

A SYSTEM'S GUIDE TO LITERACY LEADERSHIP:

Exemplar Commitments in Action

The purpose of this document is to highlight the system-level commitments required to ensure every student has access to high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction. It is intended as a practical guide for education systems to draft their own literacy commitments and action steps. Each commitment provides clear, actionable statements of the mindsets, structures, and practices necessary to create inclusive literacy environments that give all learners—particularly those with learning differences—the opportunity to thrive.

SYSTEM-LEVEL LITERACY COMMITMENTS FRAMEWORK

This framework outlines five commitments that education systems can make to ensure every student has access to high-quality, evidence-based literacy practices. Each commitment includes a guiding angle and key action steps.

1 Build and Sustain Coherent Literacy Systems

Angle: Make literacy the system's priority.

- **Develop a Comprehensive Literacy Plan:** Establish a system-wide (state and district) roadmap with clear goals, actions, and accountability to guarantee every student has access to evidence-based literacy instruction.
- **Align Schedules and Resources:** Create master schedules and resource allocations that protect time for Tier 1 instruction and allow flexibility for targeted student support.
- **Embrace Literacy in the Digital Age:** Integrate technology and AI tools into literacy practices to enhance engagement, access, and personalization.



2 Strengthen Instructional Excellence in Literacy

Angle: Put high-quality teaching at the center.

- **Protect Literacy Instructional Time:** Safeguard uninterrupted blocks of instructional time for reading and writing.
- **Provide High-Quality Instructional Materials:** Ensure schools use evidence-based, culturally responsive materials and assessments designed to meet diverse student needs.
- **Promote Literacy Across the Curriculum:** Integrate reading and writing into every subject to build and reinforce literacy skills systemwide.
- **Elevate Secondary Literacy Practices:** Prioritize literacy supports for middle and high school students to ensure continued growth beyond early reading.

3 Invest in Educator and Leader Capacity

Angle: Equip leaders and teachers to lead for literacy.

- **Provide Ongoing & Differentiated Professional Learning:** Deliver targeted professional development on evidence-based strategies to strengthen teaching and meet diverse student needs.
- **Reimagine the Role of Principals:** Position principals as literacy leaders—coaches, resource allocators, and champions of strong instruction.
- **Build the Capacity of Literacy Leaders:** Support principals, IEP teams, EL directors and others in evaluating learning environments, implementing strategies, and driving improvement.



4 Use Data and Assessments to Drive Continuous Improvement

Angle: Turn data into action.

- **Create a Literacy Leadership Task Force:** Convene a system-wide (state and district) team to monitor progress, align resources, and address system-level literacy gaps.
- **Ensure Early and Ongoing Screening:** Use universal literacy screeners to identify needs early, monitor growth, and trigger timely interventions.
- **Build a Culture of Data Use:** Provide collaborative spaces where educators regularly analyze data, design targeted interventions, and track student progress.
- **Develop a Systemwide Literacy Dashboard:** Establish an interactive platform that aggregates real-time student progress, trends, and program impact in one place.

5 Cultivate a Culture of Literacy Beyond the Classroom

Angle: Make literacy everyone's business.

- **Engage Families and Communities:** Work with families, educators, and community members to co-create a culture of literacy.
- **Deliver Accessible Resources:** Provide take-home literacy materials, workshops, and guidance to support at-home reading.
- **Expand Community-Based Programs:** Offer ongoing opportunities—such as literacy nights or summer reading programs—that engage students and families.
- **Partner with Community Organizations:** Collaborate with libraries, bookstores, and local organizations to expand literacy opportunities outside of school.
- **Leverage Local Reading Networks:** Connect with early childhood centers and other partners to build a strong literacy ecosystem.

This document was developed by gathering input from literacy leaders across six school districts and two state education agencies who were invited to contribute their most effective system strategies and recommendations for systems related to literacy education. Their collaborative efforts resulted in a long list of example commitments and action items aimed at ensuring that every student has access to high-quality literacy instruction.
