high-quality literacy instruction tailored to their needs (Gersten, 2009). This approach to assessment and instruction is best known as Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). Implementing an MTSS framework for literacy involves administering universal screening assessments to all students several times per year, creating multiple tiers of instructional support, and developing a system of data collection to inform instructional decision-making at each tier (Gersten, 2009). Wisconsin’s multifaceted MTSS framework has a central focus on equity (DPI, 2017b). Key features of the framework most closely related to providing differentiated literacy instruction include selecting appropriate assessments to screen students and monitor progress, implementing evidence-based practices and high-quality instruction to create a strong universal base (Tier 1 instruction), and developing a continuum of instructional supports to meet identified needs (Tier 2 and 3 instruction).

The research evidence and recommendations for creating an MTSS framework for literacy instruction are outlined in the IES practice guide addressing the needs of struggling elementary readers (Gersten et al., 2009). The importance of screening students and conducting ongoing progress monitoring is also recommended to support literacy instruction for English learners at the elementary level (Gersten et al., 2007). Finally, the use of assessments to inform feedback and instruction is highlighted as a key element of writing instruction for secondary students (Graham et al., 2016).

For all learners, data from universal screening and progress monitoring assessments can identify areas of need that may require intensive interventions. Guidelines for developing the content and delivery of tiered reading instruction for elementary students are outlined in the practice guide authored by Gersten et al. (2009). Several other practice guides, including those related to adolescent literacy (Kamil et al., 2008) and effective language and literacy instruction for English learners at the elementary and secondary levels (Baker et al., 2014; Gersten et al., 2007), recommend supplementary small-group and/or individualized interventions to students. These research findings and recommendations highlight the importance of identifying students who struggle with the acquisition of literacy skills and then providing effective and intensive interventions (see Wanzek et al., 2013 for review) to ensure a successful transition to the “reading to learn” phase of development, which is a key feature of literacy instruction beyond Grade 5.

## ***Grades 6 to 12***

By the time students enter middle school it is assumed that they have acquired the skills necessary to foster fluent and efficient reading. Given this assumption, instructional priorities for students at the secondary level shift markedly, from developing word recognition and foundational skills to applying these skills to comprehend and produce grade-level texts. Due to the inherent complexities of secondary instructional materials, which tend to be expository, language comprehension abilities become increasingly important (Chall, 1983; Storch & Whitehurst, 2002). Not surprisingly, literacy instruction during the secondary years emphasizes developing vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities.

Based on a review of evidence outlined in the practice guide on adolescent literacy (Kamil et al., 2008), recommendations include providing explicit vocabulary instruction, direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction, and extended opportunities for students to discuss and interpret the meaning of texts. Developing academic vocabulary through intensive and varied instruction is also suggested for English learners (Baker et al., 2014). In addition, the importance of developing a positive learning environment to increase student motivation and engagement in self-directed and collaborative literacy learning was noted for older students (Kamil et al., 2008). Recommendations to use assessment to identify students struggling with literacy-related skills and provide intensive interventions were also included in the adolescent literacy practice guide.

Using assessments is also recommended to inform writing instruction for students at the secondary level. As a result of a review of research evidence (Graham et al., 2016), recommendations include providing explicit strategy instruction using the Model-Practice-Reflect cycle and integrating writing instruction in reading and content area instruction. Integrating oral and written language instruction into content area teaching can also support the literacy development of English learners (Baker et al., 2014). Many of these research recommendations related to secondary students are reflected in multiple subdomains of the four strands—Reading 6-12, Writing 6-12, Speaking and Listening 6-12, Language 6-12—of the Wisconsin Standards for English Language Arts (DPI, 2020).

## **Considerations Arising from the Research Evidence Relevant to the Task Force**

This summary of major findings from research indicates that much has been learned that can inform how literacy is taught in MMSD and how prospective teachers at UW-SoE are prepared to teach literacy. We now focus on aspects of the research that are most relevant to the goals of the Task Force: identifying areas where changes in policies and practices could result in more effective instruction and better literacy outcomes, thus greatly reducing inequities associated with race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Note that we use both “literacy” and “reading.” Literacy is the broader term and includes reading, spelling, and writing, all of which are closely tied to spoken language. We use “reading” when focusing on issues about comprehending text, especially how that skill is acquired. We recognize that for students who speak a language other than English at home, intentional bridging must be attended to so that students have the time they need to make meaning in more than one language. Home language and dialects are assets that our children and families bring to our schools and communities.

The research literature identifies three major components of becoming a reader: (1) knowledge of spoken language, or the ways language is used to communicate; (2) knowledge of the world, or the things we use language to communicate about; and (3) knowledge of print and the mappings between written and spoken forms of words. These are the main determinants of children’s transition from pre-reader to reader. Many potential opportunities for improving literacy outcomes can be identified in reference to them. The following list of considerations for improving literacy outcomes and instruction is not exhaustive; our not including some important considerations does not reflect disinterest in them.

**Consideration 1.** Reading begins with the acquisition of foundational reading skills: rapidly and accurately recognizing and comprehending words and the sequences of words that form meaningful texts. These skills also include being able to spell words and generate simple text. Low literacy achievement is almost always related to difficulties acquiring these skills.

For children who acquire these foundational skills and become proficient readers at the Grade 3 level, additional gains in reading and writing ability involve further development of foundational skills, including expanding knowledge of spoken language and increases in speed and accuracy in reading large numbers of words, as well as the development of additional types of knowledge and expertise (e.g., ability to comprehend, evaluate, and learn from varied types of texts of increasing complexity, integrating new material with existing knowledge). However, being able to engage with texts in more advanced ways, and being able to benefit from more advanced instruction, are *predicated* on having acquired the foundational skills. Instruction in these areas is less effective for students who are still developing foundational skills, which causes them to fall further behind.

Thus, gaining foundational reading skills is critical. The high percentage of children reading below grade level in Grade 4 (e.g., on the National Assessment of Educational Progress) is a national and local concern. Few of these children ever gain reading proficiency and thus are more likely to experience a cascade of negative consequences related to education, personal health and wellbeing, and employment.

**Consideration 2.** Knowledge is *learned*. The learned knowledge and mental operations that support skilled reading are clearly identified in the research literature. These are the ability to read words accurately and quickly, comprehend sentences within extended text, and use one’s knowledge of the world—none of these are optional. People acquire different levels of skill at different rates, but the components to learn remain the same. Children’s rate of progress toward these goals is a function of the experiences children have in the home, community, and school. The instructional challenge is how to provide experiences that allow children to acquire these types of knowledge *efficiently* (e.g., meeting important developmental milestones) and *successfully* (e.g., acquiring proficiency).

**Consideration 3.** Whereas reading works essentially the same for everyone, the paths to gaining the necessary knowledge and skills vary because learning depends on experience, and children’s experiences vary greatly. These differences have not been adequately accommodated in curricula and practices. For example, recognition of the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995, 2014) has led to welcome changes. However, the use of the concept needs to be extended to include the impact of culture on the validity of materials and methods used to teach foundational skills. The same holds for normative assessments of student progress. Formative and summative assessments are often insensitive to cultural and linguistic differences that can affect the validity of the items on the assessment.

**Consideration 4.** Reading depends on knowledge of spoken language. The type of instruction used influences whether it is effective, where effectiveness depends on teachers’ abilities to respond and understand children’s varied language backgrounds, influencing the way they teach children. The interactive process of what children bring to the classroom, what materials are provided to children, and how teachers teach and respond to students is important (Cohen & Ball, 1999). A familiar example is children who are learning English as a second language: they may struggle with reading English initially because they are also learning the language. Bilingual/English language learner programs incorporate instructional practices that take this into account. However, language background varies in other ways that are not as well recognized or addressed. Monolingual English speakers’ knowledge varies across the five major components of oral language—phonology, morphology, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics—mainly due to differences in the amount and variety of language to which they are exposed. In addition, some children speak varieties of English



that differ from the one used in books and instructional materials. African American English is the most widely used and best studied variety in the United States. Using a language or variety (dialect) in the home that differs from the one used in school does not have to be a barrier to learning to read, but it often is. Children have more to learn in the same amount of time as monolingual speakers of the “standard” dialect (i.e., the variety that is used in books, other aspects of education, and in major institutions such as business, government, and healthcare; often called “general American English”). Instructional materials, including basic examples and exercises, assume that the child is speaking the “standard” dialect, with its particular pronunciations, morphology, and grammar. Finally, children’s knowledge of a language is affected by the amount and variety of speech to which they are exposed. This variability in language experience affects all of its major components.

Research has established that many children’s reading difficulties are secondary to characteristics of their spoken language, on which reading depends. That is, the child’s capacity to learn what is unique to reading—the use of a written code—is not impaired; however, learning about print is more difficult because it depends on knowledge of spoken language, where there *are* important differences among children. These differences can potentially be addressed in the years leading up to school, as well as in school; a major recommendation is to focus pre-kindergarten on expanding children’s knowledge of spoken language and things language is used to talk about (see local considerations presented in the Charge Component 4 section). However, once children enter school, reading difficulties are commonly treated as difficulties related to the printed code, rather than downstream effects of limited knowledge of the spoken language of the classroom, which may not align or draw upon the child’s home language/dialect. More effective reading instruction and better reading achievement depend on greater recognition of the role of spoken language, the impact of variability in language background on learning and assessment, and the need to provide sufficient learning opportunities related to both spoken and written language in school. Children must be exposed to a broader range of expressions and ways of using language to communicate, allowing them to be more familiar with the language of the classroom. This does not entail extinguishing or replacing the child’s home language/dialect, only supplementing it with additional school-relevant language.

**Consideration 5.** Research in cognition and neuroscience indicates that human learning involves at least two distinct mechanisms. The more familiar one is *explicit* learning from instruction, which usually involves language, attention, and conscious awareness. Research has established the value of explicit instruction in areas such as phonics and vocabulary. However, these types of knowledge are too complex to be learned entirely through instruction. For example, adults have learned 20,000 or more distinct words, very few of which were explicitly taught. At the start of school, children’s spoken vocabularies can vary by hundreds of words, which represent substantial discrepancies that affect reading progress. Gaining the additional vocabulary is very important, but there is not sufficient instructional time in or out of school to teach all the words in addition to new grade-level material.

Acquiring complex types of knowledge is possible because humans have a second type of learning, which is termed *implicit* because it occurs without conscious awareness or direction. Humans are constantly updating their knowledge based on experience without explicit direction or feedback. Implicit learning takes advantage of the predictable structure of the world—the fact that there are patterns everywhere. Print, for example, exhibits statistical structure: letters differ in how frequently they are used, how they combine with other letters, which combinations are used in spelling words, and which are not. Implicit learning picks up on the statistical structure of the world. This capacity explains how children manage to learn so much about written and spoken language so quickly even though it cannot all be taught. This is highly relevant to literacy because of the knowledge that is involved—orthography, phonology, semantics; the relationships between these codes; how they relate to things we experience in the world—all exhibit reliable statistical patterns.

Much has been written about the fundamental problem of inequities in *opportunities to learn* associated with poverty. It is also important to consider whether a child has sufficient *learning opportunities*—that is, experiences that result in learning. These include both explicit instruction and creating conditions that promote implicit learning. Becoming a reader requires sufficient instruction, exploration, and practice. Here too there are enormous differences between children that affect progress and are related to the range of experiences and resources available outside the classroom. Instructional practices need to maximize the number of effective learning opportunities, but current policies often work against this goal. For example, children learn spoken language by using it—talking and listening in communicative exchanges. In many classrooms, conversation is strictly regulated. Children may only be encouraged to talk in response to teacher prompts, with additional conversation in the classroom or hallways, at lunch or at recess discouraged, reducing the number and range of learning opportunities. This practice is highly counterproductive because it makes it harder to ameliorate differences in spoken language that affect reading and learning in other areas.

**Consideration 6.** Basic research suggests that instruction can be made more efficient and effective for more children by taking advantage of an important property of the three types of knowledge listed above: they are highly interrelated. For example, a printed word incorporates information about phonological structure, morphological structure, meaning, and grammatical function *at the same time*. It is also linked to other information that contributes to understanding meaningful sequences of words and to information about the world (e.g., that a CHAIR is a certain kind of object).

In many approaches to reading instruction, the types of knowledge that support reading are treated as independent “components” that can be taught in isolation. This makes learning more difficult because it does not take advantage of the interrelations between components. Children are able to learn about more than one property of written or spoken language at a time because these properties are correlated. A lesson may be about the pronunciations of the EA digraph in the words HEAVY and HEAVEN, but the child can also be learning the words’ meanings, their syllabic and morphological structures, their roles in sentences, and other properties *at the same time*, using both explicit and implicit learning mechanisms. This efficiency is wasted if each of the properties is taught independently.

**Consideration 7.** Current approaches to reading instruction incorporate assumptions about the availability of support in the home and access to resources such as computers, apps, libraries, and supplemental educational opportunities (e.g., tutors, learning centers). These assumptions are not valid for all children, especially those from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. In this way, curricula and practices can magnify differences related to socioeconomic status. This is an underrecognized source of bias. A major opportunity for improving literacy outcomes is to recognize this problem and utilize curricula and instructional practices that are effective regardless of the availability of specific resources beyond the classroom.

**Consideration 8.** Social/emotional factors modulate student progress. Success is highly motivating, whereas failure is a disincentive to effort and engagement. This consideration magnifies the importance of ensuring that children make sufficient progress in literacy and that the school climate is inclusive for all children regardless of background. Improving the climate in the school and classroom and creating environments that communicate that the child’s culture and experiences are valued and integral to learning are important steps that will promote learning. However, they are not sufficient; children still need instructional activities and materials that allow them to succeed at tasks such as learning to read.

**Consideration 9.** Expectations about progress in gaining literacy are codified in state standards and incorporated into curricula and assessments, and children are expected to reach normative yearly milestones. Acquisition of reading occurs at a relentless pace, along with spelling and basic writing.

Children are expected to progress from minimal knowledge of print to mastery of important foundational skills within a few years. It is clear from research that there is considerable variability in how rapidly children acquire foundational skills, due to characteristics of both the child and environment. Yet, it is also crucial that they reach milestones in a timely manner because expectations about further progress increase rapidly after Grade 3, and the costs of falling behind are enormous because difficulties multiply.

Attaining good foundational skills is so crucial to the child's educational experience that policies and practices must enable children to succeed. We noted the importance of providing sufficient learning opportunities, which may include supplemental instruction and practice. Although the goal should be to enable children to meet normative yearly goals, the importance of succeeding in this early phase of learning is such that it may be necessary to relax those expectations, extending the calendar without negative consequences if needed.

## Charge Component 2

Identify how literacy, especially early literacy, is taught across MMSD, and analyze achievement data for MMSD students with respect to literacy.

Literacy opens the door to a world in which we can read, write, and listen to communicate and make meaning of the past and our current reality—and forge a future. Teaching children to become literate is a complex and iterative process. At a systems level, the goal of literacy for all students requires attention to instructional practices, core curricular resources, and an understanding of a wide variety of standards with special attention to social, emotional, and academic learning. To that end, our subcommittee explores how literacy is taught across MMSD and how the ways of teaching literacy have resulted in an educational debt owed to many of our students (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

We begin by describing pertinent historical context related to literacy in MMSD. Then we explore reading outcomes for K-12 MMSD students through assessment measures used by the district over the past decade (roughly) to understand MMSD student achievement. Next, we examine organizational contexts that may contribute to the district’s current state of student literacy outcomes. Specifically, we examine school building access to instructional resources, educational stakeholders’ understanding and execution of instructional goals (e.g., planning and delivering grade-level assignments aligned with standards, supporting deep student engagement, and holding all students to high expectations), and guidance from MMSD’s Department of Curriculum & Instruction (hereafter, Central Office) provided to schools in support of the delivery of core literacy instruction.

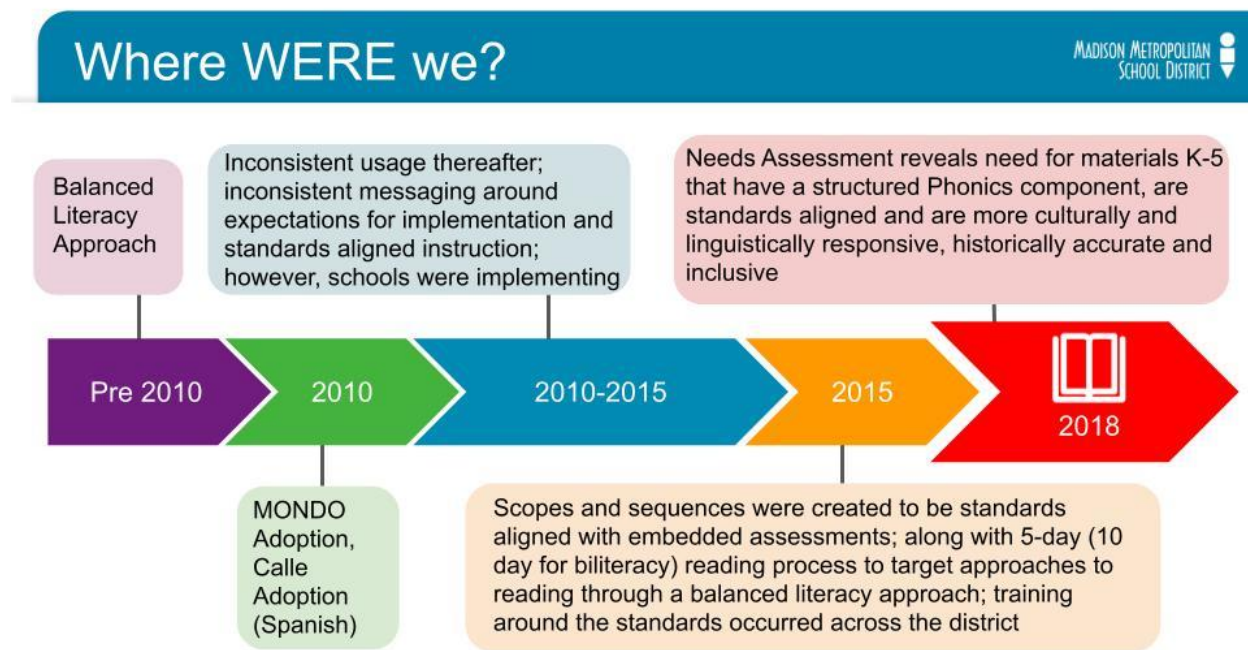
### Historical Context

MMSD’s most recent *K-12 Literacy Program Evaluation* (MMSD, 2011) was released a decade ago and many of the challenges noted in that evaluation persist. The district has worked to provide coherent literacy instruction by adopting curricular approaches, creating professional learning opportunities, and utilizing various forms of assessment (see Figure 1). For instance, in 2012, MMSD adopted Mondo (n.d.) and Calle de la Lectura (Foresman, 2011) instructional resources, along with professional development for instructional practices, such as small groups with leveled texts and the use of assessments that include running records to report student achievement. MMSD also created an infrastructure to support these efforts, with the district relying heavily on coaches to implement core instructional practices at the school level. For the past decade, these instructional coaches have worked with Central Office staff to calibrate ways to best engage with school staff.

In 2020, on the heels of work started by former Superintendent Jen Cheatham, Superintendent Carlton Jenkins brought new leadership to MMSD with a bold focus on literacy and increased academic outcomes for all students. Current steps MMSD is taking include:

- LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling; Voyager Sopris Learning and Lexia, n.d.) training for all literacy and biliteracy K-12, cross categorical, and English learner staff;
- analyzing instructional minutes to ensure students receive targeted foundational skills instruction along with language comprehension instruction; and
- developing a process to include the Board of Education and stakeholders in curriculum adoption.

**Figure 2: Transforming K-5 Literacy Pedagogy in MMSD Timeline**



Source: Netterstrom et al., 2020.

### **MMSD K-12 Student Literacy Outcomes**

MMSD’s vision statement promises to its students and the community that “Every school will be a thriving school that prepares every student to graduate from high school, college, career and community ready” (MMSD, n.d.-a). To better understand if the district is achieving this vision, we analyzed students’ academic outcome data in reading. Using publicly available data from the Wisconsin DPI website and with the support of the MMSD Research and Innovation Office, we analyzed students’ literacy outcomes at key data points across the student lifecycle. In some circumstances, we make use of an “asterisk” to represent years in which no data was publicly available for a particular demographic group. Importantly, we did find that, at times, there are inconsistencies between publicly available data and MMSD specific data.

It is critical to note that these are not the only data sources available to students, staff, and families. As data literacy is strengthened it will be critical to understand the varied sources of data and the intended purposes and limitations of each data set. Data use, instruction and feedback are all a part of the teaching and learning cycle. Data use is meant to be positive and not punitive, and this will require a shift in mindset if we are to accelerate student progress.

In our analysis, we focused on the English Language Arts (ELA) portion of the Wisconsin state-mandated annual screeners or assessments: (1) the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) used in grades 4K-2; (2) the Forward Exam used in grades 3-8; and (3) the ACT Statewide test administered in grade 11. Using publicly available literacy outcome data from DPI narrowed our focus to Grades 2, 4, 8, and 11. We analyzed evidence for recent years for each tool, focusing on data from 2015-16 to 2018-19 academic years as all three assessments (English, reading, and writing) were administered during that time frame. We did not include any available data from the 2020-21 school year given the

implications of the COVID pandemic on 4K-12 testing and assessment. Within each of these three tools, we examined student literacy outcomes by race, special education status, socio-economic status, and language status (e.g., and student’s classification in English Language Learner (ELL)). Before we describe our analysis of student literacy outcomes for these selected grades, we thought it important to describe PALS, Forward Exam, and the Statewide ACT test, including the purpose of each tool and appropriate uses/considerations for the tool.

