

REPORT TO THE BOARD

Item:	Early Literacy Initiative Update
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The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update on the implementation of the Early Literacy Initiative.

The Early Literacy Initiative focuses on providing high-quality literacy instruction and targeted literacy intervention to TK-2nd grade students. Grounded in the Science of Reading, the initiative provides consistent instruction, early identification of reading challenges, and timely intervention. It represents a long-term investment in student outcomes, instructional quality, and educational equity.

The Early Literacy Initiative includes the following elements:

- Districtwide common early literacy assessments
- Job-embedded Professional development for teachers and administrators
- Districtwide common foundational reading skills (*oral language, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary*)
- Common early literacy resources and materials across all TK-2 classrooms
- In-class coaching for teachers (with early literacy TOSAs)

This initiative brings together aligned curriculum, common assessments, teacher coaching, and family engagement to build a strong literacy foundation for every student.

Common Early Literacy Assessments

With the adoption of DIBELS as NUSD’s approved Reading Difficulties Screener, NUSD now has aligned reading assessments in grades K-2. The DIBELS assessment will be given three times per year to all students in grades K-2. Teachers and early literacy TOSAs will be monitoring data from the DIBELS assessments to design lesson sequences and provide targeted intervention for students. In addition to the DIBELS reading difficulties screener, all TK-2 students will continue to take the NUSD writing assessment twice per year. The results of the writing assessments will also be used to support TOSAs in their coaching and collaboration with teachers. Additionally, principals will be monitoring formative assessment data for their school sites, such as curriculum-embedded assessments, and consistently analyzing the data with staff in Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings and staff meetings.

Professional Development

The Early Literacy TOSAs, two school site Principals (HES and BCS), and district leaders overseeing the work with the Early Literacy Initiative attended the National Literacy Institute Science of Reading (SOR) Summer Program. Through this summer program, the early literacy team:

- Received training on the Science of Reading and instructional strategies for each pillar of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary) that align with the most up to date Science of Reading research
- Received support from the National Literacy Institute on:
 - The development of a fully comprehensive English-Language Arts instructional block that maximizes literacy instruction
 - Designing coaching cycles for TK-2 teachers
 - Examples of how a model early literacy classroom should be laid out and set-up

It is important to note that the "Science of Reading" is not a program. It is a well-researched and documented body of evidence to support effectively teaching reading to our early learners, utilizing the key components of oral language, concepts about print, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary.



On August 12, all TK–2 teachers participated in a full-day pre-service professional development session. This session was held at Bannon Creek School, one of our two model early literacy school sites. The training emphasized:

- The Science of Reading and how the brain learns to read
- High-Quality First Instruction (HQFI) and its components
- The Five Essential Pillars of Literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension
- Instructional modeling, hands-on literacy strategies, and classroom application
- Instructional schedules that incorporate all elements of literacy instruction daily

Following the PD, teachers collaborated with colleagues and TOSAs to apply what they learned as they planned and prepared for the school year. TOSAs also modeled how to utilize the sound wall and provided opportunities for teachers to practice using a sound wall. Additional professional development will be provided on November 10 (All-District PD) and during SDERD (Staff Development and Early Release Days). The all-district PD day and designated SDERD days will continue to focus on research-based instructional strategies rooted in the Science of Reading and how instruction on the five pillars of literacy should be integrated into a daily English Language Arts instructional block.

In addition to providing teacher professional development, the early literacy TOSAs will be participating in ongoing training. TOSAs will participate in the "Getting Reading Right" cohort through the Sacramento County Office of Education (SCOE). This cohort will meet monthly to provide additional training on the Science of

Reading and tier 1 and tier 2 reading intervention strategies for grades K-6. In addition to the SCOE cohort, TOSAs will also receive coaching from our partner, Leverage Learning, in order to build our internal coaching capacity in NUSD. In addition to training, TOSAs will receive on site coaching from Leverage Learning across the year on the implementation of their coaching cycles. The Leverage Learning coaches will observe our TOSAs' coaching practices in each cycle and provide feedback to them on how to strengthen their coaching cycles. In addition, Leverage Learning coaches will meet with TOSAs after each cycle to review data and support them in planning their coaching steps for the next cycle. Providing ongoing training and coaching for our TOSAs will build our internal capacity to provide high-quality professional development sessions and in-class coaching.

Model Early Literacy Classrooms

Heron School and Bannon Creek School will serve as our model early literacy sites. As model early literacy sites, the configuration of each TK-2 classroom aligns with the science of reading and the National Literacy Institute recommendations. These recommendations include creating a print-rich environment, literacy centers, writing centers, and tables conducive to small group instruction. A specific example of the required elements that will be in all TK-2 classrooms is a visible and student accessible sound wall. Sound walls are organized by speech sounds and focus on phonemes (sounds), articulation, and the transfer of skills to multiple words. Sounds are taught explicitly through the intentional use of sound walls and then these walls are also used independently by students.