### ***Selected State of Wisconsin Mandated Screeners and Assessments***

**PALS.** According to DPI, PALS is “...a research-based screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tool for students in grades 4K through 2nd grade” (DPI, n.d.-f). PALS supports the screening and identification of students who need literacy support and should not be used as an assessment tool. DPI has outlined the appropriate uses of PALS data, as well as its limitations (DPI, n.d.-f). Following this, in MMSD, PALS is used in the Fall to support the identification of students who may need intervention to support their success in literacy learning. MMSD also uses PALS in Spring to identify students who haven’t met benchmarks and who may need intervention to support their success in literacy. PALS data is provided to teachers in late Fall (mid-December) and late Spring (end of June).<sup>4</sup>

**Forward Exam.** The Forward Exam is used for grades 3-8 and was first used statewide in Wisconsin during the 2015-16 school year. The Forward Exam is a state-mandated test that replaced the Wisconsin Knowledge and Concepts Examination (WKCE) and the Badger Exam, and consists of subtests in English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Questions in the Forward Exam align with State of WI standards (MMSD, 2020b). According to DPI, the Forward Exam provides information that allows “all stakeholders to check how ready ALL students are for college and career, especially those groups that have historically been left behind.” Performance at the “proficient” level on the Forward Exam (see Glossary) indicates that the student “demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness” (DPI, n.d.-b). MMSD students take the computer-based Forward Exam in-person in mid-late spring (March - May). Results shared with the district and families in mid- to late- summer.

**Statewide ACT Test.** The Statewide ACT test is a state-mandated assessment given to all 11th grade students by a test proctor. The ACT “assesses students’ academic readiness for college,” and the ELA score on the ACT Statewide test is calculated by DPI based on the English, Reading and Writing portions of the ACT (DPI, n.d.-c). In MMSD, the test is given via pen and paper on a set day mid-Spring with several makeup dates scheduled in case needed. Students who take the test with accommodations may have their test scheduled during the first two weeks following the initial date (MMSD, 2020c). Students generally receive their results approximately 3-8 weeks after the test is completed and have the option of sending scores to four colleges or scholarship agencies at no charge by entering the correct code(s) on their answer documents.

### ***Every Student Ready for College, Career, and Community***

Student readiness for college, career, and community must be supported throughout students’ educational journey through the district, which may begin as early as the MMSD’s Early Childhood

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<sup>4</sup> For the 2020-2021 school year, MMSD did not use the PALS screener in grades K, 1, and 2. Instead, MMSD used FastBridge AUTOREading because it can be implemented remotely (MMSD, 2020a). Currently, given that MMSD has returned to mainly in-person instruction, FastBridge earlyReading will be used.

Program (MMSD, n.d.-b) before kindergarten and may extend until the student turns 21. Literacy is a cornerstone for readiness and, therefore, academic outcomes in literacy provide an indication of how well MMSD is supporting its students' educational progress.

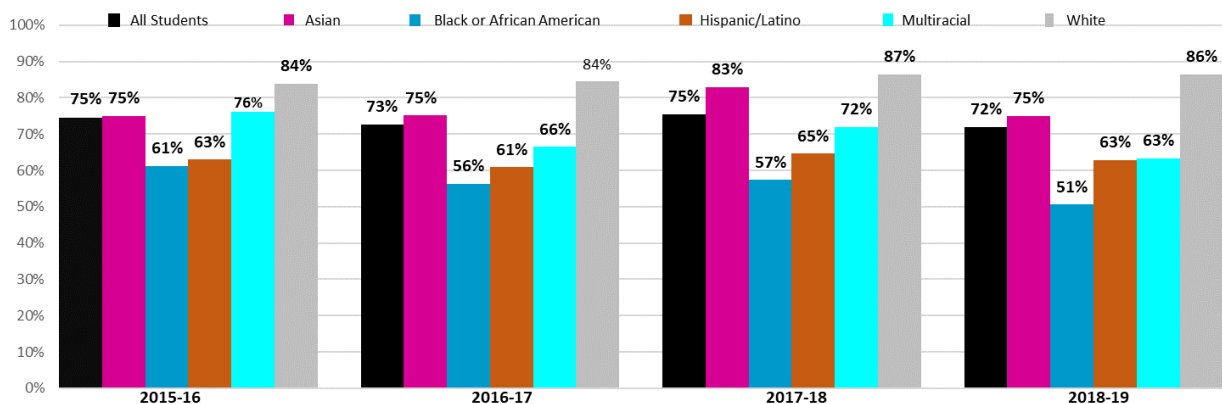
To know whether every student is prepared to become a high school graduate who is college, career, and community ready, it is necessary to look beyond aggregated performance data to uncover patterns across different demographic groups. As noted earlier, our analysis includes student literacy outcomes by race, special education status, socio-economic status, and language status (e.g., ELL). While we highlight these specific groups, this does not signal disinterest in their literacy outcomes for other marginalized students such as students in foster care, students experiencing homelessness, students from Wisconsin's First Nations and other indigenous peoples, pregnant and parenting students, students with parents on active duty in the armed forces, etc.

### ***Reading Readiness in the Early Elementary Years***

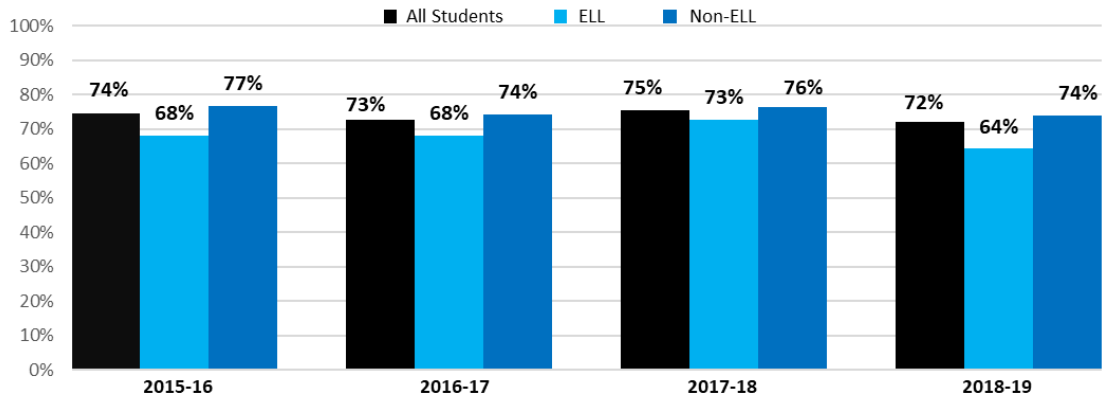
PALS, an annual reading readiness screener for 4K through Grade 2 students (DPI, n.d.-d) is intended to identify students who may require more intensive literacy instruction. PALS can be thought of as a component of an early warning system to support the identification of students who are at risk of not meeting grade level benchmarks in literacy.

Figures 3a-d present the percent of MMSD Grade 2 students who met the PALS benchmark in 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 by race/ethnicity and other demographic characteristics (this is not a cohort analysis). Meeting the PALS benchmark means students met a level of minimum competency and can be expected to show growth given regular classroom literacy instruction; it does not imply that the students are on grade level (PALS Resource Center, n.d.). See Appendix C for quantitative data for Figures 3a-d.

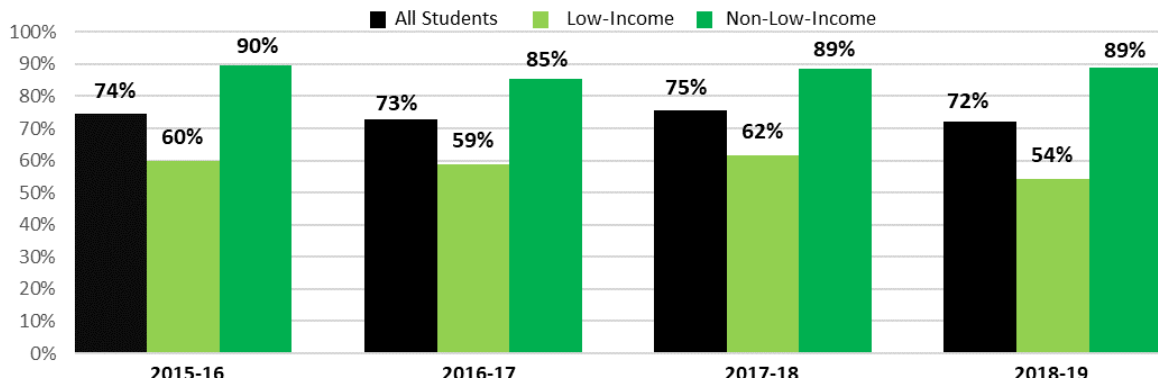
**Figure 3a: Percent of 2nd Grade MMSD Students meeting the PALS benchmark by Race/Ethnicity**



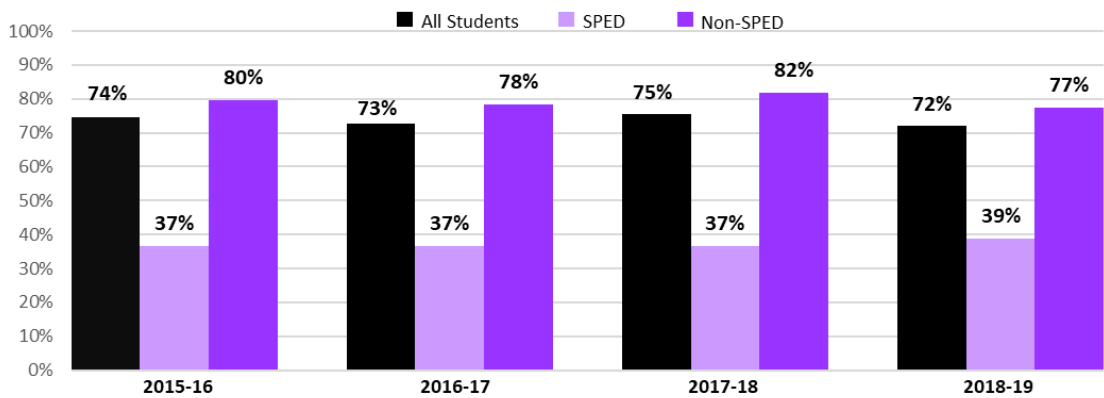
**Figure 3b: Percent of 2nd Grade MMSD Students meeting the PALS benchmark by ELL Status**



**Figure 3c: Percent of 2nd Grade MMSD Students meeting the PALS benchmark by Income Status**



**Figure 3d: Percent of 2nd Grade MMSD Students meeting the PALS benchmark by Special Education Status**





**Race/Ethnicity.** As Figure 3a shows, all MMSD student race/ethnicity focal groups<sup>5</sup>--with the exception of White students--experienced a slight decrease in the percent of students meeting the benchmark between 2015-16 and 2018-19. White students experienced a very small increase in the percent of students meeting the benchmark during the same years. However, all groups did have a small spike in the 2017-18 academic year.

**English Language Learner Status.** Students classified with an ELL status and students who are not classified as having an ELL status experienced a similar trend in volatility from year-to-year with the percentage of students meeting the benchmark (see Figure 3b). The data reflected includes only PALS English and does not include PALS Español as PALS Español does not include a sub score.

**Low-Income Status.** There is a large gap in outcomes between low-income and non-low-income students with regard to meeting the benchmarks (see Figure 3c). Those gaps, on average, were about a 25-percentage point difference during these years.

**Special Education Status.** Students identified as having special education needs had the lowest percentage of students meeting the benchmark of all demographic groups (see Figure 3d).

### ***Literacy Outcomes in Later Elementary and Secondary Years***

In this section we discuss two assessments that students take in late elementary and secondary years - the Forward Exam and the ACT. The Forward Exam and ACT are both state-mandated assessments. The Forward Exam is a summative assessment which provides information about what students know and can do in relation to state standards. The Forward Exam is administered in Grades 3-8 and 10 (Social Studies only) in an in-person format. Forward Exam scores are classified into four levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic. The ACT Statewide Assessment includes four curriculum-based tests that measure students' education achievement in English, mathematics, reading, and science, plus a writing test. The ACT provides a measurement of college and career readiness (MMSD, 2020c). All MMSD 11th grade students take the ACT during their second semester, and the ACT may be retaken if scores are unsatisfactory.

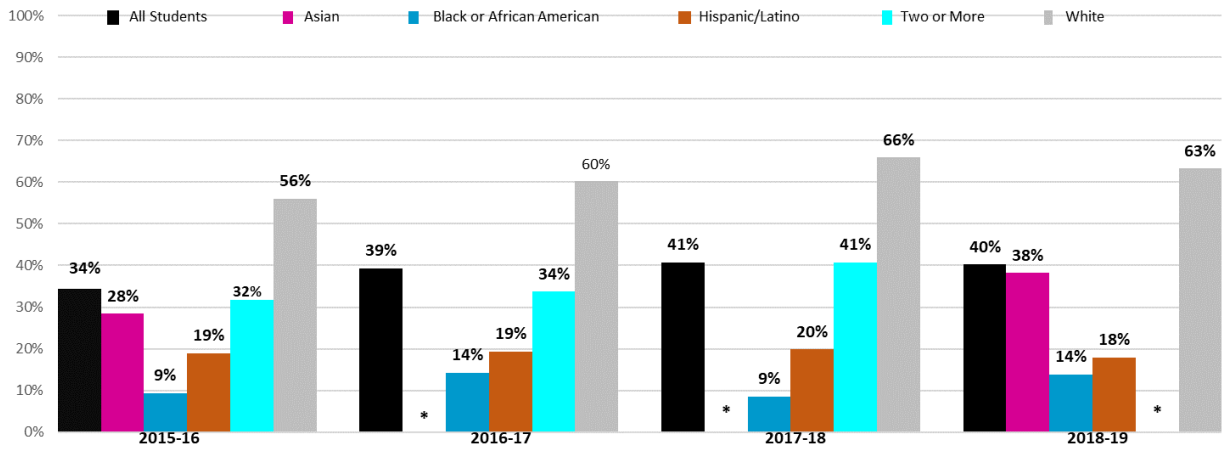
#### **Fourth Grade Forward Exam Literacy Outcomes**

Figures 4a-d examine the Forward Exam literacy outcomes for 4th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. These data represent the percentage of 4th graders in each academic year meeting proficiency or advanced. See Appendix D for quantitative data for Figures 4a-d.

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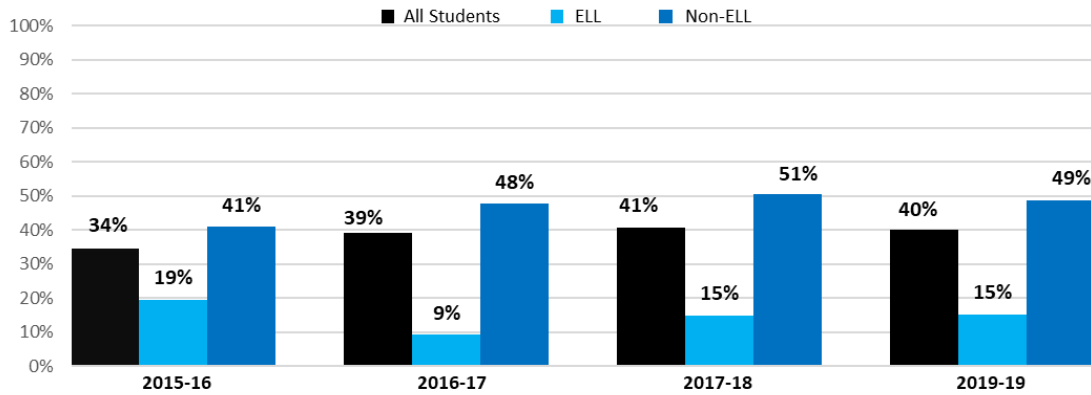
<sup>5</sup> In this report, we use the race/ethnicity categories utilized by the district in reporting on the selected screener and assessments.

**Figure 4a: Percent of MMSD 4th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Race/Ethnicity\***

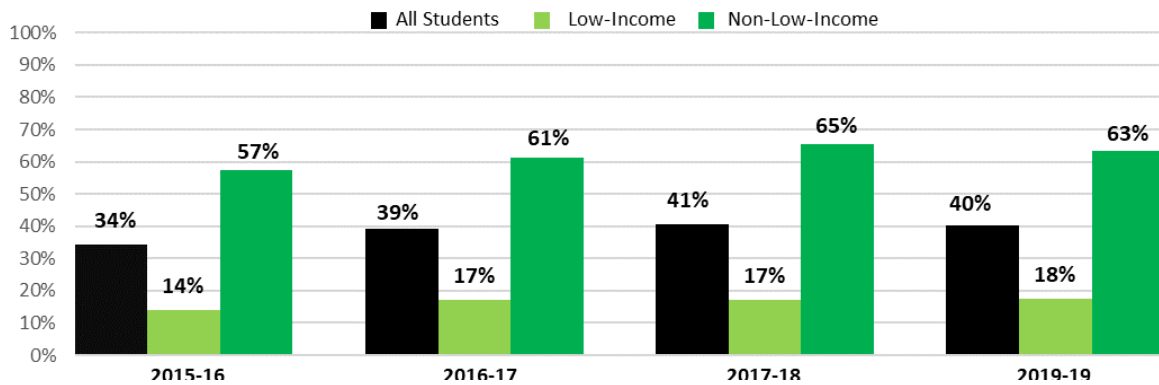


\*Publicly available data for 'Asian' and 'Two or More' race/ethnicity categories were not available for all years between 2015-16 through 2018-19.

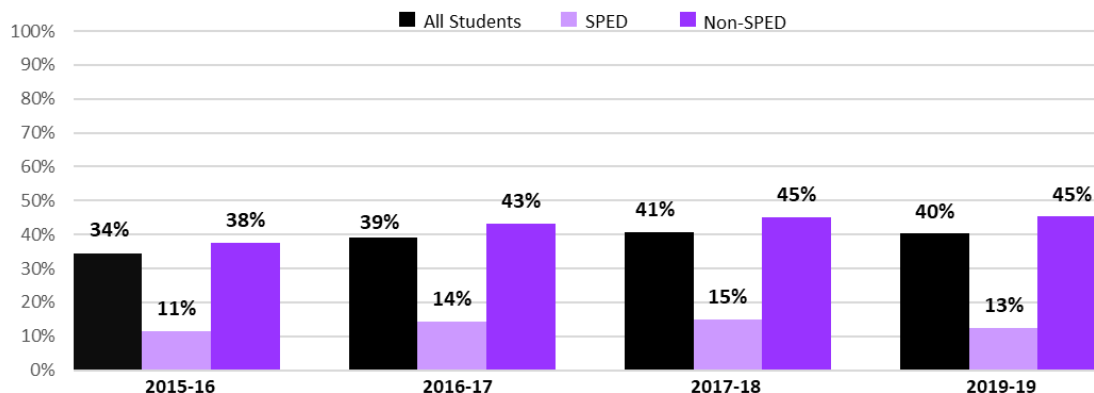
**Figure 4b: Percent of MMSD 4th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by ELL Status**



**Figure 4c: Percent of MMSD 4th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Income Status**



**Figure 4d: Percent of MMSD 4th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Special Education Status**



**Race/Ethnicity.** As demonstrated in Figure 4a, when examining the data by various student race/ethnicity groups, trend lines indicate increases for White and all students. Conversely, Hispanic students decreased. Percentages for Black students were not as linear as their peers and fluctuated from year-to-year resulting in a moderate increase from the baseline year.

**English Language Learner Status.** Similar to the racial/ethnic patterns shown above, there is a large gap between ELL and non-ELL students in the percentage meeting proficiency or advanced status (see Figure 4b).

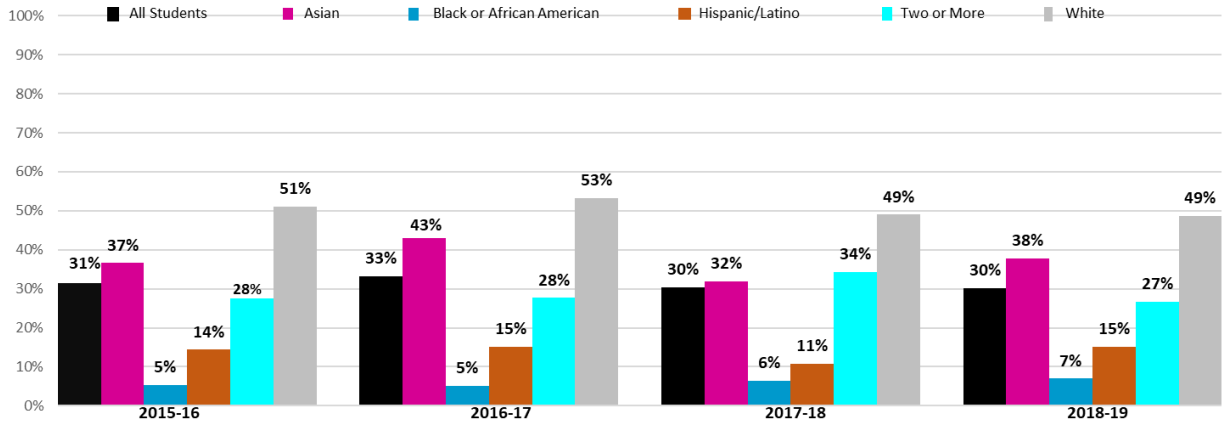
**Low-Income Status.** Students from low-income households and students not from low-income households experienced large differences in the percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced (see Figure 4c). While students from low-income households have a slight upward trajectory, the gap has increased since the baseline year.

**Special Education Status.** Students identified as having special education needs had a significantly lower percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced than students not identified as having special education needs (see Figure 4d). Yet, both groups experienced increases in the percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced from the baseline year with minimal volatility.

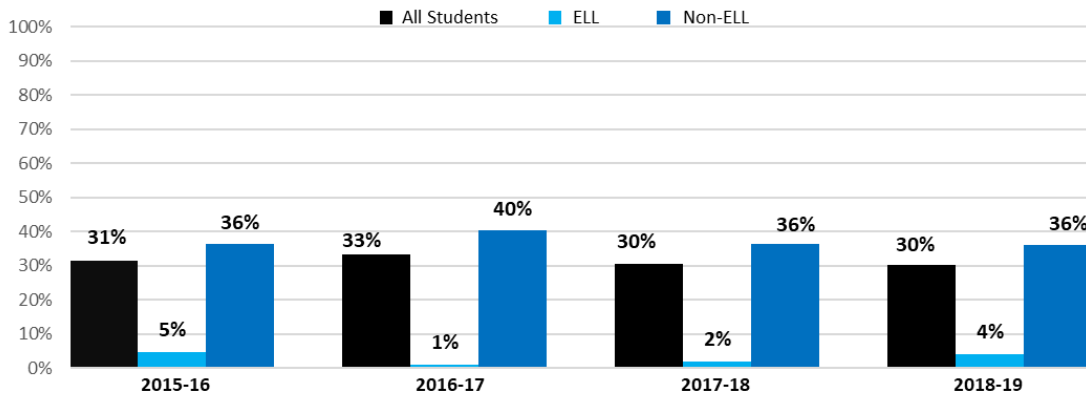
### **Eighth Grade Forward Exam Literacy Outcomes**

Figures 5a-d examine the Forward Exam literacy outcomes for 8th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. These data represent the percentage of 8th graders in each academic year meeting proficiency or advanced. See Appendix E for quantitative data for Figures 5a-d.

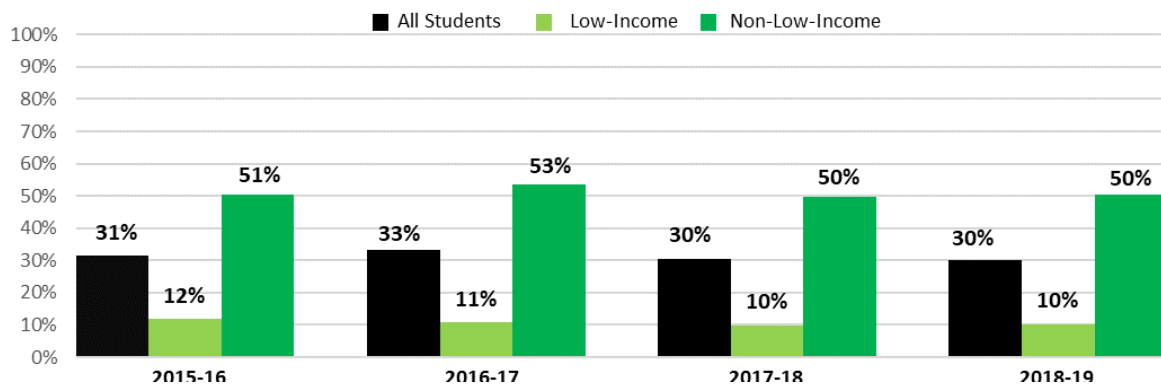
**Figure 5a: Percent of MMSD 8th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Race/Ethnicity**



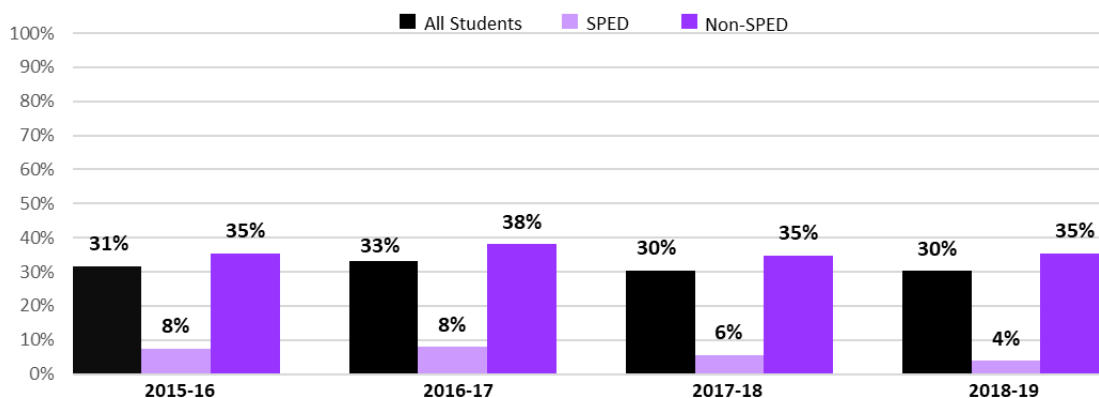
**Figure 5b: Percent of MMSD 8th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by ELL Status**



**Figure 5c: Percent of MMSD 8th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Income Status**



**Figure 5d: Percent of MMSD 8th graders testing proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward exam by Special Education Status**



**Race/Ethnicity.** As demonstrated in Figure 5a when examining the data by various student race/ethnicity groups, trend lines remained relatively constant from the baseline year.

**English Language Learner Status.** Students classified with an ELL status and students who are not classified as having an ELL status experienced moderate volatility but percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced remained relatively unchanged from the baseline year (see Figure 5b).

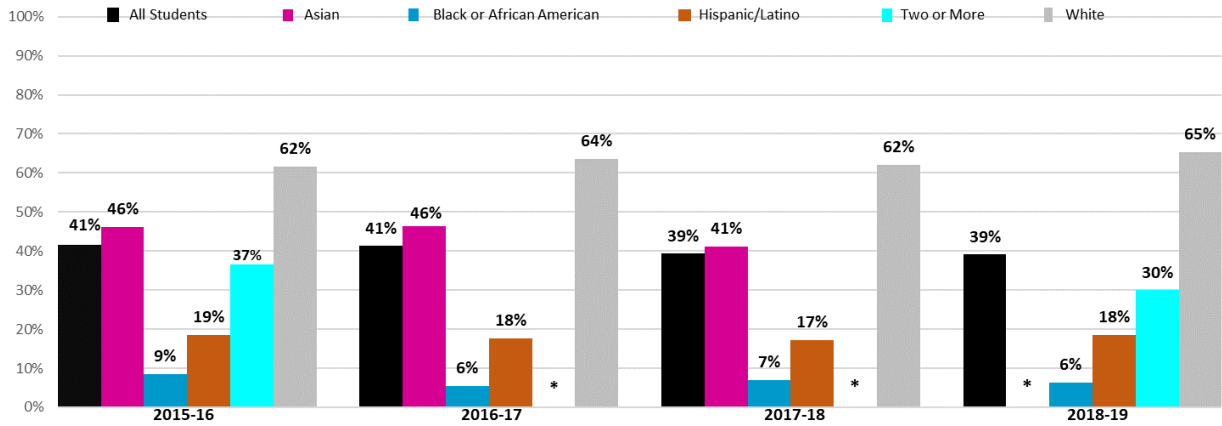
**Low-Income Status.** Students from low-income households and students not from low-income households had small decreases in the percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced from the baseline year (see Figure 5c).

**Special Education Status.** Students identified as having special education needs had the greatest reduction in percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced from the baseline year (-7%) (see Figure 5d). Students not identified as having special education needs held constant; however, still well short of an ideal percentage of students meeting proficiency or advanced.

#### **Eleventh Grade ACT Statewide Test ‘College Readiness’ Outcomes**

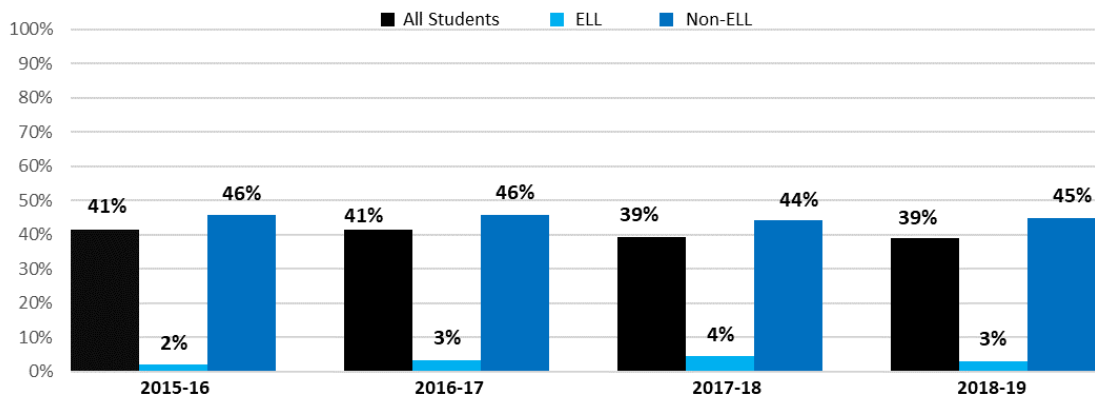
Figure 6a-d examine the ACT Reading assessment outcomes for 11th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19. These data represent the percentage of 11th graders in each academic year testing “College Ready.” See Appendix F for quantitative data for Figures 6a-d.

**Figure 6a: Percent of MMSD 11th graders testing “College Ready” in Reading, as defined by ACT by Race/Ethnicity**

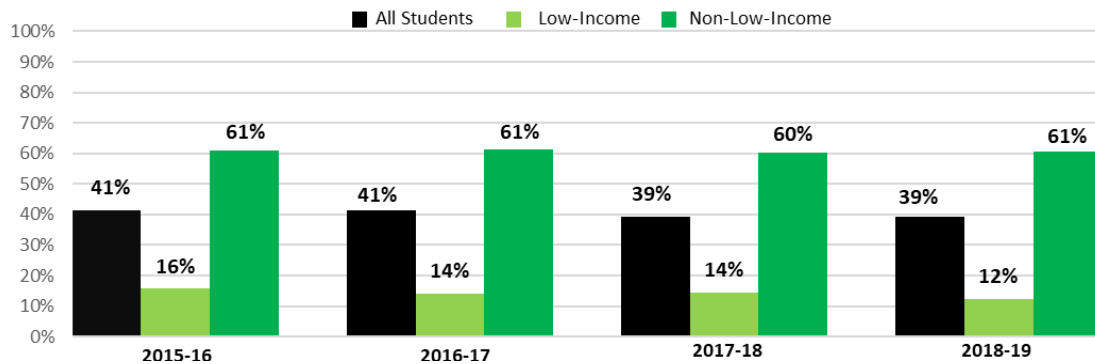


\*Publicly available data for 'Asian' and 'Two or More' race/ethnicity categories were not available for all years between 2015-16 through 2018-19.

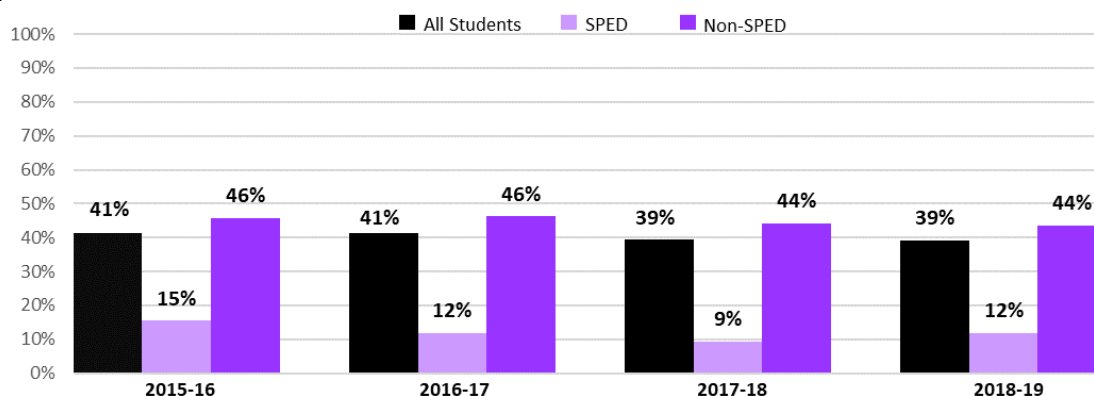
**Figure 6b: Percent of MMSD 11th graders testing “College Ready” in Reading, as defined by ACT by ELL Status**



**Figure 6c: Percent of MMSD 11th graders testing “College Ready” in Reading, as defined by ACT by Income Status**



**Figure 6d: Percent of MMSD 11th graders testing “College Ready” in Reading, as defined by ACT by Special Education Status**



**Race/Ethnicity.** As demonstrated in Figure 6a when examining the data by various student race/ethnicity groups, from 2015-16 through 2018-19, there was a small decrease across most race/ethnicity groups classifications of 11th graders scoring College Ready in Reading on the ACT. This data does not include the category of Asian as it is not part of the public DPI dataset due to the number of students (DPI utilizes a broad disclosure threshold).

**English Language Learner Status.** Students classified with an ELL status and students who are not classified as having an ELL status experienced relatively no movement in percentage of 11th graders testing “College Ready” on the ACT Assessment (see Figure 6b).

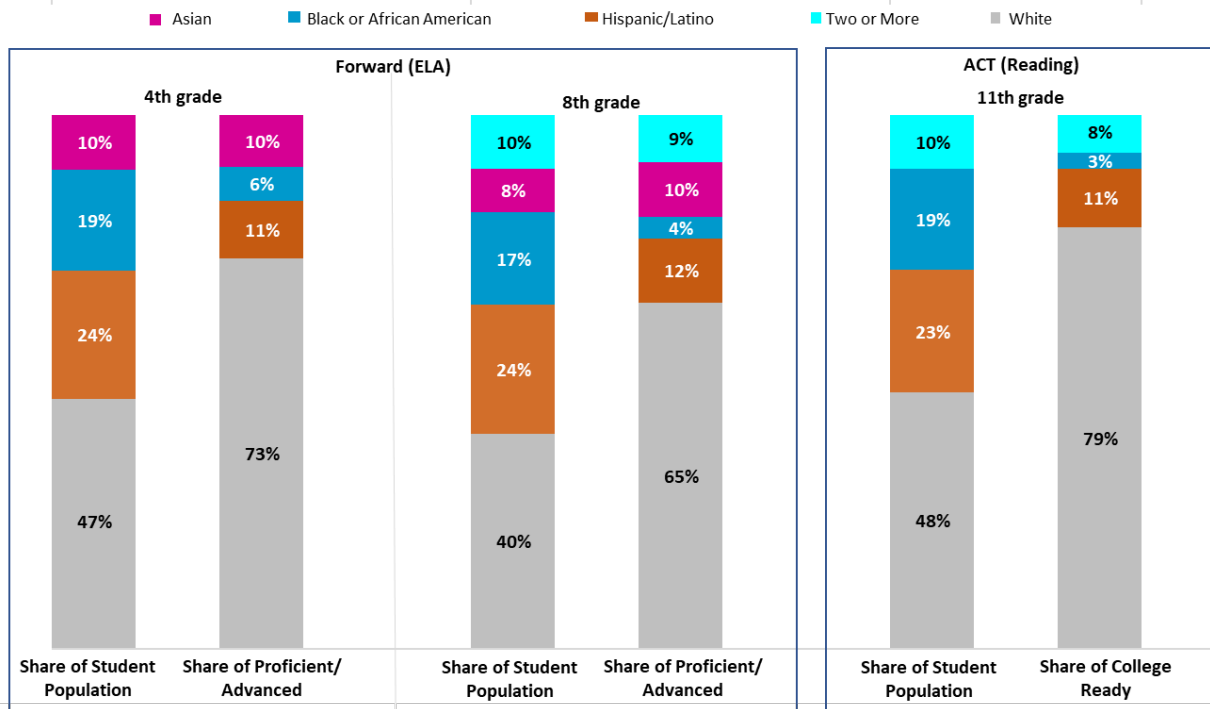
**Low-Income Status.** Students from low-income households and students not from low-income households had minute decreases in the percentage of 11th graders testing “College Ready” on the ACT assessment (see Figure 6c).

**Special Education Status.** Students identified as having special education needs experienced some volatility in the percentage of 11th graders testing “College Ready” on the Act Assessment from year-to-year, resulting in a decrease from the baseline year (see Figure 6d). Students not identified as having special education needs remained relatively unchanged.

**Comparison of Shares of Student Body and Shares of Proficient or Advanced on Assessments**

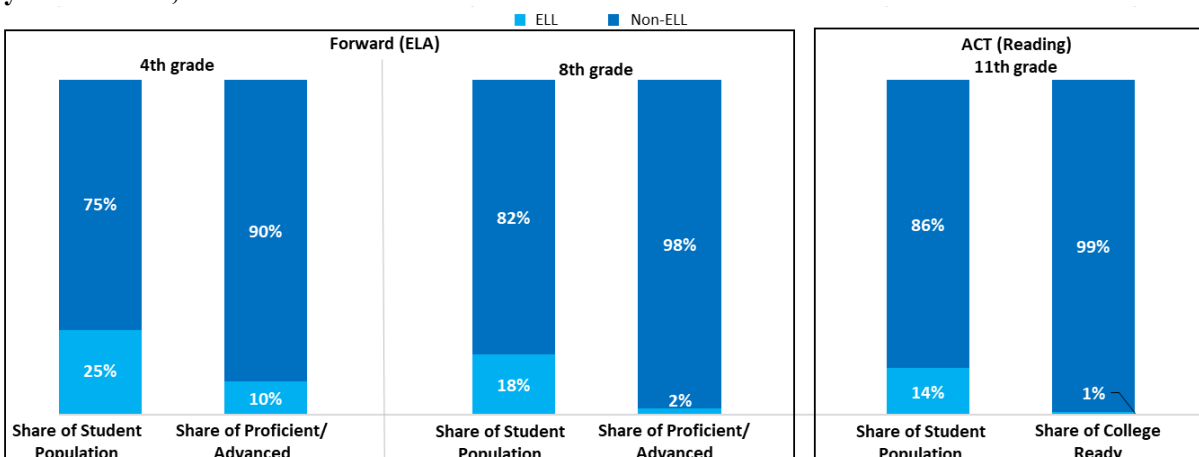
Figure 7a-d presents a comparison of shares of student body and shares of 4th, 8th, and 11<sup>th</sup> students scoring proficient or advanced in ELA on Forward Exam and testing as “College Ready” on the ACT in Reading by race/ethnicity in 2018-19.

**Figure 7a: Comparison of Shares of Student Body and Shares of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam and College Ready on ACT in Reading by Race/Ethnicity\*, 2018-19**



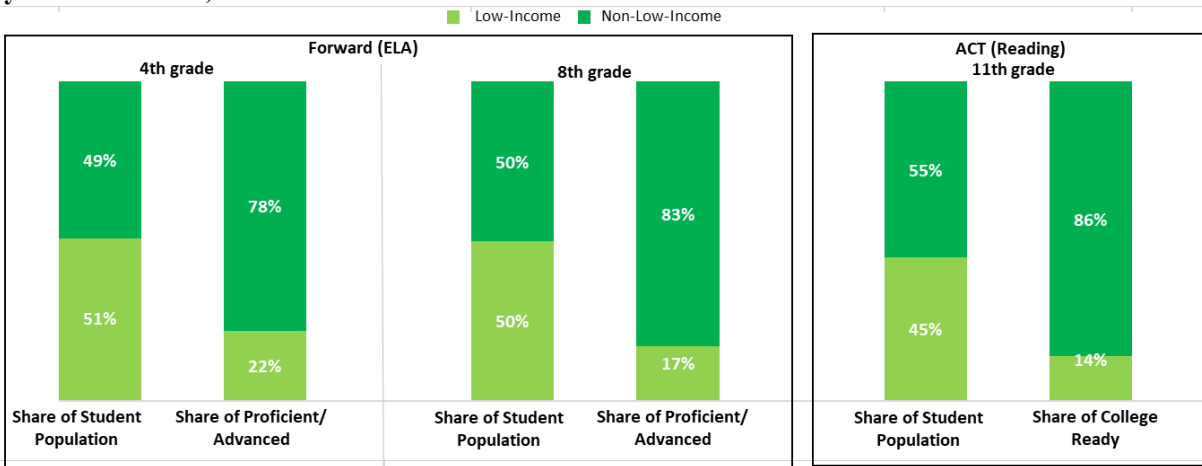
\*Publicly available data for 'Asian' and 'Two or More' race/ethnicity categories were not available for all years between 2015-16 through 2018-19.

**Figure 7b: Comparison of Shares of Student Body and Shares of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam and College Ready on ACT in Reading by ELL Status, 2018-19**

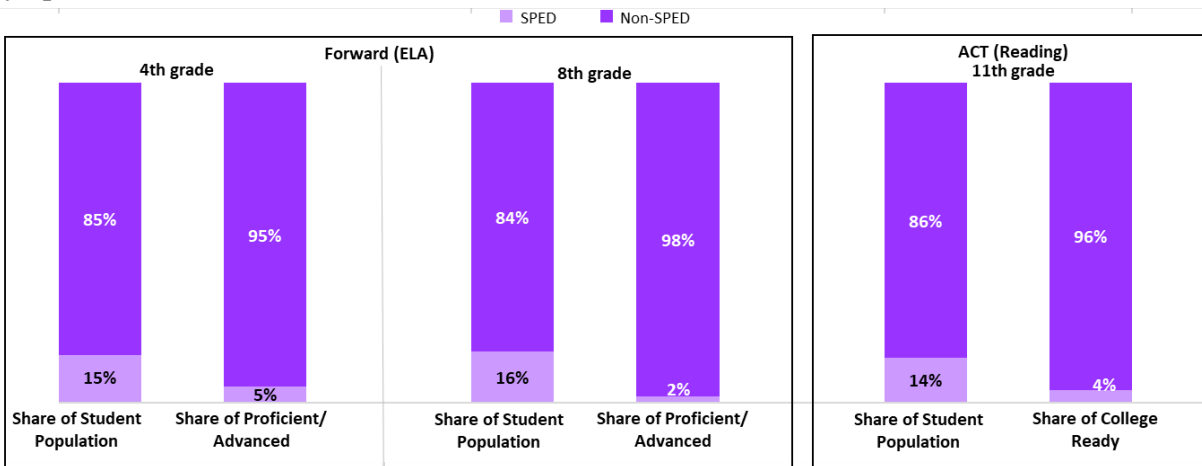




**Figure 7c: Comparison of Shares of Student Body and Shares of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam and College Ready on ACT in Reading by Income Status, 2018-19**



**Figure 7d: Comparison of Shares of Student Body and Shares of 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students Scoring Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam and College Ready on ACT in Reading by Special Education Status, 2018-19**



**Considerations for MMSD Student Achievement Outcomes**

The evidence from these assessments paints a relatively consistent picture of literacy outcomes in MMSD. In analyzing the student outcomes across selected student demographic groups some troubling patterns are evident, presented in the three considerations below.

**Consideration 1.** There are stark race and ethnicity differences in students’ outcomes in literacy from early elementary through high school. In particular, Black and Hispanic students’ level of proficiency and college readiness lags behind that of their White and Asian counterparts. Given their share of the population, White students are overrepresented among students who test as both proficient/advanced and college ready.

**Consideration 2.** As with race/ethnicity, there are also troubling outcome disparities across ELL and non-ELL students, low-income and non-low-income students, and special education and non-special education students that are consistent in each of the years measured.

**Consideration 3.** The overall patterns of grades 2, 4, 8, and 11 from year-to-year do not show significant increases in proficiency rates, indicating a need to strengthen core instruction for all students and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. Intervention alone will not lead to sustained increases in proficiency.

## **Organizational Context**

Our data analysis revealed the importance of grounding the adjective “*current*” as it relates to teaching literacy in MMSD. *Current* is a moving target due to three contextual markers. First, access to instructional resources varies depending on school site; MMSD engaged in a textbook adoption for elementary programs in 2012, but these resources no longer meet minimal qualities to merit continuing their use. Second, educational stakeholders understand and execute instructional goals (e.g., instruction that delivers grade-level assignments aligned with standards, and that supports deep student engagement) differently across schools. Third, the district’s Central Office offers universal guidance to schools for their consideration and in support of the delivery of core literacy instruction; this guidance changes periodically to respond to district-wide priorities.

### ***Access to Instructional Resources in School Buildings***

Use of instructional resources varies greatly across school sites. In February 2011, a literacy advisory committee’s recommendations (MMSD, 2011) resulted in core instructional materials in buildings K-12. In 2012, the following resources arrived in schools:

- K-5 English programs: MONDO resources (Mondo Education, n.d.);
- K-5 dual language immersion programs: MONDO resources for English (Mondo Education, n.d.) and Calle de la Lectura (Pearson) for Spanish (Foresman, 2011);
- Grade 6-8 reading anthologies from the Great Books Foundation (2021);
- Mentor texts for Grade 9+ ELA teachers (MMSD, 2020d).

This was the first time that core instructional materials were available in MMSD across schools. While the materials were acquired following recommendations from the 2011 advisory committee, implementation of the materials varied across schools and classrooms. To support consistent implementation of these resources, MMSD developed an instructional practices tool aligned with the gradual release of a responsibility framework that includes focused instruction, guided practice, collaborative learning, and independent practice. Below are the components in each category.

### **Focused Instruction**

- The teacher establishes a clear instructional purpose with daily learning targets based on the standards.
- The teacher makes thinking visible so as to engage students through modeling in service to the learning targets.
- The teacher uses high-quality texts and text-dependent questions at or above grade-level complexity that clearly build knowledge relevant to the learning target.

- The teacher establishes, teaches, and/or reinforces routines and expectations.

### **Guided Practice**

- The teacher facilitates whole-group discussion.
- The teacher invites students into the learning process.
- The teacher provides scaffolds for student learning.
- The teacher uses a variety of formative assessments to check for understanding.

### **Collaborative learning**

- The teacher creates a collaborative task that applies the learning from focused instruction and guided practice.
- The teacher uses groups flexibly.
- Students use the vocabulary and syntax of grade-level academic language within student-to-student discourse.
- Students give and receive feedback as part of the feedback loop to support student learning.
- The teacher uses student feedback to reflect on and adjust instruction.

### **Independent Practice**

- Students engage in tasks that extend the learning from focused instruction and guided practice.
- Students choose resources, independent tasks, and/or opportunities to demonstrate their learning.
- Students understand the structure of independent practice.
- Students use the vocabulary and syntax of academic language to apply grade level concepts in new ways in service of the stated learning targets.
- Students use feedback to improve and persist in their efforts to read, speak, and/or write about complex grade-level text(s) and task(s) that are connected to learning target(s).
- The teacher uses student feedback to inform instruction.

In 2019-2020, a curricular adoption process started but was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. MMSD internally reviewed a variety of research on the importance of learning and unlearning some of the district’s current instructional practices. The process of curricular adoption should resume with a focus on adopting a curriculum that aligns to the components of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021) and Wisconsin Standards (DPI, n.d.-e).

### ***Educational Stakeholders’ Understanding and Execution of Instructional Goals***

Our subcommittee developed and administered an informal survey of Instructional Coaches to collect preliminary perceptions regarding *current* instructional practices throughout the district. We selected to focus on Instructional Coaches in this informal survey to help guide future data collection and analysis to support more equitable reading instruction in MMSD as Instructional Coaches interact closely with students to observe the effects of varied instructional practices and work with multiple teachers. In addition, MMSD prioritizes the role of Instructional Coaches with one placed at each school in the district. In developing our informal survey, we considered the contextual markers related to *current practices*, focusing on four key resources related to students’ literacy development: (1) grade-appropriate assignments; (2) strong instruction; (3) deep engagement; and (4) teachers who hold high expectations. We narrowed the survey to individuals who served as Instructional Coaches during the 2019-20 school year to have the most current preliminary sampling of their perceptions during pre-pandemic in-person instruction. Survey questions focused on specific instructional strategies provided by teachers to African American, emerging bilingual, and students with disabilities.

Data from our informal survey is not generalizable or representative of all educational stakeholders due to limitations such as the number of respondents and the categories of respondents (e.g., reliance on the observations of instructional coaches regarding instructional practices). Our informal survey ushered in conversations about the next steps for studying reading equity in the district. For example, future data collection could include a more formal survey of Instructional Coaches using a data collection tools and processes crafted in partnership with individuals in that role and surveys of teachers and administrators. Additionally, the next iteration of data collection should account for the variability in teacher roles as well as how such roles influence instruction (e.g., special education teachers, general education teachers). While future data collection may include more survey participants, it should also include qualitative data through individual and focus-group interviews. Our informal survey made apparent the need for continued examination of the state of literacy within MMSD, and future data collection efforts with stakeholders should acknowledge teacher diversity through strategic research methods and a deeper inquiry regarding the causes of inequity.

### ***Literacy Instruction Guidance from Central Office***

Instructional guidance provided from the Central Office for teaching literacy and biliteracy (kindergarten to Grade 5), literacy and humanities for ELA and bilingual programs (Grades 6-8), and English 1 & 2 (Grades 9-10) has had to respond to the instructional, philosophical, and pedagogical leadership of that point in time. For example, with each individual who holds the position of *Director of Literacy* comes nuances in how they frame their work with somewhat varied perspectives on theory and instructional practices, as they work under the guidance of the Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction. Although the level of detail and intentionality shifted from 2018 to 2021, some instructional guidance remained consistent, while each academic year the instructional guidance becomes more nuanced. (See Appendix B.)

MMSD has made efforts to improve the quality of the instructional guidance provided to schools. The desired state is to ensure that every classroom teacher teaching literacy or biliteracy has access to a comprehensive core curriculum for the integral teaching at the rigor of the CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021) and Wisconsin Standards (DPI, n.d.-e) and with clearly defined entry points for word recognition and language development. Such a curriculum must allow MMSD staff (teachers, principals, instructional coaches, Central Office, etc.) to continue to further their work on anti-racist teaching and commitment to students' social, emotional, and academic success. MMSD has made efforts to provide schools with instructional guidance that intentionally lifts student and family voice. Continued effort is being made to support teacher teams as they examine student work as a means to improve teaching and learning.

## Charge Component 3

Examine how literacy, especially early literacy, is taught to teacher education preservice teachers at UW-SoE, and analyze what these future teachers are learning about literacy.

Literacy and access to quality literacy instruction and resources is an issue of equity and an issue of social justice. Being literate represents the difference between inclusion in and exclusion from society. Examining how we are providing literacy experiences to children is critical to fulfilling this basic human right.

*Advocating for Children's Rights to Read*  
(International Literacy Association, 2019, p. 3)

Given the global significance of children's rights to read as represented in the above quote, our subcommittee kept returning to issues of social justice, race, and equity as we examined how literacy, especially early literacy, is taught to UW-SoE preservice teachers, and as we analyzed what future teachers are learning about literacy in their teacher education programs at UW–Madison.

SoE offers 14 teacher education programs. We reviewed the eleven programs that require literacy education courses. These courses have “homes” in two departments: Curriculum & Instruction (C&I) and Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education (RPSE).

- Bachelor of Science in Education (B.S.E.) in Elementary Education *in one of four program options* (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-a)
  - Early Childhood/English as a Second Language (ESL) (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-a)
  - Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence/English as a Second Language (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-a)
  - Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence/Special Education program (C&I + RPSE) (UW-SoE, C&I and RPSE, n.d.)
  - Middle Childhood-Early Adolescence/Content Focused Minor program (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-a)
- B.S.E. in Special Education (RPSE) (UW-SoE, RPSE, n.d.-a)
- Master of Science (M.S.) in C&I: Secondary Education with ESL certification *in one of four content areas* (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-b)
  - English
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Social Studies
- M.S. in Curriculum & Instruction: Reading Teacher certification (C&I) (UW-SoE, C&I, n.d.-c)
- M.S. in Special Education (RPSE) (UW-SoE, RPSE, n.d.-b)

Literacy courses in the teacher education programs above all take a view of reading and literacy that stresses cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, psychological, cultural, socioeconomic, political, and historical factors. Given this range of factors involved in literacy learning, teacher education at UW–Madison endorses a student-centered approach based on students' individual needs within specific contexts. Preservice teachers learn how people acquire and use different forms and styles of oral and written language for different practices and purposes, such as the cognitive demands of a difficult text or

the different language structures across content areas. Thus, literacy courses focus on scientific reading research and the foundations of early literacy success, as well as the wider processes of literacy and language development starting early in life and developing further throughout the school years and across the lifespan.

Also common across teacher education programs is a stated commitment to social justice. As preservice teachers acquire the knowledge and skills for teaching, they also learn to undergird their practice by getting to know their students' cultures and languages. Students' cultures and languages (in whatever dialect) must be attended to first because literacy arises from oral language, which is developed in homes and local communities through the indigenous languages, neighborhood dialects, and verbal abilities indicative of any culture. Within the special education programs, social justice is conceptualized as equity and inclusion for students with disabilities. All special education teacher preparation programs advocate for and prepare teacher candidates to support students with disabilities in inclusive settings to the maximum extent possible.

Putting students' languages, abilities, and cultures first is an act of social justice because it promotes inclusion rather than exclusion, and students must be included in order to be educated. When a student feels as though they have a place in a school that admires and respects their identity (e.g., language, dialect, culture, but many other identities too), they begin to feel they belong in a class of literacy learners. This is an act of equity and social justice because it promotes children's rights to read. Often students perceived as being different from the norm are at risk of being categorized as "left behind."

Preservice teachers use other examples to demonstrate their competence in social justice education, such as creating educational environments of trust, respect, and care; tailoring lessons for individual students' knowledge and interests; choosing materials where students see themselves as they come to understand others; and, perhaps most importantly, using scientific reading research to provide on-time individualized instruction for each student. As we describe below, we found that an understanding of literacy *as* social justice occurred across teacher education programs in lectures, online discussion boards, small and large group assignments, analyses of student assessments, lesson planning, fieldwork experiences, formative and summative assessments, and more.

Our report of teacher education in literacy (early and beyond) is divided by grade level bands (4K-2, 3-8, 9-12), and further divided into two sections each to represent the dual prongs of our charge: examine and analyze (1) how literacy is taught and (2) what preservice teachers learn in SoE's teacher education programs. We gathered data from course syllabi, course assignments, certification program plans, pass rates on state mandated licensure assessments, observations of course instruction, and interviews with professors, instructors, and preservice teachers. Also included is a note about changes that will occur to the elementary education programs in 2022-23. Recommendations for the future are presented in the Themes and Broad Recommendations section of this report.

## **Focus: 4K-Grade 2**

### ***How is early literacy taught to teacher education preservice teachers at UW-SoE?***

At UW-SoE, early literacy (4K-Grade 2) is taught through a combination of courses, supervised fieldwork, community experiences, practice, evaluations, ethnographic case study reports, and self-analyses. Preservice teachers who are taught early literacy also learn how to teach beyond Grade 2 due to DPI grade levels for licensing. Whether preservice teachers are working toward 4K-Grade 5 or Grades 1-8 certification, *all are taught the early literacy content necessary to be licensed to teach students of any age who require emergent and early oral language and literacy instruction.*

Through required coursework, preservice teachers examine the research, theories, philosophical stances, assessments, interventions, and practical methods of early literacy instruction. Classic meta-analyses, or quantitative summaries, such as from the NELP (2008) or the NRP (2000), serve as a baseline across courses for teaching the necessary components and impact of early literacy on children's futures. Newer meta-analyses of research, such as from the National Academy of Education (2020), are used as points of comparison and critique, as well as to increase preservice teachers' ability to synthesize key findings across studies. Similarly, preservice teachers study classic theoretical frameworks, such as Chall's (1983) Stages of Reading Development, the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), or Scarborough's (2001) Reading Rope, because these models continue to hold value as beginning points for understanding reading. They also are key to understanding how literacy instruction often works in schools. As the semester continues, though, preservice teachers examine more current understandings of reading, such as Connor's (2016) Lattice Model of the Development of Reading Comprehension, the DRIVE (Deploying Reading in Varied Environments) Model of Reading complexities (Cartwright & Duke, 2019), or the Braid of Literacy (Bear et al., 2019), which add to and understanding of the reading process as multidimensional.

Content specific to emergent and early literacy from the research and theoretical frames discussed above (e.g., concepts about print, the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, the vocabulary of phonemes and graphemes) is taught explicitly through readings, lectures, heuristics and models, vocabulary practice, interactive lessons, discussions, and quizzes. Implicit and explicit phonics instruction is taught, including the wealth of research on the efficacy of explicit and systematic instruction in emergent and early literacy skills in early grades. These skills also are learned through supervised practice with young children, as well as practice using early literacy programs in place in MMSD. Preservice teachers are taught early literacy content through lectures, readings, and activities. For example, preservice teachers are taught developmental continuum which detail the phases of development and key indicators of each phase with associated major teaching emphases for oral language, writing, reading, and spelling development. Preservice teachers are taught how readers decode words in sentences using graphophonics as part of the reading process. As part of their training on emergent and early reading skills, preservice teachers are taught the concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness, and how to count phonemes and graphemes. They are also provided an in-depth look at phonology, phonemes, graphemes, and graphophonics, and provided additional early literacy resources.

In their courses, preservice teachers are taught early literacy engagement, formative assessments, and instruction through a combination of methods: readings, discussions, lectures, presentations, videos, group projects, written papers, reflection journals, children's book reviews, performative assignments, mind mapping, and children's picture books for emergent and early literacy experiences. The articles used in the early childhood and elementary education programs are chosen based on the most current research from journals such as the *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy* or *Reading Research Quarterly*. Books that review research and speak to notable issues in early childhood literacy education are chosen for their focus on language inclusivity, phonology, foundations of reading and writing success, and the substantive value of children's play and imagination for language and literacy development. Examples of text used for teacher education in early literacy include: *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play* (Paley, 2004); *Literacy in Preschool and Kindergarten Children: The National Reading Panel and Beyond* (Shanahan & Lonigan, 2013); and *Reading, Writing, and Talk: Inclusive Strategies for Diverse Learners, K-2* (Souto-Manning & Martell, 2016). Across all UW-SoE teacher preparation programs, literacy coursework is taught by faculty who have extensive background in reading instruction and research, doctoral students who work with literacy faculty, and/or faculty associates or lecturers with expertise specific to literacy and literacy instruction for pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 students.

Early literacy is also taught through supervised fieldwork, observations of professional teaching, and practice teaching. All cohorts of C&I preservice teachers receive one literacy-specific, semester-long practicum designated for learning how to teach reading and writing. They receive two additional practica dedicated to cross-curricular forms of reading, writing, and thinking in math, science, and social studies. Cohorts of RPSE preservice teachers take the required reading course in conjunction with a practicum field experience in which they have opportunities to engage in literacy instruction and assessment. At the end of their programs, all SoE preservice teachers carry out a full semester of student teaching. For a summative overview of how preservice teachers are taught early literacy (and beyond), see Appendix E to view coursework and fieldwork requirements across all the elementary and special education certification programs.

### ***What are future 4K-2 teachers at UW-SoE learning about literacy?***

The outcomes below are consistent across all literacy and language courses that make up UW–Madison’s elementary teacher education programs. They are treated as the core knowledge that preservice teachers are expected to study, investigate, and learn across their 2-year program. While these are the core learning expectations, individual courses within the various programs have more “grain-sized” content and conceptual topics to learn. Those grains that are unique to 4K-Grade 2 early literacy will be discussed next within the context of the overarching outcomes that preservice teachers learn during the course of their programs. Upon completion of their undergraduate teacher education programs at UW-SoE, preservice teachers who become licensed in 4K-Grade 5 or Grades 1-8 will have demonstrated their knowledge and ability in what follows. Below is a list of learning outcomes associated with literacy courses within SoE.

### ***Learning outcomes (4K-Grade 8)***

1. Recognize the complex nature of the reading process as influenced by linguistic, sociological, cultural, cognitive, and psychological factors.
2. Understand the multiple dimensions of reading in the development of a strong theoretical and empirical (research-based) foundation for making instructional decisions. This includes knowledge about:
  - a. phonological awareness (including but not limited to phonemic awareness) as it relates to emergent reading and later reading and spelling (orthography) skills
  - b. phonics and the alphabetic principle (i.e., phonemes [sounds] are represented by graphemes [letters])
  - c. word-reading strategies (e.g., phonics, syllabic analysis, morphemic analysis, vocabulary, pragmatics, semantics, syntax)
  - d. reading comprehension as a complex construct (e.g., from basic literal interpretation or recall of single texts to critical readings across multiple texts)
  - e. reading process (involving the text, the reader, the activity, and the sociocultural context)
  - f. sociocultural and multi-dynamic complexities of reading engagement.
3. Demonstrate relationships among reading, writing, listening, and speaking.
4. Use children’s and adolescent literature to teach reading and writing.
5. Recognize the importance of play and imagination for children’s reading success.
6. Understand socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, and cultural diversity from an asset-based perspective in connection with reading, including variations in language use and learning practices.
7. Critically discuss issues surrounding social justice and equity in reading instruction, and what good education *for all* might look like in this age of measurement and standardization.



8. Select, administer, interpret, and communicate information from literacy observations and assessments of two unique literacy learners in your practicum placement.
9. From these observations and assessments, identify a variety of instructional strategies, approaches, techniques, and materials for capitalizing on the strengths of two unique literacy learners in your practicum placement.
10. Teach with an ethic of care and meaning making in mind.

Specific to 4K-Grade 2 early literacy learning, the outcomes listed above become distinctively focused on emergent and early literacy in assignments, lectures, discussions, and fieldwork. For example, outcome number 1—*recognize the complex nature of the reading process as influenced by linguistic, sociological, cultural, cognitive, and psychological factors*—has a wealth of content by itself in each and every concept and may seem (to some) to be too advanced for teachers of very young children.

Yet, preservice teachers in UW-SoE’s teacher education programs study and learn the deeper meanings of the concepts that influence reading, and they further learn the distinct characteristics of emergent readers (e.g., pretend reading or scribble writing) and early readers (e.g., beginning understanding of the alphabetic principle). Armed with this knowledge, they know how to talk with and get to know the complex factors that may influence different children’s emergent or early reading (e.g., linguistic, cognitive, combinations), which helps them know next instructional moves. Moreover, preservice teachers know that children give us observable data to use if we get to know children and their families, communities, languages, cultures, backgrounds, and interests. Preservice teachers know that this observable data, elicited through kid-watching and conversation, can be analyzed and drawn upon when a teacher begins reading, writing, playing, and singing with the child as a literacy learner.

Preservice teachers demonstrate their knowledge and abilities on the outcomes through: teacher performance assessments, such as the edTPA and the Wisconsin Foundations of Reading Test (WFORT); formative grades on course assignments and projects; summative grades on final exams and final course grades; success in their observed fieldwork experiences and student teaching; written, spoken, and observed abilities to apply knowledge from their classes in their practice; and thinking and writing about race, culture, and equity in their fieldwork experiences.

## **Focus: Grades 3-8**

### ***How is literacy taught to teacher education preservice teachers at UW-SoE?***

For a summative overview of how preservice teachers are taught literacy in Grades 1-8 (see Appendix G for coursework and fieldwork requirements). There are many similarities to the ways in which literacy education is taught to preservice teachers for 4K-Grade 2 and how literacy is taught for Grades 3-8. For example, the learning outcomes remain the same across teacher education programs, but are imagined, studied, practiced, and taught across grade levels (see learning outcomes above). The main differences in how preservice teachers are taught literacy for intermediate and middle school grades are:

- greater focus on inquiry-based learning;
- use of literature and other texts written for tweens, teens, and young adults;
- greater focus on fluency and comprehension;
- focus on literacy across the curriculum (e.g., reading and vocabulary instruction for different kinds of texts).

Teacher candidates pursuing certification as cross-categorical special educators are prepared to provide instruction, intervention, and support to students with disabilities Grades K-12. Thus, in addition to the abovementioned outcomes, teacher candidates in the RPSE programs are expected to:

- articulate an understanding of typical and atypical language development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can interact with a student’s experience with and use of language;
- articulate an understanding of difficulties that a student with a disability may display in the areas of oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and written expression;
- select and carry out appropriate research-based instructional strategies to improve the reading skills of K-12 students, based on knowledge of a wide range of tools, pedagogies, and assessments;
- identify current research in the field that supports their decisions about what interventions to include in reading instructional and intervention plans for students with disabilities.

Teacher education programs follow the Teacher Education Standards, the Wisconsin ELA Standards, and the International Literacy Association’s Standards for Reading Professionals. C&I’s Teaching of Reading and RPSE’s Reading Instruction for Students with Disabilities courses meet the WI Reading and Language Arts statutory requirement. The special education teacher education programs follow the national professional standards of the Council for Exceptional Children.

### ***What are future Grade 3-8 teachers at UW-SoE learning about literacy?***

As children grow from beginning readers to transitional readers (typically in the intermediate grades) to advanced readers (typically in middle school), preservice teachers learn content specific to these age groups and the teaching strategies necessary to assist students in becoming flexible and strategic readers. Reading for students in Grades 3-8 increasingly becomes the dominant mode of learning new information. Readers at this age also are increasingly connecting with themes and characters in rich children’s literature in such a way that can become transformative. Content and topics that preservice teachers learn about literacy in Grades 3-8 includes:

- children’s theories about being or becoming smart, understanding how students learn, understanding the reading process and the importance of writing
- stages of literacy development and following the development of individuals
- phonemes, phonics, and orthographic development in writing workshops
- alphabetic code, word study, and responding to students’ writing
- developing fluent readers / writers, word study, and writing skills
- fluent readers, vocabulary instruction
- comprehension: the reader and text factor, vocabulary acquisition, new word study for advanced readers, syllabic, and morphemic analysis
- assessments: running records, writing rubrics, comprehension checks
- differentiating for instruction
- project-based learning, text sets and social justice in the literacy classroom.

Preservice teachers demonstrate their knowledge and abilities on course and program outcomes in multiple ways. Evidence of their learning can be found through: teacher performance assessments such as the edTPA and the WFORT; their formative grades on course assignments and projects; their summative grades on final exams and in their final course grades; their success in their observed fieldwork experiences and student teaching; their written, spoken, and observed abilities to apply knowledge from their classes in their practice; and their thinking and writing about race, culture, and equity in their fieldwork experiences. There is a lack of research in adolescent literacy in general, so preservice teachers also learn to rely on additional educator practices, which are based on their knowledge of individualized instruction, cognitive and social forms of learning, and a focus on student-centered learning, such as project-based learning.

Generally, UW-SoE teacher candidates have high achievement on standardized state licensure assessments. For academic year 2019, 94.15% of all SoE teacher preparation program completers passed the edTPA. In 2020, SoE moved to a Final Performance Portfolio Assessment. Future teachers within SoE are learning about foundations of reading instruction as evidenced by pass rates on the WFORT. UW–Madison has the highest first-time and cumulative pass rate among all educator preparation programs in the state on the WFORT. *However*, similar to statewide trends, UW–Madison students of color and male students have a lower first-time and cumulative pass rate than white females.

Although SoE prepares candidates for teaching positions across the state, the bulk of field placements and student teaching placements take place in MMSD. For example, in the 2020-2021 school year, MMSD clinical placements accounted for 72% of all UW-SoE placements (664 out of 921 total placements).

## **Focus: Grades 9-12**

### ***How is literacy taught to teacher education preservice teachers at UW-SoE?***

Preservice teachers becoming high school teachers in history, science, math, or ELA already have undergraduate degrees in their subject area and are pursuing a Master’s degree in Curriculum & Instruction. Through this degree, they take classes toward an ESL/bilingual certification. Students in the secondary education programs all take a required course on literacy education, which provides an overview of literacy theories. Students are expected to connect these theories to practice occurring in field sites and/or community settings. Teacher candidates pursuing certification in Cross-Categorical Special Education are prepared to support the needs of students with disabilities Grades K-12. The required special education literacy course (RPSE 465) includes content on teaching literacy to secondary students with disabilities. Included in this course is information on how to adapt grade-level texts, content area literacy, and accommodations/modifications in literacy for secondary students.

Preservice teachers are taught that literacy is a set of skills for reading and writing that must be mastered, and that literacy as a socio-historic phenomenon has spread widely through the circulation of people and texts. Understanding the contours of this social trend is essential for equitable literacy instruction because current socio-historic trends have brought us literacy instruction as it is today. Critical content about the power and privilege of literacy is taught to preservice teachers through a combination of reading, writing, projects, discussions, interactive research, and fieldwork.

### ***What are future Grade 9-12 teachers at UW-SoE learning about literacy?***

Through the course on literacy education, along with their supervised fieldwork experiences, preservice teachers from across curricular areas in secondary education learn literacy theories, research, and critiques around two basic themes: (1) literacy as a socio-historic trend (e.g., autonomous and contemporary views of literacy; literacy, and inequality, upward mobility; discourse, power and social contexts); and (2) literacy as liberation (e.g., literacy as liberation in U.S. history and the present; reading the word and reading the world; abolitionist literacy ideology). Thus, preservice secondary teachers demonstrate in their projects and assignments a special focus on literacy as power and literacy as freedom.

## **Teacher Education Programs in 2022-23**

RPSE faculty are developing a new certification program in Early Childhood Special Education that will prepare and license teachers to work as early interventionists or special educators to support young

children with disabilities birth-Grade 3. This new program will include the standard RPSE course on language and reading instruction for students with disabilities but will also include content specific to early literacy and language development.

C&I faculty are developing a new certification program in Elementary Education. Although there will be only one required literacy course (4 credits), preservice teachers may choose electives from among several literacy and language courses, most of which are represented in Appendix G in the existing program we reviewed. The courses now taken across four different teacher education cohorts will turn into elective courses in the new program, with the expectation that preservice teachers will continue to take between three to five literacy and language courses.

### **Considerations for UW-SoE Teacher Preparation in Literacy**

The evidence presented in this section provides an in-depth overview of the course offerings and approach to literacy education for preservice teachers at UW-SoE. While faculty have varied perspectives on the best ways to teach literacy across developmental levels, there are also consistent components across coursework and expectations. Yet, foregrounding issues of social justice, race, and equity requires critical reflection and action moving forward. In that spirit, there are additional questions for UW-SoE to consider to make its commitments real in practice, presented in the below four considerations:

**Consideration 1: Strengthen the commitment to social justice.** UW–Madison emphasizes social justice across its programs, as evidenced by the various readings and topics included in coursework and the comments shared by interviewed students. At the same time, the vast majority of preservice teachers are white and therefore do not represent the racial diversity that exists in the MMSD student body. Likewise, conversations related to social justice are often limited to representing diverse peoples in books or are tangential to issues of reading instruction.

We recommend building on and strengthening the programs’ commitment to and practice in enacting anti-racist and socially just practices in preparing teachers at UW–Madison. Starting with the foundational assumption that reading is a right for all students, we suggest that this consideration might entail diversifying the teacher workforce pipeline in collaboration with MMSD and community partners; enhancing access to culturally and linguistically responsive programming and support for teacher candidates who have been historically underrepresented in the program, and focus more explicitly on family and community input, storytelling, and relationships. Likewise, this goal could be enhanced by renewing the focus on building literate classrooms environments that promote respect for difference, provide multiple opportunities to examine the intersection of teaching literacy and social justice throughout the program in a coherent and integrated manner, and explicitly use and draw on the Learning for Justice standards that emphasize identity, diversity, justice, and action.

**Consideration 2: Prepare future teachers to be lifelong learners and critical thinkers.** The considerable amount of content and experiences needed to develop the knowledge, skills, practices, and attitudes necessary to serve the diverse range of learners in today’s classroom require learning beyond initial teacher preparation. To extend opportunities for teacher development beyond the preservice level in collaboration with MMSD, we suggest that this consideration might entail taking two related steps. First, increasing the quantity and quality of communication between MMSD and UW-SoE related to teacher preparation in literacy and biliteracy so there is greater alignment; examples might include formalized steering committees to discuss literacy teacher preparation, and inviting MMSD literacy coaches and cooperating teachers to participate in UW-SoE literacy coursework. Secondly, establish teacher preparation partnerships that expand beyond traditional field

placement and student teaching experiences. Examples of this expanded partnership might include residency models, communities of practice that involve UW-SoE teacher candidates, MMSD cooperating teachers, and other community stakeholders, and inviting UW-SoE teacher candidates to participate in MMSD-sponsored professional development.

**Consideration 3: Systematically and intentionally integrate content and practice.** Literacy is a multifaceted construct that includes content related to language, culture, reading, writing, speech, and literature, among others. Teaching literacy requires knowledge of instructional planning, pedagogy, assessment, and differentiation. Teaching as a practice-based profession requires teacher candidates to not only acquire knowledge of what literacy is but also knowledge of how to teach literacy. Acquiring a deep working knowledge of these multiple components is not likely to be accomplished without providing preservice teachers with multiple opportunities to learn and apply knowledge in authentic settings.

Moreover, teacher candidates must become skilled in providing literacy instruction through a social justice, anti-racist lens. Data collected for this report indicate UW-SoE teacher candidates have varied opportunities to engage in literacy coursework and experiences based on the preparation program in which they are enrolled, with some programs having more extensive opportunities than others. Moreover, preservice teachers noted disconnects between their learning in coursework and what they were seeing in practice. Data also indicate teacher candidates across programs have incomplete understandings of the intersections between literacy and social justice. Bolstering preparation in this area will require multiple opportunities for authentic practice.

**Consideration 4: Engage in continuous program evaluation and improvement.** UW–Madison has established a process for programs to evaluate student outcomes annually; however, this process is not specific to literacy within C&I and RPSE. A more explicit focus on literacy-related outcomes within the UW-SoE teacher preparation programs would provide helpful information with which to make program revisions. Moreover, there is a need to that ensure literacy courses are taught with a high degree of quality and consistency, irrespective of the course instructor. This might mean seeking feedback from UW-SoE alumni and MMSD partners on their perceptions of preparedness to teach literacy and biliteracy, including through social justice and anti-racist pedagogies, engage in regular program reviews with a specific focus on literacy and biliteracy objectives and outcomes.

## Charge Component 4: Themes and Broad Recommendations

Recommend steps that strengthen literacy instruction in the Madison schools and UW-Madison teacher education programs.

A high-level view of inequitable student literacy achievement within MMSD led to a commitment by the joint Task Force to determine factors that cause students in the district to struggle with literacy. The charge of the Task Force, in its simplest terms, is to seek what is best for *all* children within MMSD. With this as its goal, the Task Force recommends steps to strengthen literacy instruction in Madison schools and in UW-SoE’s teacher education programs.

### Overview of Process

Task Force members engaged in an iterative process to arrive at the current set of recommendations. The co-chairs began the process by reviewing all subcommittee narratives (which included draft subcommittee recommendations), discussing the themes which emerged. The co-chairs then crafted an initial set of broad recommendations, taken either word-for-word from subcommittee narratives or by grouping/summarizing more detailed recommendations into a broader description. The Task Force discussed and refined the themes, broad recommendations, and examples of how broad recommendations could be implemented over the several Task Force meetings.

The proposed recommendations in this report are grouped into eight themes, and further grouped as “broad recommendations” or “example activities,” with the former representing proposed broad areas of work at both MMSD and UW-SoE (i.e., the Task Force recommends MMSD and UW-SoE do this), and the latter representing suggested activities that provide a roadmap of action on the broad recommendations at MMSD, at UW-SoE, and in partnership (e.g., the recommendation might be carried out in this way). The themes, broad recommendations, and example activities are derived from the work of the three subcommittees and are presented below as an integrated set of recommendations. The content in this report, including the themes, broad recommendations, and example activities, have been rigorously reviewed with the Task Force, with recommendations that would help MMSD and UW-SoE move forward productively to enhance all students’ success.

The Task Force notes that working on literacy is a journey, not an event. The recommendations contained in this report are part of a large suite of activities to address literacy efforts across MMSD and UW-SoE. The Task Force stresses that the effort to improve literacy is not about blame, ideology, or politics, but rather it is an ongoing process of using evidence to do what is best for our youth.

### Local Considerations for Bridging Evidence-Based Research and Local Context

Based on the research evidence and major considerations highlighted in Charge Component 1, we offer the following local considerations to guide the conversation of how to improve how literacy is taught in MMSD and how preservice teachers at UW-SoE are prepared to teach. The local considerations described below are incorporated into the Task Force thematic recommendations presented in this section. The local considerations ground the evidence-based research reviewed earlier in the context of MMSD and UW-SoE and are meant to help guide the reader through our thought processes as a Task Force and provide a linkage between evidence-based research and our recommendations.

**Local Consideration 1: Ensure children succeed in gaining foundational skills.** Efforts to improve literacy outcomes should ensure that children succeed in gaining foundational skills. These efforts can draw on the extensive research literature in this area, with the goal of creating closer alignment between how children are taught to read, spell, and write and evidence about how they acquire the three major types of knowledge: (1) knowledge of spoken language, (2) knowledge of the world, and (3) knowledge of print and the mappings between written and spoken forms of words.

**Local Consideration 2: Promote spoken language development.** Educational practices at the pre-kindergarten level should promote spoken language development. By language we include all forms of communication and listening (e.g., oral, spoken, American Sign Language) during discussions and meaning making. Children must be exposed to a broader range of expressions and ways of using language to communicate, allowing them to be more familiar with the language of the classroom. This does not entail extinguishing or replacing the child’s home language/dialect, but instead seeing home language/dialect as an asset and supplementing it with additional school-relevant language and the time students need to bridge between two languages.

Instruction should also take advantage of opportunities to expand children’s knowledge of the world beyond what is learned from immediate experience, as this will also be relevant to school progress. Instruction at this stage should focus on developing early literacy skills (e.g., concepts about print, phonological awareness, alphabets), and introducing how print and spoken language are related. The focus should be on spoken language and world knowledge, along with very basic print knowledge (e.g., letter identification, letter names and sounds). Children do not need to be taught to read earlier; they need to acquire relevant knowledge to support later reading instruction.

**Local Consideration 3: Provide learning opportunities which integrate spoken and written language.** Children should be provided adequate learning opportunities. These can be provided in the literacy block but also in the context of other school activities that require reading and writing skills. Schools should promote spoken language development not only through instruction, but also via the extensive use of spoken language by teacher and children, including conversation in various settings. Coupling spoken and written language is highly beneficial.

**Local Consideration 4: Promote learning for all children.** Educational practices and policies should be evaluated with respect to whether they promote successful learning for the broadest range of children, including ones traditionally at risk of failure because of factors such as poverty and racial discrimination, and whether they promote reaching learning milestones in a timely, efficient manner. Curricula and practices currently in wide use are not equally effective for all children. Concerns about cultural relevance are valid and have begun to be addressed. However, commercial curricula and common instructional practices also need to be critically evaluated with respect to their effectiveness for individuals with different backgrounds (especially language) and life experiences. Teacher education needs to incorporate coursework that permits teachers to recognize effective instruction and how teaching materials and practices promote equity.

**Local Consideration 5: Integrate instruction.** Curricula and practices should be examined for their effectiveness in providing integrated literacy instruction that maximizes on the interrelations between the development of language abilities and reading, spelling, and writing skills, and their connection to spoken language. These different uses of language are interconnected and interdependent. The

knowledge we use in using spoken language is also used in learning to read and spell words, and in producing written language. This is not to imply that everything be taught at once, rather that instruction and other learning experiences be structured to take advantage of the relationships among these uses of language in developmentally appropriate ways.

**Local Consideration 6: Develop an MTSS framework.** Developing a strong MTSS framework for literacy at the school and district level will ensure that an appropriate continuum of evidence-based supports is available to address students' identified needs. An effective MTSS framework includes selecting appropriate screening and progress monitoring assessments, creating a strong universal base of instruction, and developing school-level teams to closely monitor data and student progress. Establishing district-level data teams would foster consistent MTSS implementations across schools and provide opportunities for individuals to share resources and solutions.

**Local Consideration 7: Increase educator knowledge.** Educators, including teachers, administrators, college instructors, and preservice teachers, must have a strong working knowledge of the core components of literacy instruction, the interconnectedness between skills and abilities, the major goals for the various stages of development, and the research evidence supporting instructional practice. Acquiring this knowledge can ensure that selected assessment and instructional practices are efficient and effective for all students. Efforts to increase educators' knowledge and, more importantly, the impact of this knowledge on student achievement, need to be carefully monitored and evaluated to gauge if expected outcomes are achieved.

**Local Consideration 8: Ensure preservice teachers' foundational knowledge includes familiarity with basic literacy research.** Preservice teachers should be directed toward the most effective methods and approaches, given our current knowledge. Leaving it to the new teacher to devise a personal approach to teaching reading imposes an enormous burden on the teacher and encourages ad hoc approaches that do not incorporate essential elements and are not based on empirical evidence.

Education of preservice teachers needs to be expanded to include greater familiarity with basic research in several areas relevant to reading and language. This is essential foundational knowledge for all teachers, not just those who will teach reading in the early grades, because reading and language development can also be incorporated in instruction in other subjects such as math and science. This necessary foundational knowledge includes:

Language. An introductory course in linguistics (or linguistics for educators) provides a wealth of information relevant to children's education. Such courses cover properties of language, language variation, bilingualism, how language is learned, factors that affect language learning, relations between spoken language and literacy, cultural differences in language use, language change, and other topics relevant to goals in reading and the impact differences in language background has on learning.

Scientific Literacy. Reading research can be used to improve teaching, curricula, and learning outcomes. However, making effective use of it, even as described in summary documents written for non-scientists, requires a basic level of scientific literacy. Prospective teachers need to understand how evidence is acquired, how it is interpreted, how to assess curricula and activities said to be "evidence-based," and where to look for reliable information about research relevant to the classroom.

Cognitive Science of Reading, Language, and Learning. Students need to have a basic course sequence in these areas to acquire literacy about science, including development and brain bases of



advanced behaviors such as reading. Such courses can emphasize connections between basic research and education.

**Local Consideration 9: Create institutional structures at UW–Madison and MMSD to sustain commitment to improving literacy outcomes, evaluating progress, and adjusting policies and practices as necessary.** This Task Force report is an important step, but additional effort is required to translate the findings and recommendations into effective practices. This requires a long-term commitment and shared accountability for action that includes mechanisms for monitoring follow-through: how are recommendations implemented, how effective are they, and what policies and practices must be modified as additional evidence demands.

## **Themes and Broad Recommendations**

This final report integrates the work of the three subcommittees and contains thematic recommendations that center children and maintain an equity, social justice, and antiracist stance in tackling the issue of literacy. These bold, action-orientated recommendations are based on evidence and grounded in the current context at MMSD and UW-SoE, with an eye for how piloting the activities linked to the recommendations could lead to increased literacy achievement for all students.



## **Theme 1: Ensure Anti-racist, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Equitable Education**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Explicitly state and recognize reading as a right<sup>6</sup> for all children.
2. Create equitable educational opportunities across student demographic categories, including race, ethnicity, gender, disability, language status, social class, and other categories where inequality persists, including student focal groups that are too small for data to be collected or publicly reported.
3. Provide MMSD and UW-SoE students with educational opportunities that are culturally and linguistically responsive and build upon the cultural strengths that emerge from their families and communities.

See Table 1 for example activities.

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<sup>6</sup> “Reading as a right” is used in this report to describe a moral imperative and is not meant to be interpreted as a legal statement.

**Table 1. Example Activities for Theme 1: Ensure Anti-racist, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Equitable Education**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Expand diversity in hiring and explicitly communicate the connection to social justice within the recruitment and hiring process.</p> <p>Develop intentional conversations about strategic staffing, social justice, and talent management within the budget and allocation process.</p> <p>Focus on professional development activities that have meaningful effects on children’s success, motivation, and ability to learn regardless of background; determine how to implement these activities and provide supporting materials.</p> <p>Uplift the home languages, positive experiences, and voices of our communities of color (staff, student, families) as related to their literacy journey.</p> <p>Provide students with adequate learning opportunities during literacy instruction and in other subject areas that require reading and writing skills to be successful.</p>	<p>Invest in creating a more diverse MMSD and UW-SoE workforce (e.g., Accelerated Licensure Special Education (ALSE), Forward Madison partnership, etc.).</p> <p>Extend anti-racist and culturally and linguistically responsive orientation to instruction, curriculum, and practices, as well as to general philosophy and climate.</p> <p>Incorporate coursework that permits preservice teachers to recognize effective instruction and how teaching materials and practices promote equity.</p> <p>Create a “right to read” community coalition to ensure broad participation, access, and success in literacy efforts.</p> <p>Evaluate and use educational practices and policies: (1) that allow children to learn successfully and efficiently, reaching annual learning milestones; and (2) ensure the educational practices and policies are effective for all children regardless of background.</p>	<p>Extend recruitment of minoritized students, staff, and faculty, and expand support for them once they are on campus.</p> <p>Establish proactive support systems for minoritized students.</p> <p>Enhance access to culturally and linguistically responsive programming and support for teacher candidates historically underrepresented in the program.</p> <p>Introduce instruction that focuses on activities with meaningful effects on children’s success, motivation, and ability to learn regardless of background.</p> <p>Focus more explicitly on family and community storytelling and relationships.</p> <p>Provide opportunities to examine the intersection of teaching literacy and social justice throughout the program in a coherent and integrated manner.</p> <p>Explicitly use and draw on the Social Justice Standards (Learning for Justice, n.d.) with emphases on identity, diversity, justice, and action.</p> <p>For all literacy courses, include a statement about reading being a right on all course syllabi and engage in discussions around this concept within courses.</p>



## **Theme 2: Improve Instructional Coherence**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Ensure that literacy curricula and practices are equally effective for all children, strengthening our commitment to social justice.
2. Focus on students attaining foundational reading and literacy skills such that they become proficient readers at the Grade 3 level.
3. Create closer alignment between how children are taught to read, spell, and write and to show evidence of how they acquire knowledge of spoken language, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of print and the mappings between written and spoken forms of words.
4. Establish/update broad organizational or multi-organizational (e.g., MMSD and UW-SoE) literacy SMART goals: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound. Use longitudinal literacy goals to allow for cultural/systemic shifts and deeper literacy gains to be realized.
5. Adopt standards-aligned core instructional materials for teaching literacy/biliteracy, which aligns to instructional approaches detailed in the Charge Component 1 section and ensure effective implementation of core curriculum across classrooms and schools.

See Table 2 for example activities.

**Table 2. Example Activities for Theme 2: Improve Instructional Coherence**

<b>MMSD activities</b>	<b>Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners</b>	<b>UW-SoE activities</b>
<p>Monitor classroom practices for fidelity with approaches outlined in the Task Force Report.</p> <p>Provide pre-K-5 teachers with professional development related to language development, early reading, and biliteracy.</p> <p>Implement professional development plan for data literacy for current teachers.</p> <p>Create and implement professional development for Central Office departments, teachers, school leaders and chiefs of schools that fosters a shared understanding of research/language/terminology to support coherent literacy and biliteracy practices, focusing on strong core instruction first and including when/where intervention can be most effectively implemented.</p> <p>Ensure that teacher teams include special education teachers and ESL/bilingual resource teachers/staff when examining and acting on literacy interventions and outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure that students with special education needs, who have literacy goals in their instructional education plans, are being served by the most highly qualified staff members in the school.</p> <p>Make available a menu of intervention options that can be implemented within core instruction or outside of core instruction.</p>	<p>Establish steering committee to monitor literacy practices, focusing on consistent messages about goals, policies, and practices</p> <p>Involve stakeholders in planning and executing a phased, comprehensive plan for launching the standards-aligned core instructional curriculum for teaching foundational skills and reading comprehension.</p> <p>Involve teachers, school leaders, families, Central Office staff, and UW-SoE faculty/staff to design professional development related to data literacy for current and future educators.</p> <p>Systematically provide opportunities for teachers to integrate their learning within classroom practice.</p> <p>Revise MMSD Literacy Scope and Sequence documents to reflect research and recommendations.</p> <p>Promote language development to help students access other forms of literacy beginning with the pre-kindergarten/4K level and continuing through K-5.</p> <p>Integrate literacy instruction in ways that maximize the connection among reading, spelling, and writing skills, and non-written language. Structure instruction and other learning experiences to take advantage of the relations among these uses of language in developmentally appropriate ways.</p>	<p>Use the MMSD adopted core program/approach as an example within literacy coursework and assignments.</p> <p>Ensure broad coherence across all coursework related to language acquisition and literacy and implications for practice for all prospective preK-5 teachers.</p> <p>Provide coursework that emphasizes how skills and abilities build on each other and develop over time.</p> <p>Implement a data literacy learning opportunity plan for preservice teachers: (a) multiple opportunities for literacy and biliteracy related instructional practice; (b) increased opportunities to learn about and practice delivering literacy and biliteracy instruction in ways that promote social justice and anti-racism through culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices; (c) increased opportunities to understand the role of play, imagination, and innovation in language and literacy instruction.</p> <p>Implement data literacy learning opportunities for faculty and/or staff to support their efforts to enhance and promote preservice teacher data literacy learning in their courses (see above activity).</p>



## **Theme 3: Align Leadership for Literacy**

### **Broad Recommendations**

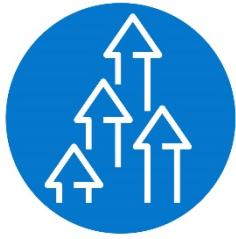
1. Develop a shared understanding of how to best support coherent, socially just literacy practices between MMSD and UW-SoE that includes a common understanding of research/language/terminology.
2. Develop and/or enhance strong working knowledge of the core components of literacy instruction among MMSD and UW-SoE educators and preservice teachers. This knowledge should include an understanding of the connections between skills and abilities (e.g., language comprehension, word recognition), the major goals for the various stages of development, the research evidence supporting instructional practices, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.
3. Clarify roles and responsibilities of administrative leadership in MMSD and UW-SoE to create greater coherence and communication, intentionally focusing on shared leadership and accountability for improved literacy outcomes.
4. Determine agreed upon required components and areas of flexibility for literacy instruction and teaching about literacy instruction.

See Table 3 for example activities.

**Table 3. Example Activities for Theme 3: Align Leadership for Literacy**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Provide professional development on foundational skills in literacy, using current generation materials.</p> <p>Implement a scope and sequence of literacy learning for principals: (a) infuse leadership for literacy into hiring practices and rubrics for principal hiring at all levels; (b) include intentional criteria for literacy leadership related to special education, ESL, and bilingual programming.</p> <p>Analyze all roles and responsibilities that support literacy using a phased-in approach, beginning with strengthening the role and assessing effectiveness of <b>instructional coaches</b>.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Create system-level protocols to ensure coherence of actions and communication.</p> <p>Develop literacy-focused tools and resources to support principals as they supervise and evaluate teachers.</p>	<p>Co-design and establish ongoing communities of practice centered on leadership for literacy inclusive of MMSD cooperating teachers, SoE supervisors, SoE literacy faculty, and/or student teachers.</p> <p>Co-review existing leadership preparation and hiring policies and practices and recommend adjustments.</p> <p>Co-design professional learning experiences and university coursework opportunities for instructional coaches to gain Reading Teacher or Reading Specialist (316/317) licensure that take into account the professional knowledge of individual coaches.</p> <p>Enhance connections between MMSD and SoE for field placement experiences that support the merging of literacy research and practice.</p> <p>Create and implement a professional learning and leadership development plan for instructional coaches rooted in lifelong learning.</p> <p>Articulate how MMSD, SoE, community stakeholders, and families will create a community-wide emphasis on literacy.</p>	<p>Incorporate a new (or expanded) course sequence for all prospective reading teachers that includes both special education and general education, and provides background in reading, language development, scientific literature, and social justice.</p> <p>Infuse leadership for literacy in coursework in principal certification programs; identify either additional content for literacy development or culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy and leadership practices required to support teachers in equitable literacy instruction in schools with predominantly White workforces.</p> <p>Define graduate coursework necessary to gain Reading Teacher or Reading Specialist (316/317) licensure.</p> <p>SoE faculty collaborate with MMSD to incorporate MMSD educator practitioners' knowledge and experience in SoE courses (e.g., inviting instructional coaches to engage or lead course discussions, etc.).</p>

<sup>7</sup> Tasks that could be included in this activity include: (a) include both principals and Central Office staff these hiring committees; (b) refine/define the role to serve as instructional bridge between schools and Central Office with a plus factor for those who are licensed in reading; (c) increase the number professional development sessions per year and further the intentionality toward peer-to-peer growth; (d) provide a mechanism for feedback to guide professional learning experiences so that the instruction meets the rigor of the standards and is evidence-based.



## **Theme 4: Enhance Organizational Structures to Support Literacy**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Strengthen and enhance organizational structures that prioritize foundational literacy skills and social justice in and across MMSD and SoE.
2. Strengthen the commitment to instruction that puts students' languages, abilities, and cultures first, reinforcing literacy through a culturally and linguistically relevant lens, and challenging various forms of power (e.g., race, class, gender, heteronormativity) in how literacy is taught to 4K-12 students and future teachers to support literacy development for all students.
3. Create and enhance organizational structures and processes at MMSD and SoE that encourage instructional practices which allow students to meet proficiency in literacy within the target goal of the first 6 weeks of first quarter, prioritizing Grades 4K-3.

See Table 4 for example activities.



**Table 4. Example Activities for Theme 4: Enhance Organizational Structures to Support Literacy**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Integrate literacy into a more systems-oriented Central Office structure that facilitates communication and coordination of efforts.</p> <p>Examine job descriptions and certification requirements to support a focus on hiring teachers with a strong background in literacy; align hiring and placement practices with student needs.</p> <p>Identify and support principals and instructional coaches as a critical school-based team to build capacity of classroom teachers around the area of literacy and evidence of strong core instruction.</p> <p>Create and enhance organizational structures and processes to support teachers’ design and use of appropriate intervention(s) for 4K-3 students identified as not meeting proficiency in literacy within the first 6 weeks of first quarter, including the creation of an intervention plan in place by the end of the first quarter to support the student in reaching proficiency.</p>	<p>Co-design and establish ongoing communities of practice centered on leadership for literacy inclusive of Central Office staff and SoE literacy faculty that includes special education, bilingual instruction, second language learning and general education.</p> <p>Coordinate degree and certification requirements at SoE with policies and practices in MMSD. Provide expanded opportunities for post-bac learning in literacy for MMSD faculty and staff — courses that count for continuing learning credits.</p> <p>Seek and secure funding opportunities to support more learning opportunities and/or to reimagine organizational structures.</p> <p>Joint advocacy for state and federal policies that support literacy goals.</p> <p>Establish and utilize high-quality standards-aligned formative and interim assessments that are not time-consuming but integrated as part of learning and instruction for both monolingual and bilingual students.</p> <p>Strengthen structures to support current and future teacher professional learning and classroom practice to ensure students succeed in gaining traditional and culturally relevant foundational skills.</p> <p>Develop a partnership between UW-SoE and MMSD to create literacy certification programs</p>	<p>Develop a new course sequence for all prospective reading teachers that includes both special education and general education, and provides background in language, reading, development, and scientific literature.</p> <p>Identify within degree and certification requirements where literacy is incorporated into course goals and outcomes from a school-wide perspective.</p> <p>Utilize the Teacher Education Center, or other SoE entity, to support cross-programmatic integration of literacy in teacher preparation programming.</p> <p>Leverage WCER resources to identify grant opportunities and write and submit grant proposals.</p> <p>Provide more experiential learning for preservice teachers to understand from a social justice lens when and why interventions would be used and what data supports intervening within or outside of strong core instruction.</p>

for MMSD teachers or professional development opportunities for MMSD and SoE educators.



## Theme 5: Refine Data Systems

### Broad Recommendations

1. Use integrated formative and summative data systems (qualitative and quantitative) to better describe, monitor, and act upon organizational and student-level literacy goals in order to create socially just outcomes in MMSD and UW-SoE.
2. Establish, maintain, and use accessible integrated data systems for internal organizational stakeholders that examine all student and staff data which combines *multiple demographic categories* and *utilizes cohort analysis as appropriate* to provide a more nuanced understanding of areas of strength, areas of improvement, and more targeted interventions across literacy instruction.
3. Establish more robust and accessible data repositories that capture literacy data longitudinally to provide a historical contextualization; ensure timely dissemination to stakeholders.

See Table 5 for example activities.

**Table 5. Example Activities for Theme 5: Refine Data Systems**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Refine annual assessment and reporting strategy.</p> <p>Use ongoing assessments and performance tasks that are high-quality, standards aligned, and closely tied to curricula that are adopted. Obtain easily collected and interpreted assessment data, which are useful but not disruptive to ongoing classroom activities.</p> <p>Collect systematic data on instructional practices to support literacy. Collect data on effectiveness of intervention and student mastery in specific skill areas.</p> <p>Provide regular and consistent reports to district stakeholders on assessments and benchmarks.</p> <p>Create an organizational early warning system that supports all students being proficient in reading by the first quarter of the current year.</p> <p>Develop a strong, effective MTSS framework for literacy that includes selecting appropriate screening and progress monitoring assessments, creating a universal base of instruction, providing an accessible menu of interventions, and developing school-level teams to closely monitor data and student progress.</p> <p>Establish district-level data teams to foster consistent and sustained MTSS implementation across schools and provide opportunities for schools and staff to share core instruction and intervention resources to enhance school data</p>	<p>Establish and/or build upon existing collaborative partnerships across UW and MMSD to help refine data systems focused on early literacy and beyond.</p> <p>Provide joint reports to families and other SoE stakeholders about ongoing work.</p> <p>Coordinate assessments and data collection with classroom curricula and activities.</p> <p>Collect data that are accessible and relevant to educators and provide preservice and in-service education for teachers to promote data literacy in order to understand characteristics of effective assessments, potential bias in assessments, and how to interpret results and plan differentiated instruction.</p> <p>Integrate MTSS experiential learning into the preservice student teaching experience, working with Cooperating Teachers to ground prior knowledge into student context.</p>	<p>Include literacy and social justice pedagogy survey questions throughout student coursework experiences and on annual SoE alumni survey to assess perceptions of preparedness to teach literacy and biliteracy.</p> <p>Solicit feedback from MMSD partners on beginning teachers’ knowledge and skill in literacy.</p> <p>Conduct annual focus group interviews with graduating SoE teacher candidates on their perceptions of preparedness to teach literacy using an anti-racist and culturally and linguistically responsive framework.</p> <p>Engage in regular and consistent data collection and monitoring/reporting in collaboration with appropriate stakeholders.</p> <p>Collect systematic data on instructional practices to support literacy.</p> <p>Use ongoing assessments to monitor preservice teachers’ literacy learning experiences and outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure MTSS is integrated into SoE coursework for preservice teachers.</p> <p>Train preservice teachers on how to interpret and use student data to inform core instruction and individual literacy interventions.</p>

literacy capacity.

Establish and clearly communicate school-level systems where teacher teams monitor and examine data; regularly use data to inform next steps in instruction to reach more equitable outcomes and align to school improvement plan strategies and goals.

Data analysis that follows predictable cycles in support of improved teaching and learning.



## **Theme 6: Build on the Strengths of Our Students, Families, and Community**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Use an asset-based approach to leverage and enhance connections with families, students, and communities.
2. Elevate and listen closely to student, family, and community voices in order to create a teaching and learning environment that is culturally and linguistically responsive and recognizes the brilliance that all students bring to the classroom.
3. Emphasize family involvement and input in the data-based problem-solving process and provide comprehensive information to parents routinely about their student and how they can support their student and continue to communicate with the teacher and school-based administrators/staff.

See Table 6 for example activities.

**Table 6. Example Activities for Theme 6: Build on the Strengths of Our Students, Families, and Community**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Refine and increase consistent communication between MMSD and families, particularly when they are concerned about their child’s literacy instruction and achievement.</p> <p>Provide more detailed information for families when their student receives or is recommended to receive additional supports within core instruction or intervention.</p> <p>Leverage talents and experiences of staff, community, and families to participate in professional learning at both the district and school level (e.g., “literacy nights” to explain instructional efforts and actionable strategies for families to engage in at home).</p> <p>Examine the Special Education and English Learner external program reviews and prioritize recommendations related to program implementation and potential dual-language program expansion.</p>	<p>Create outreach programs that link MMSD, SoE, and community leaders and organizations so as to share information about goals, needs, and cooperative activities.</p> <p>Compile a repository of tools, resources, and local experts available and willing to support literacy work in MMSD and UW-SoE.</p> <p>MMSD shares and discusses the English learner external program review with UW-SoE faculty to generate joint recommendations that support biliteracy program expansion and MMSD hiring.</p> <p>MMSD shares and discusses the Special Education external program review with UW-SoE faculty to generate joint recommendations that support special education licensure and MMSD hiring (e.g., ALSE program, etc.).</p> <p>Establish systems to routinely and systematically provide literacy data/analysis to families and communities; intentionally and regularly elicit feedback from families, communities, and students on literacy achievement.</p>	<p>Prepare new educators with the skill sets needed to lift student voice and engage families around literacy achievement and instruction and how they can support their child’s reading at home.</p> <p>Invest in expanding UW-SoE biliteracy programs.</p> <p>Offer extension or open-access courses for community members, leaders, parents/caregivers about reading and literacy, how to provide support.</p> <p>Support SoE programs to provide UW-SoE students experiences in which they collaborate with schools to co-planning family literacy events in the community.</p>



## **Theme 7: Collectively Grow Together Through a Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Enhance a supportive culture rooted in openness to change, collective responsibility and accountability for socially just outcomes, ongoing learning through formative feedback, and lifelong learning.
2. Develop culturally and linguistically responsive professional learning opportunities that are rooted in research on reading, language, learning, development, and effective practices.
3. Strengthen coherence between MMSD and SoE to support current and future educators around literacy instruction and student learning.
4. Develop targeted, explicit literacy goals, strategies, and organizational practices to guide ongoing work.

See Table 7 for example activities.



**Table 7. Example Activities for Theme 7: Collectively Grow Together Through a Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Encourage cross-functional collaboration among Chiefs of Schools, Central Office departments and school leadership to improve literacy outcomes.</p> <p>Strengthen school improvement planning and ensure that each school has a literacy goal that is regularly monitored.</p> <p>Strengthen the communication and partnership between Central Office staff and coaches to support consistent and evidence-based literacy efforts. Implement consistent culturally and linguistically responsive professional learning opportunities for educators across central office and within schools.</p> <p>Provide professional development for educators and staff on data literacy and how to use data as part of a continuous improvement plan.</p>	<p>Develop and implement Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles as a means to monitor and adjust, if needed, all aspects of plan implementation; use as an approach to collaborative organizational learning and growth</p> <p>Leverage current school improvement planning structures, course development structures and syllabi development processes to drive clear literacy goals and literacy achievement.</p> <p>Establish teacher preparation partnerships that expand traditional field placement and student teaching experiences; these could include residencies and communities of practice involving UW-SoE preservice teachers, MMSD teachers, and other community stakeholders.</p> <p>Continue to regularly monitor, revise, and enhance relevant professional learning opportunities around literacy as needed.</p> <p>Establish data teams inclusive of MMSD and SoE stakeholders to review literacy data at student or school-wide levels.</p>	<p>Add literacy-specific outcomes to annual SoE program reviews.</p> <p>Establish an SoE literacy committee tasked with program review and evaluation to ensure continuous improvement.</p> <p>Engage in regular program reviews with a specific focus on literacy objectives and outcomes.</p> <p>Establish mechanisms for monitoring course quality and consistency across instructors.</p> <p>Implement consistent culturally and linguistically responsive professional learning opportunities for students in SoE.</p> <p>Co-design and establish consistent culturally and linguistically responsive communities of practice opportunities for faculty and staff in SoE.</p>



## **Theme 8: Enhance Implementation Efforts Through Communication and Coordination**

### **Broad Recommendations**

1. Nurture relational trust within and across MMSD and SoE that centers children and advances equity in all aspects of literacy work.
2. Establish project management structures between MMSD and SoE, removing barriers to collaboration, leveraging resources, and managing the approach to Task Force recommendations.
3. Create or use existing organizational groups in MMSD and SoE to routinely review organizational policies and practices that relate to literacy recommendations proposed in this report; modify policies/procedures as needed and appropriate.

See Table 8 for example activities.

**Table 8. Example Activities for Theme 8: Enhance Implementation Efforts Through Communication and Coordination**

MMSD activities	Partnership activities among MMSD, UW-SoE, and/or community partners	UW-SoE activities
<p>Share and discuss the Literacy Task Force Report and Recommendations with Central Office leaders and Principals, developing plans with each department lead and school principal to facilitate ongoing discussions and plan ongoing professional learning around literacy.</p> <p>Integrate Recommendations from Task Force and site/department based next steps into every Principal and Instructional Coach meeting throughout the year.</p>	<p>Create an Early Literacy and Beyond Steering Committee composed of UW–Madison, MMSD, and community members to recommend a phased in approach for recommendations that are taken up by MMSD and UW-SoE leadership. The Steering Committee would regularly monitor and review progress, adjusting as needed.</p> <p>Annually report on implementation efforts to Dean Hess and Dr. Jenkins.</p> <p>Create mechanisms for cross-organizational discussion and usage of MMSD and UW-SoE resources when obstacles and challenges arise.</p> <p>Create literacy certification and/or professional development opportunities for literacy coaches and other educators (possible school-based cohort programs) to increase literacy-related knowledge.</p> <p>Develop a communication plan to share Task Force recommendations with UW–Madison stakeholders and MMSD Board of Education.</p> <p>Share the Task Force report with multiple stakeholders from MMSD and UW-SoE and create communication tools so that all schools and UW-SoE have talking points and materials to share with families and community members.</p>	<p>Explore delivery options in teacher education courses as well as in Reading Teacher/Reading Specialist (316/317) licensure programs, certificates, and professional development courses, to provide multiple opportunities for individuals to increase literacy-related knowledge.</p> <p>Share and discuss teacher education and 316/317 course syllabi on an annual basis and provide access to UW–Madison libraries and other resources.</p> <p>Share and discuss the Literacy Task Force Report and Recommendations with SoE faculty, staff, and students.</p>

## Appendix A: Biographical Information

### Task Force Membership



**School of Education**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



**John B. Diamond** (co-chair of the Task Force) is the Kellner Family Distinguished Chair in Urban Education and a professor with UW–Madison’s Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. He is a faculty affiliate with the departments of Afro-American Studies and Educational Policy Studies. Through his research, Diamond has made numerous contributions to the study of race, distributed leadership, educational policy, urban and suburban education, and other topics. His most recent book, *Despite the Best Intentions: How Racial Inequality Thrives in Good Schools*, examines how racial inequality thrives in racially diverse suburban schools. He co-authored an *Educational Researcher* article on

reframing suburban educational research and co-edited an Equity and Excellence in Education symposium on the changing terrain of suburban education. He is writing a new book, *Defending the Color Line*, which examines the challenges of school district leadership in the context of racialized resistance. An engaged scholar, Diamond is the faculty lead for Forward Madison, a faculty fellow in the Teacher Education Center, and a former steering committee member of the Madison Education Partnership. He’s also a member of the Urban Research Action Network National Planning Team, a senior research specialist with the Consortium for Policy Research in Education, and a new advisory board member of the American Sociological Association’s Sociology Action Network.



**Mariana Castro** serves as deputy director of the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) at UW–Madison. After 16 years as a science, ESL, and bilingual educator at MMSD, she spent 14 years engaged in research and development at WIDA, an organization housed within WCER with the mission of advancing the academic language development and academic achievement of multilingual learners in the United States and internationally. Throughout her tenure at WIDA, Castro directed professional development activities, co-lead the development of K-12 language standards and standards-based curricular resources in Spanish and English, supported the development of summative assessments and formative assessment tools, and directed research activities. Castro earned her PhD in curriculum and

instruction from UW–Madison. Her research focuses on the language practices and ideologies of bi/multilingual students and their educators through translanguaging lenses and methodologies.



**Dawnene D. Hassett** is a professor with UW–Madison’s Department of Curriculum & Instruction. She has a bachelor’s degree and teaching license in elementary education, pre-kindergarten (pre-K) through Grade 8; a master’s degree and teaching licenses in reading and literacy education, pre-K through Grade 12; and a doctoral degree in literacy studies and curriculum theory from UW–Madison. Hassett was an elementary school teacher and a district reading specialist for the Mount Horeb School District and MMSD. She teaches courses in literacy and language development and administers the Wisconsin licensure programs for reading teachers and reading specialists. Her research examines early literacy curriculum and instruction

to determine how it constitutes individuals and maintains particular social conception of what it means to read and write well, especially in terms of reading and racism, as well as reading and resistance through children’s literature. She has published numerous book chapters and articles in journals such as the *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, and the *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*.



**Melinda Leko** is a professor in the UW–Madison’s Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education. She holds a master’s degree in elementary education and a PhD in special education from the University of Florida, with emphasis on reading instruction for students with disabilities and educator preparation in reading. Her research centers on preparing pre- and in-service teachers to provide inclusive, equitable, and evidence-based reading instruction, particularly at the secondary level. Her book, *Word Study in the Inclusive Secondary Classroom: Supporting Struggling Readers and Students with Disabilities*, was published by Teachers College Press in 2016. Leko co-edits the journal *Teacher Education*

and *Special Education* and has provided technical assistance in reading and effective remote instruction to over 25 states through the Office of Special Education Programs CEEDAR (Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform) Center.



**Mark S. Seidenberg** is a Vilas Research Professor and Donald O. Hebb Professor with UW–Madison’s Department of Psychology. Seidenberg has conducted research on the nature of skilled reading, how children learn to read, developmental reading impairments, and the brain bases of reading, in English and other languages, for many years. He also studies how differences in spoken language experience, particularly the use of varieties of English that differ from the “standard” dialect, affect learning to read and the effectiveness of curricula, instruction, and assessment. Seidenberg is author of the 2017 book, *Language at the Speed of Sight: How We Read, Why So Many Can’t, and What Can Be Done About It*, which examines the science of reading and its educational implications. His current research focuses on

finding ways to improve literacy outcomes, especially for children at risk for reasons such as poverty or developmental conditions such as dyslexia.



**Beverly Trezek** is an associate professor and the Tashia F. Morgridge Chair in Reading with UW–Madison’s Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education. She earned her bachelor’s degree in special education-deaf and hard of hearing from Illinois State University and her master’s and doctoral degrees in special education from UW–Madison. Trezek’s research focuses on reading instruction for beginning and struggling readers, with a particular emphasis on students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Prior to joining the faculty at UW–Madison, Trezek was a professor of special education and director of the Reading Specialist master’s degree program at DePaul University (2005-2019). She was also a special education

teacher for 12 years and spent the majority of her teaching career with MMSD. Trezek is the co-author of two books on the topic of literacy, *Reading and Deafness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, and *Early Literacy Development in Deaf Children*.



**Ashley L. White** is an assistant professor with UW–Madison’s Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education. Before her appointment at UW–Madison, White served as the 2019-20 Joseph P. Kennedy Public Policy Fellow with the Committee on Education and Labor under Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott. White also worked with Florida’s Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Project and interned with other federal agencies. Before earning her PhD from the University of South Florida, she taught for over 13 years in general education, inclusion, and isolated special education settings. White taught for the School District of Hillsborough County for 11 years, primarily teaching Grade 5 reading and mathematics.

Dr. White’s research and advocacy include the study of ethno-racial factors, disability, and policy across the P-20 spectrum. She is working on research related to the assessment of current, historical, and pending federal legislation affecting individuals with disabilities and other marginalized populations; culturally responsive frameworks for preservice educators; and the intersectionality of ethnicity and learning disabilities among African American student athletes who work in predominantly White institutions’ Division I football programs.





**Lisa Kvistad** (co-chair of the Task Force) spent the past 9 years as the Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning in MMSD, retiring in Summer 2021, and returning to MMSD as a limited term employee. She has supervised the departments of Curriculum & Instruction, Special Education, Student Services, Advanced Learning, Office of Multilingual and Global Education and Secondary Programs/Personalized Pathways. She also supervises the Chiefs of Schools as they collaborate with and develop strong leadership capacity in the 54 school principals in MMSD. Prior to this position, Lisa was the Director of State and Federal Programs. Lisa was an elementary Principal in Madison for 11 years, at Elvehjem Elementary School and Lowell Elementary School. She has spent 35 years in the field of education. Lisa has her Master’s Degree in Educational Administration and Superintendent’s License from the UW–Madison. She is a former YWCA Woman of Distinction and a Wallace Fellow.



**Gabi Bell** is the Director of Literacy and Humanities at MMSD who partners with Central Office teams, leaders, and coaches to ensure that core instructional guidance and professional development K-12 attends to the rigor of grade level standards for Literacy, Biliteracy, Humanities, Social Studies, World Language and Arts. Prior to this work, Gabi spent many years in positions of instructional leadership such as Bilingual Program Developer K-12, and before that as a licensed teacher for World Language, Bilingual, and English as a Second Language. Her work supporting early reading for socially, culturally, and economically diverse students as a reading specialist awakened her to leverage reading as the highest anti-racist strategy and most fundamental universal human right. Gabi earned her PhD at the Universidad Nacional Estatal a Distancia, Costa Rica. Her research centers on the Science of Reading in multi-linguistic instructional settings with adolescent learners.



**Lisa Hepburn** is a Bilingual Resource Teacher at Randall Elementary School in MMSD. She developed an early interest in regional dialects and language variation while growing up in states such as Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Texas. She has been teaching English learners (adults and children), since 1998: in South Korea, Mexico, and numerous institutions in the Madison area, including Madison College and the Literacy Network. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Fine Arts and a master’s degree in Applied Linguistics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and she earned her elementary teacher’s license with certifications in ESL and Bilingual Education from Edgewood College. She earned her Dyslexia Practitioner 1 certification from the Children’s Dyslexia Center. Her professional organizations include The Reading League, The Reading League-Wisconsin, and the IDA-Wisconsin. Lisa is passionate about the collaborative efficacy and instructional precision that reading research provides. With a shared reality of how reading works in the brain, traditionally “siloed” departments such as ESL/Bilingual, Special Education and Speech & Language can fully partner with classroom teachers (and principals and art, music, and gym teachers) to ensure that every child learns to read, spell, and write.



**Angie Hicks** is a Madison native and has been employed with MMSD for over 30 years. Recently appointed as the Chief of Secondary Schools for the district, Dr. Hicks has led as principal of James C. Wright Middle School for the past 8 years. After serving with the U.S. Army in 1990, she joined the district as an Administrative Clerk-Typist. Dr. Hicks has held many roles within the district including Title V Indian Education Tutor Coordinator, Custodian, Teacher, Title I Grant Facilitator and Instructional Resource Teacher for Mathematics and Literacy, Assistant Principal, and Principal. Prior to becoming an Administrator, Dr. Hicks had a 12-year teaching career that spanned White Horse Middle School, and Emerson Elementary and

Frank Allis Elementary Schools. Her administrative roles began as Assistant Principal at Sherman and Hamilton Middle Schools. Additionally, Dr. Hicks simultaneously served as Principal at Badger Rock and James C. Wright Middle Schools for the 2011-2012 school year.

Dr. Hicks received her B.S. Degree in Elementary Education from UW–Madison, and holds a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration as well as a Doctoral Degree in Educational Leadership from Edgewood College. Dr. Hicks believes that literacy is foundational to the relentless pursuit of equity. This philosophy has shaped how she advocates for access and opportunity for her scholars and families. With scholars at the center, she challenges her staff to continually self-reflect, grow, and develop as servant educators. Dr. Hicks is committed to ensuring that scholars, staff, and families are focused on “Everyone Responsible, Every Day, Every Student Achieving, Whatever It Takes!”



**Jorge Covarrubias** is the Chief of Leadership Development and oversees the Professional Learning and Leadership Development Department for MMSD. In his role as the Chief of Leadership Development, Jorge is responsible for district professional learning, induction and mentoring of principals and teachers, leadership development for all staff, and the professional growth of staff through Educator Effectiveness. Jorge represents MMSD in the Wisconsin Urban Leadership Institute, the Deeper Learning Dozen, the National Equity Project Midwest Network, and the States ESSA Leadership Learning Community, as well as other partnerships such as Forward Madison. Educational degrees include a Bachelor’s in Elementary Education

from UW–Madison and a Master’s in Educational Administration from Concordia University. Jorge believes that education is a fundamental right steeped in deep and authentic relationships and rooted in the brilliance and rich experiences students bring.



**Jaclyn Smith** is the Principal of Gompers Elementary School, which covers 4K to Grade 5. This is her fifth year collaborating with parents, teachers, and staff developing programs and innovative strategies to foster a learning organization focused on meeting the needs of students. Gompers faculty and staff have embraced MMSD’s commitment to race, rigor, and relationships and are determined to disrupt patterns that have historically marginalized our communities of color. A lifelong Madisonian, she began her education at Leopold Elementary, Cherokee Middle School, and Madison West. She knows firsthand the quality and commitment of MMSD teachers and staff leading to her successful undergraduate and graduate studies. Also, she recognizes the disparities that exist within our city and is committed to

continuing to learn to further support all MMSD students to have the amazing educational opportunities. Literacy is a passion of Jackie’s, and she believes that teaching all of our students to read, write, listen, and speak about complex text is the key to anti-racist teaching and opening lifelong possibilities for our scholars. Jackie holds a Bachelor’s of Arts in International Studies and Spanish from UW–Madison and



served at a non-profit organization through AmeriCorp in Puerto Rico. Returning to Madison she continued to support students through Centro Hispano. She began her professional education career in Madison while completing graduate programs culminating with Master's of Science in Bilingual Education from Edgewood College. Past MMSD assignments include Bilingual Resource Specialist, Bilingual Classroom Teacher, Bilingual Program Planner.



**Carlettra Stanford** (back-up MMSD co-chair) is currently the Chief of Elementary Schools in the Madison Metropolitan School District, a position that she has had the privilege of serving in for the past two years. In her role as Chief of Elementary, she supervises and collaborates with the 32 elementary principals, to ensure that schools are a place in which all Scholars will thrive. Prior to her role as the Chief of Elementary Schools, she had the honor of being the Principal of Mendota Elementary School, one of MMSD's first community schools, for ten years. With over twenty-seven years in MMSD, Carlettra has held myriad roles including Principal, School Wide Facilitator, Literacy Coach and Teacher. Carlettra attended Madison Public

Schools, graduating from Madison East High School, home of the Purgolders. She went on to attend the prestigious Spelman College in Atlanta Georgia before earning her Master's degree in education from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Carlettra is currently pursuing her Doctoral degree in Educational Leadership. An active community member she has served on numerous committees, boards and was the director of the African American Ethnic Academy. Her contributions to the community, the field of education and promotion of educational equity have been acknowledged through many awards and recognitions including the Luminaira Award for Leadership for Equity and Excellence, MMSD Aristos Scholar, Lois Gadd Nemece Outstanding Alumnae Award, Milt McPike Education Award, nominee for MMSD Principal of the Year and most recently Charles Hamilton Houston Institute Difference Maker Award for Outstanding Service in Education. Carlettra has also presented at various national educational conferences focused on literacy and educational equity. Through her journey in the field of education, Carlettra has been steadfast in her commitment to eliminate, disrupt and dismantle inequitable systems. Her career and volunteer efforts have focused on creating systems and structures in which all Scholars will not only succeed but will thrive.



**Chan Stroman** is a resident of Madison and is the founding attorney and principal of Landlord Counsel LLC, her commercial real estate law practice. She is active in advocacy, research, consulting, and speaking on educational equity issues for students with disabilities and students of color, and organized Wisconsin's first Wrightslaw conference. She is a consulting volunteer on special education matters with StEPP (Student Expulsion Prevention Project) and a pro bono reading tutor. She serves on the City of Madison's Disability Rights Commission, the Dane County Aging and Disability Resource Center Governing Board, the Board of the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters, and the Advisory Board of the Reading League Wisconsin.

## Task Force Staff



**Jen Schoepke** (Task Force Project Manager) is the Director of Forward Madison (FM), a partnership between UW-Madison School of Education and the Madison Metropolitan School District, where she supports the shared purpose of the partnership. The FM partnership is a collective human capital strategy aimed at building a high-quality and diverse educator workforce by supporting and retaining high-quality educators to significantly narrow opportunity gaps and improve student achievement. Prior to this role, Dr. Schoepke was the Director of Strategic Diversity Planning, Research, and Communication in the UW-Madison College of Letters & Science Center for Academic Excellence (CAE). In this role she facilitated the continued development of CAE’s strategic framework, assessment, and communication strategies, and research to advance CAE’s mission of supporting student success for students who have been historically underserved by institutions of higher education. Dr. Schoepke previously worked the University of Wisconsin System Administration as an Academic Planner supporting equity and diversity capacity-building and policy work across all two- and four-year Wisconsin public higher educational institutions. She has a doctoral degree from UW–Madison in Industrial and Systems Engineering and has researched the impact of race and whiteness on issues of equity in higher education through a systems lens. She received her master’s from UW–Madison in Manufacturing Systems Engineering and her undergraduate from UW–Eau Claire in physics/mathematics secondary education.



**Donald Dantzler, Jr.** (Task Force Data Analyst) is a Ph.D. candidate at UW–Madison in Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis. He is a Survey and Research Specialist in the Research and Program Evaluation Office for MMSD. Donald’s research interests include examining wage and employment differences in the teaching labor market (K-12 and collegiate) and exploring intervention mechanisms—such as structured mentoring programs—that aid in the academic success of African American males at predominately White institutions of higher education. Donald works with the Fair Play project, which is a computer-based serious game designed to highlight implicit bias incidents in academia. He also consults on several projects analyzing and developing structured mentoring programs for African American males. Having an economics and strong quantitative research background, he is passionate about solving real-world problems using statistical techniques. Donald earned his Master’s and Bachelor’s degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater in Higher Education Leadership and Economics. For the past 7 years, he worked in the areas of evaluation, data analysis, research, and Student Affairs and Student Academic Affairs. He is a native of Joliet, IL, but has resided in Wisconsin since entering college.

## **Appendix B: Literacy Instruction Guidance from Central Office**

### **Guidance that Remains Consistent**

1. A progression of academic standards (e.g., CCSS for Reading Foundational Skills, Literature and Informational Text, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening [Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021]) that explicitly calls out which standards are to be taught for the year, and listed for each quarter of the school year.
2. A unit description that frames the end of the unit's performance assessment within the standards, the essential questions, and the texts explored for the unit.
3. A list of essential questions to support development of content knowledge that connect learning experiences (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) to a theme. The essential questions identified for ELA (MMSD, n.d.-c) and Dual Language Immersion (MMSD, n.d.-d), Developmental Bilingual Programs, and Hmong Bilingual programs (MMSD, n.d.-e) in Grades K-12 were identified by the Curriculum & Instruction team.
4. A list of texts for core instruction for which there are assurances of universal access. MMSD used texts for Grades K-5 from Mondo Publisher (ELA) (Mondo Education, n.d.) and Pearson (DLI) (Foresman, 2011) for the 2018-2019 guidance. These were leveled texts, which means that they were identified as grade level texts by the publisher using qualitative measures not aligned to the CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021). Anthologies were adopted from the Great Books Foundation (2021) to support English language literacy in Grades 6-8, and from a variety of publishers for Spanish language literacy. Mentor text sets were made available for English high school courses. For secondary programs, no explicit text analysis quantified that the texts met the rigor of the grade level standard per Common Core. The unusual 2020-2021 school year due to the pandemic created an opportunity to discontinue the use of historically embedded texts and explore texts with online access.
5. End of quarter/unit performance assessments from 2018-to 2020 were created in-house. Students were presented with a writing prompt; to develop a response, students read texts, engaged in a collaborative conversation, planned, and executed their piece. These formative assessments allowed staff to collect data on students' writing and content knowledge achievement but were not explicitly pointed to understanding students word recognition, language comprehension, or reading comprehension. Classroom, building, and district level data from these quarterly assessments was not collected or analyzed universally. While some grade level teams and buildings used data from these assessments to respond to their instructional practice, it was not required at the district level to do so.

### **Changes in Instructional Guidance for 2021**

1. The progression in which specific standards (Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text [Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021]) were called for every week of the academic school year.
2. In support of the universal teaching of the weekly standards, a grade level text that met qualitative (lexile) and quantitative (complexity rubric) measures was identified.
3. Each text within the instructional guidance was lifted by providing text dependent questions to help the teaching and learning of the standards identified for the specific week.
4. For the explicit support of English language learners, and to make visible Speaking and Listening CCSS (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021), each text was framed within three instructional moments (preparing, engaging, and extending). The framing was set in place to lift speaking and listening in support to reading and writing.

5. Connected to the teaching of foundational skills, in English Language Programs (MMSD, n.d.-c) (monolingual) core resources were created in house for the teaching of a foundational skills block in grades kindergarten to 5. In Dual Language Immersion Programs (MMSD, n.d.-d), the complexities of virtual learning allowed for the exploration of an electronic platform to aid the teaching of foundational skills in both Spanish and English (K-5).
6. An expectation that students will be screened three times per year in Grades K-8 to support an early warning system, or to prompt additional diagnostic testing.
7. An instructional time at the end of the quarter/unit for staff to engage in the administration of an interim assessment at the rigor of the grade level standard to gauge students' preparedness for the state summative assessment. A soft implementation of interim assessments for learning was launched. A full implementation is protected for Grades K-10 for the 2021-2022 SY.
8. An invitation for classroom teachers, and school level teams to analyze achievement data for word recognition and language comprehension that is desegregated as to aid a deeper understanding and ownership of the academic achievement of African American students, English language learners, and students with disabilities.
9. Opportunities to engage with professional development modules, built in house, to increase staff understanding and future implementation of teaching practices closely aligned with what empirical research identifies as highly effective for all students.

## Appendix C: PALS Data

The tables below are a companion to Figures 3a-d, presenting the percent of MMSD Grade 2 students who met the PALS benchmark in 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 by various demographic characteristics.

School Year	ELL Status	Number Meeting Benchmark	Total Test Takers	Percent Meeting Benchmark
2015-16	All Students	1249	1677	74%
	ELL	311	456	68%
	Non-ELL	938	1221	77%
2016-17	All Students	1274	1752	73%
	ELL	309	453	68%
	Non-ELL	965	1299	74%
2017-18	All Students	1234	1636	75%
	ELL	289	397	73%
	Non-ELL	945	1239	76%
2018-19	All Students	1115	1550	72%
	ELL	207	322	64%
	Non-ELL	908	1228	74%

School Year	Low-Income Status	Number Meeting Benchmark	Total Test Takers	Percent Meeting Benchmark
2015-16	All Students	1249	1677	74%
	Low Income	513	856	60%
	Not Low Income	736	821	90%
2016-17	All Students	1274	1752	73%
	Low Income	493	838	59%
	Not Low Income	781	914	85%
2017-18	All Students	1234	1636	75%
	Low Income	496	803	62%
	Not Low Income	738	833	89%
2018-19	All Students	1115	1550	72%
	Low Income	410	757	54%
	Not Low Income	705	793	89%

School Year	Special Education Status	Number Meeting Benchmark	Total Test Takers	Percent Meeting Benchmark
2015-16	All Students	1249	1677	74%
	SPED	74	202	37%
	Non-SPED	1175	1475	80%
2016-17	All Students	1274	1752	73%
	SPED	87	237	37%
	Non-SPED	1187	1515	78%
2017-18	All Students	1234	1636	75%
	SPED	84	230	37%
	Non-SPED	1150	1406	82%
2018-19	All Students	1115	1550	72%
	SPED	86	222	39%
	Non-SPED	1029	1328	77%

School Year	Race/Ethnicity	Number Meeting Benchmark	Total Test Takers	Percent Meeting Benchmark
2015-16	All Students	1245	1671	75%
	Asian	126	168	75%
	Black or African Am	185	302	61%
	Hispanic/Latino	177	281	63%
	Multiracial	144	189	76%
	White	613	731	84%
2016-17	All Students	1271	1749	73%
	Asian	154	205	75%
	Black or African Am	184	327	56%
	Hispanic/Latino	165	271	61%
	Multiracial	115	173	66%
	White	653	773	84%
2017-18	All Students	1229	1630	75%
	Asian	136	164	83%
	Black or African Am	191	333	57%
	Hispanic/Latino	157	243	65%
	Multiracial	123	171	72%
	White	622	719	87%
2018-19	All Students	1111	1545	72%
	Asian	114	152	75%
	Black or African Am	170	336	51%
	Hispanic/Latino	113	180	63%
	Multiracial	121	191	63%
	White	593	686	86%

## Appendix D: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Forward Exam Data

The tables below are a companion to Figures 4a-d, presenting the Forward Exam literacy outcomes for 4th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 by various demographic characteristics.

School Year	ELL Status	Number 4th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	1249	1677	74%
	ELL	311	456	68%
	Non-ELL	938	1221	77%
2016-17	All Students	1274	1752	73%
	ELL	309	453	68%
	Non-ELL	965	1299	74%
2017-18	All Students	1234	1636	75%
	ELL	289	397	73%
	Non-ELL	945	1239	76%
2018-19	All Students	1115	1550	72%
	ELL	207	322	64%
	Non-ELL	908	1228	74%

School Year	Low-Income Status	Number 4th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	1249	1677	74%
	Low Income	513	856	60%
	Not Low Income	736	821	90%
2016-17	All Students	1274	1752	73%
	Low Income	493	838	59%
	Not Low Income	781	914	85%
2017-18	All Students	1234	1636	75%
	Low Income	496	803	62%
	Not Low Income	738	833	89%
2018-19	All Students	1115	1550	72%
	Low Income	410	757	54%
	Not Low Income	705	793	89%

School Year	Special Education Status	Number 4th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	637	1851	34%
	SPED	26	227	11%
	Non-SPED	611	1624	38%
2016-17	All Students	746	1901	39%
	SPED	37	259	14%
	Non-SPED	709	1642	43%
2017-18	All Students	767	1881	41%
	SPED	40	266	15%
	Non-SPED	727	1615	45%
2018-19	All Students	777	1932	40%
	SPED	37	296	13%
	Non-SPED	740	1636	45%

School Year	Race/Ethnicity	Number 4th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	637	1851	34%
	Asian	50	176	28%
	Black or African American	31	333	9%
	Hispanic/Latino	79	419	19%
	Two or More	50	158	32%
	White	425	758	56%
2016-17	All Students	746	1901	39%
	Asian			*
	Black or African American	46	322	14%
	Hispanic/Latino	82	424	19%
	Two or More	61	181	34%
	White	490	813	60%
2017-18	All Students	767	1881	41%
	Asian			*
	Black or African American	26	305	9%
	Hispanic/Latino	92	464	20%
	Two or More	75	184	41%
	White	518	786	66%
2018-19	All Students	777	1932	40%
	Asian	68	178	38%
	Black or African American	46	333	14%
	Hispanic/Latino	76	424	18%
	Two or More			*
	White	520	822	63%

\*Publicly available data for 'Asian' and 'Two or More' race/ethnicity categories were not available for all years between 2015-16 through 2018-19.



## Appendix E: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Forward Exam Data

The tables below are a companion to Figures 5a-d, presenting the Forward Exam literacy outcomes for 8th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 by various demographic characteristics.

School Year	ELL Status	Number 8th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	526	1672	31%
	ELL	12	254	5%
	Non-ELL	514	1418	36%
2016-17	All Students	550	1656	33%
	ELL	3	298	1%
	Non-ELL	547	1358	40%
2017-18	All Students	532	1747	30%
	ELL	6	296	2%
	Non-ELL	526	1451	36%
2018-19	All Students	525	1740	30%
	ELL	13	316	4%
	Non-ELL	512	1424	36%

School Year	Low-Income Status	Number 8th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	526	1672	31%
	Low Income	97	823	12%
	Not Low Income	429	849	51%
2016-17	All Students	550	1656	33%
	Low Income	84	783	11%
	Not Low Income	466	873	53%
2017-18	All Students	532	1747	30%
	Low Income	83	845	10%
	Not Low Income	449	902	50%
2018-19	All Students	525	1740	30%
	Low Income	89	873	10%
	Not Low Income	436	867	50%

School Year	Special Education Status	Number 8th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	526	1672	31%
	SPED	18	240	8%
	Non-SPED	508	1432	35%
2016-17	All Students	550	1656	33%
	SPED	21	266	8%
	Non-SPED	529	1390	38%
2017-18	All Students	532	1747	30%
	SPED	14	253	6%
	Non-SPED	518	1494	35%
2018-19	All Students	525	1740	30%
	SPED	11	285	4%
	Non-SPED	514	1455	35%

School Year	Race/Ethnicity	Number 8th Graders Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA on Forward Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing Proficient or Advanced in ELA
2015-16	All Students	526	1672	31%
	Asian	45	123	37%
	Black or African American	17	316	5%
	Hispanic/Latino	50	348	14%
	Two or More	40	145	28%
	White	374	733	51%
2016-17	All Students	550	1656	33%
	Asian	67	156	43%
	Black or African American	15	292	5%
	Hispanic/Latino	56	369	15%
	Two or More	34	123	28%
	White	377	709	53%
2017-18	All Students	532	1747	30%
	Asian	45	141	32%
	Black or African American	20	312	6%
	Hispanic/Latino	41	379	11%
	Two or More	50	146	34%
	White	374	763	49%
2018-19	All Students	525	1740	30%
	Asian	54	143	38%
	Black or African American	21	301	7%
	Hispanic/Latino	63	417	15%
	Two or More	46	172	27%
	White	340	699	49%

## Appendix F: 11<sup>th</sup> Grade ACT Statewide Exam Reading Data

The tables below are a companion to Figures 6a-d, presenting the ACT Reading assessment outcomes for 11th grade students from 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18, and 2018-19 by various demographic characteristics.

School Year	ELL Status	Number 11th Graders Testing "College Ready" in Reading on ACT Statewide Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing "College Ready" in Reading
2015-16	All Students	689	1661	41%
	ELL	3	158	2%
	Non-ELL	686	1503	46%
2016-17	All Students	733	1775	41%
	ELL	6	188	3%
	Non-ELL	727	1587	46%
2017-18	All Students	727	1849	39%
	ELL	10	230	4%
	Non-ELL	717	1619	44%
2018-19	All Students	700	1790	39%
	ELL	7	242	3%
	Non-ELL	693	1548	45%

School Year	Low-Income Status	Number 11th Graders Testing "College Ready" in Reading on ACT Statewide Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing "College Ready" in Reading
2015-16	All Students	689	1661	41%
	Low Income	112	715	16%
	Not Low Income	577	946	61%
2016-17	All Students	733	1775	41%
	Low Income	106	750	14%
	Not Low Income	627	1025	61%
2017-18	All Students	727	1849	39%
	Low Income	121	843	14%
	Not Low Income	606	1006	60%
2018-19	All Students	700	1790	39%
	Low Income	99	797	12%
	Not Low Income	601	993	61%

School Year	Special Education Status	Number 11th Graders Testing "College Ready" in Reading on ACT Statewide Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing "College Ready" in Reading
2015-16	All Students	689	1661	41%
	SPED	37	239	15%
	Non-SPED	652	1422	46%
2016-17	All Students	733	1775	41%
	SPED	30	255	12%
	Non-SPED	703	1520	46%
2017-18	All Students	727	1849	39%
	SPED	24	259	9%
	Non-SPED	703	1590	44%
2018-19	All Students	700	1790	39%
	SPED	30	255	12%
	Non-SPED	670	1535	44%

School Year	Race/Ethnicity *	Number 11th Graders Testing "College Ready" in Reading on ACT Statewide Exam	Total Test Takers	Percent Testing "College Ready" in Reading
2015-16	All Students	689	1661	41%
	Asian	66	143	46%
	Black or African American	25	294	9%
	Hispanic/Latino	55	296	19%
	Two or More	42	115	37%
	White	497	807	62%
2016-17	All Students	733	1775	41%
	Asian	87	188	46%
	Black or African American	17	309	6%
	Hispanic/Latino	56	316	18%
	Two or More	*	*	*
	White	519	817	64%
2017-18	All Students	727	1849	39%
	Asian	68	165	41%
	Black or African American	23	328	7%
	Hispanic/Latino	63	366	17%
	Two or More	*	*	*
	White	519	836	62%
2018-19	All Students	700	1790	39%
	Asian	*	*	*
	Black or African American	20	313	6%
	Hispanic/Latino	70	379	18%
	Two or More	50	167	30%
	White	516	789	65%

\*Publicly available data for 'Asian' and 'Two or More' race/ethnicity categories were not available for all years between 2015-16 through 2018-19.

## **Appendix G: Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experiences: Elementary, Early Childhood, ESL/Bilingual and Special Education Courses**

To provide a summative overview of how preservice teachers are taught early literacy, each teacher education program that includes Grades 4K-2 is listed below, followed by its required literacy and language courses and fieldwork experiences. Each course resides within a particular area of study within C&I or RPSE; these are listed in brackets. Because preservice teachers learn about language and literacy education across different areas (literacy, early childhood, ESL/bilingual, special education), we believe it is important to include all courses where literacy and language research, theories, methods are taught.

In thinking about how preservice teachers are taught literacy, especially early literacy, in their teacher education program, it is worth mentioning that the UW–Madison credit standard for 3-credit courses is an expectation of at least 135 hours (45 hours per credit) of student time spent reading, writing, studying, and thinking about course readings, discussions, presentations, online materials, and assignments.

### **Early Childhood Education (ECE) + ESL/Bilingual Education Certification (Grades 4K-5): Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experiences**

- C&I 314, Becoming Literate in and Out of Schools (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 315, Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum in Early Childhood (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 325, Educating Young English Learners (3 credits) [C&I ESL/Bilingual Area]
- C&I 328, Artistic Lives of Children (3 credits) [C&I ECE Area]
- C&I 326, Language Use and Acquisition in Early Childhood (3 credits) [C&I ESL/Bilingual Area]
- C&I 663, Early Childhood Education Environments (3 credits) [C&I ECE Area]
- Three practicum experiences, one literacy-specific (3 credits each, 9 credits total) [ECE/Elementary Area]
- One EC/ESL/Bilingual Student Teaching Experience (12 credits including 2 credit seminar) [ECE/ESL/Bilingual Areas]

### **Elementary Education + Special Education Certification (Grades 1-8): Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experiences**

- C&I 368, The Teaching of Reading (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 369, The Teaching of Language Arts (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- RPSE 465, Language and Reading Instruction for Students with Disabilities (4 credits) [Special Education]
- Three practicum experiences, one literacy-specific, the others cross-curricular (3 credits each, 9 credits total) [RPSE and Elementary Areas]
- One Elementary/Behavioral Disabilities/Special Education Student Teaching Experience (12 credits including 2 credit seminar) [RPSE and Elementary Areas]

### **Elementary Education + ESL/Bilingual Education Certification (Grades 1-8): Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experiences**

- C&I 311, Language Acquisition in and Out of Schools (3 credits) [C&I ESL/Bilingual Area]
- C&I 317, Dimensions of Literacy (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]

- C&I 318, Teaching Reading and Writing (4 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 338, The Language of Schooling (3 credits) [C&I ESL/Bilingual Area]
- Three practicum experiences, one literacy-specific, the others cross-curricular (3 credits each, 9 credits total) [Elementary Area]
- One Elementary/ESL/Bilingual Student Teaching Experience (12 credits including 2 credit seminar) [ESL/Bilingual and Elementary Areas]

**Elementary Education + Content Specific Certification (Grades 1-8): Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experiences**

- C&I 309, Reading and Writing Across the Curriculum (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 311, Language Acquisition in and Out of Schools (3 credits) [C&I ESL/Bilingual Area]
- C&I 368, The Teaching of Reading (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- C&I 369, The Teaching of Language Arts (3 credits) [C&I Literacy Area]
- Three practicum experiences, one literacy-specific, the others cross-curricular (3 credits each, 9 credits total) [Elementary Area]
- One Elementary or Middle School Student Teaching Experience (12 credits including 2 credit seminar) [Elementary Area]

**Special Education: Literacy and Language Courses and Fieldwork Experience**

- RPSE 465, Language and Reading Instruction for Students with Disabilities (3 credits)
- One cross-curricular practicum experience at either elementary or secondary level (3 credits)
- One cross-curricular student teaching experience at either elementary or secondary level (10 credits)

## Glossary

Below is a brief list of terminology and working descriptions to provide additional context to the narrative and recommendations found in this report. The sources of working descriptions are noted, and “Source: Report Narrative” is used to indicate the working description arose from the Task Force discussion and/or written report narrative.

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<b>ACT</b>	<p>“A testing system designed by the ACT Corporation (ACT) to assess high school students' general educational development and their ability to complete college-level work. The ACT tests cover four subjects: English, mathematics, reading, and science. See the ACT website for details. WISEdash provides two sets of ACT results. ACT Graduates scores are for members of the graduating class who took the test as 10th, 11th, or 12th graders. Only students who completed the entire test are represented in these data. ACT Statewide scores are for 11th graders that took the required ACT test on the designated statewide testing days. Writing is a required component of the statewide test. All test results are included regardless of whether the entire test was completed” (DPI, n.d.-g).</p> <p>“The highest possible score on the exam is 36 for the Composite score, the Combined score and each of the subject scores. The lowest possible score for writing is 2 and the highest possible score is 12 except for 2015-16 when the score range was 1-36. The scores of each subject area are categorized as College Ready or Below College Ready based on <a href="#">benchmark values provided by the ACT</a>. No benchmarks are provided for the Composite, Combined, and Writing scores” (DPI, n.d.-c).</p>
<b>Alphabet Language</b>	<p>Includes naming letters and producing the sounds associated with them (Source: Report Narrative).</p>
<b>Anti-racist</b>	<p>“Opposed to racism” (Merriam-Webster, 2021).</p>
<b>College Readiness Benchmarks</b>	<p>“Scores on each of the four main ACT tests (reading, English, mathematics, and science) that can be used to predict whether or not a student will succeed in that subject in college. ACT's empirical definition of college readiness is having a likelihood of 50 percent of earning a grade of B or better or 75 percent of earning a C or better in a typical credit-bearing first-year college course” (DPI, n.d.-g).</p>
<b>Cut Scores</b>	<p>“A cut score is a point or score, based on prior data, that differentiates among categories or classifications of a selected measure or test. For example, cut scores can be used to differentiate if a student has demonstrated a basic, proficient, or advanced understanding of the standards being assessed” (MMSD, n.d.-f).</p>

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<b>Disability Status</b>	“Indicates that a student has been reported by the school district as needing special education and/or related services” (DPI, n.d.-g).
<b>English Language Arts (ELA)</b>	“A subject area that generally includes English, reading, and writing. For ACT Statewide, the ACT ELA score is calculated by DPI by averaging the English and reading scores and then combining that average with the writing score multiplied by three. The ELA score for ACT is Wisconsin specific. It is not available in other states or nationally, and is not included as part of the ACT Graduates results in WISEdash” (DPI, n.d.-g).
<b>English Language Learners (ELL)</b>	“This term can encompass students from a lot of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In general, an English Language Learner is a student who has had significant exposure to a language other than or in addition to English. This can range from a student who just moved to the United States and speaks no English, to a student who was born in the United States whose family speaks not only English but also their heritage/native language. So, although the term "English Language Learner" implies that the student needs to learn English, sometimes the student is multilingual and is fully proficient in multiple languages. By law, school districts are required to assess any English Language Learner's English Language Proficiency” (MMSD, n.d.-g).
<b>FastBridge</b>	“FastBridge provides several universal screeners, progress monitoring and a data management system that supports a Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS). FastBridge for Progress Monitoring has replaced AIMSweb. FastBridge is also being used as a system of screeners (AUTOREading for grades K-2 with English instruction and early Reading for grades K-2 with English/Spanish instruction). This assessment measures reading performance for grades K-12 and can adapt to any curriculum. FAST literacy probes enable early intervention through progress monitoring and bench-marking” (MMSD, 2020a)
<b>Fluency</b>	The ability to read text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Formative Assessment</b>	“A formative assessment is an assessment or activity that monitors student learning and provides feedback to teachers and students about their learning. This may be given, in different forms, several times a week” (MMSD, n.d.-g).
<b>Forward Exam</b>	“The Forward Assessment is a statewide Wisconsin Student Assessment System (WSAS) standardized exam. The exam was given to students in grades 3 through 8 and 10 and measured student achievement in two subject areas: English language arts (ELA), mathematics, science and social studies. This exam was given starting in school year 2015-16” (DPI, n.d.-g).



	Student performance on the Forward Exam is reported in terms of four performance levels: Advanced, Proficient, Basic, and Below Basic (DPI, n.d.-h).
<b><i>Advanced</i></b>	<i>“...Student demonstrates thorough understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness” (DPI, n.d.-h).</i>
<b><i>Proficient</i></b>	<i>“...Student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness” (DPI, n.d.-h).</i>
<b><i>Basic</i></b>	<i>“...Student demonstrates partial understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness” (DPI, n.d.-h).</i>
<b><i>Below Basic</i></b>	<i>“...Student demonstrates minimal understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills for their grade level that are associated with college content-readiness” (DPI, n.d.-h).</i>
<b>Language</b>	In referring to language, we include all forms of communication and listening (e.g., oral, spoken, American Sign Language) during discussions and meaning making (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Literacy</b>	Used in this report as a broader term and includes reading, spelling, and writing, all of which are closely tied to spoken language (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) Framework</b>	A systemic approach to assessment and instruction used to ensure that all students, especially those who struggle, receive high-quality literacy instruction tailored to their needs (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Oral Language</b>	Described as the ability to comprehend and produce the vocabulary and grammar of spoken language (Source: Report Narrative)
<b>PALS</b>	<p>“The Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS) was Wisconsin’s required literacy screener from 2012-13 until 2015-16. ...PALS is a research-based screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tool. Wisconsin teachers used PALS to identify students at risk of developing reading difficulties, diagnose students' knowledge of literacy fundamentals, monitor progress, and plan instruction that targeted students' needs. Student data collected from PALS provided a direct means of matching literacy instruction to specific literacy needs” (DPI, n.d.-i).</p> <p>“PALS scores are provided in WISEdash for those schools that have students in grades K4 through 2nd in order to facilitate thorough data</p>

	analyses. PALS scores are not used for school accountability purposes. Schools and districts are required by Wis. Stats. 118.016 to administer a literacy screener in order to identify students who are at risk of developing reading difficulty” (DPI, n.d.-j).
<b>PALS Benchmark</b>	“...A predefined minimum score for a task or set of tasks which is used to identify whether the student is at risk of reading difficulty. Benchmark values vary from task to task, test administration, and grade level. No benchmarks are provided for K4 or the optional winter administration” (DPI, n.d.-j).
<b>Phonics</b>	Instruction that teaches children to read and spell words (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Phonological Awareness</b>	The ability to detect and manipulate the sound structures of oral language (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Phonological Memory</b>	The short-term retention of spoken information (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Print Knowledge</b>	Encompasses aspects of concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, and beginning decoding (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	“A person's "race/ethnicity" is the racial and/or ethnic group to which the person belongs or with which he or she most identifies. Ethnicity is self-reported as either Hispanic/Not Hispanic. Race is self-reported as any of the following 5 categories: Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or White. In WISEdash, the data displayed reflects the race/ethnicity that is reported by school districts to DPI. See more at the DPI webpage on Racial and Ethnic Data” " (DPI, n.d.-g)
<b>Reading</b>	Used in this report when focusing on issues about comprehending text, especially how that skill is acquired (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Reading Readiness</b>	Involves several skills such as concepts about print, alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, vocabulary, and memory (Source: Report Narrative).
<b>Screener</b>	“Screening tools, or assessments, are used as a "quick check" to determine if there is a need to look more closely to see if a student is struggling with things. One possible result of a screening assessment is that a more thorough, diagnostic assessment tool would be used to determine if there is, indeed, any specific support or strategy needed. Screening tools are not designed to be diagnostic -- their purpose is to alert the teacher that a closer

	look may be needed or that a specific program (English Learner supports) may be recommended” (MMSD, n.d.-h).
<b>Social Justice</b>	“Fair treatment of all people in a society, including respect for the rights of minorities and equitable distribution of resources among members of a community” (Dictionary.com, 2021).
<b>Summative Assessment</b>	“Summative assessments are assessments that check student learning over a longer period of time (quarter, semester, etc.) and compare it against a benchmark expectation or standard” (MMSD, n.d.-f).
<b>Two or More</b>	“Indicates that a student identifies with two or more races and is not Hispanic/Latino. See ‘Race/Ethnicity’” (DPI, n.d.-g)
<b>WISEdash</b>	“Wisconsin Information System for Education (WISE) Data Dashboard is an official public reporting portal from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). WISEdash is located at <a href="http://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov">http://wisedash.dpi.wi.gov</a> . WISEdash uses "dashboards," or visual collections of graphs and tables, to provide multi-year educational data about Wisconsin schools. WISEdash can be used by anyone to view educational data published by DPI (DPI, n.d.-g).

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