TOSAs at the model early literacy school sites supported teachers with setting up their classrooms in the summer. Materials and furniture needed to create these model early literacy classrooms were purchased and delivered to school sites. TOSAs will continue to work to ensure all model classrooms are exemplar spaces for other staff to use as guides for setting up their own rooms. All TK-2 teachers were provided with the materials needed to create a sound wall in their classroom. 360 degree images of the model classroom will soon be available on our Knowledge Base webpage to serve as a repository of resources for teachers and administrators. TOSAs will also conduct facilitated walkthroughs with teachers from multiple sites to see the model classrooms in person and observe instruction taking place in these early literacy classroom environments. The picture below is of a kindergarten model classroom at Heron School.



Aligned Programs and Common Materials

School sites will continue to use Heggerty Bridge to Reading and/or University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) instructional programs and materials for Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction and intervention as well as SIPPS for Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention. These programs were piloted at several school sites in the 24-25 school year. TOSAs reviewed all programs and compiled a list of additional materials and resources teachers need to successfully implement each program.

Materials purchased for classrooms include:

- Individual student whiteboards
- Alphabet tiles and magnets
- Composition writing books are designed specifically for TK-2 students
- Phonics games and puzzles for literacy center rotations and small group instruction

NUSD has also purchased materials recommended by the National Literacy Institute for all TK-2 classrooms to support teachers with high quality first instruction aligned to each pillar of reading.

These materials include but are not limited to:

- Culturally responsive books for classroom libraries
- Anchor charts
- Leveled reading books
- Pocket charts
- Picture cards

Coaching Cycles with Early Literacy TOSAs

All TK-2 teachers are receiving coaching from TOSAs on each pillar of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary) in consistent coaching cycles throughout the school year. Each coaching cycle is six weeks in length and focuses on one or more of the literacy pillars and specific

instructional routines aligned to the focus pillar for each cycle. The week following each coaching cycle will be professional development, collaboration, and calibration for TOSAs. During each collaboration week, TOSAs will be monitoring and analyzing district reading and writing assessment data and making adjustments needed for the next coaching cycle. The TOSAs will share the data with the Ed Services and School Leadership teams in order to make adjustments and support coaching for site administrators to monitor and provide ongoing feedback to improve teacher capacity and student outcomes.

The coaching model is a co-teaching and gradual release model. In weeks 1 and 2 of each cycle, TOSAs will plan a lesson sequence aligned to the focus pillar of literacy for the cycle. The lesson sequence includes a research-based instructional routine aligned across school sites for each grade level. TOSAs then teach demonstration lessons for teachers to observe and replicate. Each TOSA provides teachers with look-fors prior to each lesson to support teachers in identifying the specific instructional strategies, routines, and practices to replicate in their own lessons. In weeks 3 and 4, TOSAs and teachers co-teach a lesson that is built by the TOSA team and collaborate to identify which part each teacher will lead during the lesson. TOSAs gradually release more of the instruction time to teachers so that by the end of week 4 the goal is for teachers to be leading all of the lesson components. In weeks 5 and 6, teachers will plan and practice independently teaching the district aligned instructional routine with the TOSA observing and providing support when needed. At the end of week 6, the TOSA and teacher will reflect on the lesson sequence, analyze assessment data, and discuss next steps for the teacher to continue implementing the modeled instructional routine after the cycle has concluded. The chart below outlines the five coaching cycles:

Yearlong Coaching Cycle Focus by Grade						
Grade		Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3	Cycle 4	Cycle 5
		Aug 18th-Sept 26th	Oct 6th - Nov14th	Dec 1st-Jan 23rd	Feb 2nd-Mar 13th	Mar 23rd-May 8th
TK	Literacy Pillar	Oral Language & Phonological Awareness	Vocabulary, Comprehension & Oral Language	Phonemic Awareness	Fluency & Concepts of Print	Phonics Foundations
	District Aligned Instructional Routine	Interactive Read-Aloud with Think-Aloud, *Elkonin Boxes (oral/picture)	Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds, Frayer Model	Elkonin Boxes	Shared or Echo Reading	Sound-Spelling Mapping
K	Literacy Pillar	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency & Phonics	Vocabulary & Comprehension	Vocabulary & Comprehension & Writing
	District Aligned Instructional Routine	Elkonin Boxes (Sound Boxes)	Sound-Spelling Mapping	Repeated Reading, High Frequency Word Mapping	Frayer Model, Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds	Frayer Model, Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds, Shared Writing
1st	Literacy Pillar	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency & Phonics	Comprehension & Fluency	Vocabulary, Comprehension & Writing
	District Aligned Instructional Routine	Elkonin Boxes	Sound-Spelling Mapping	Repeated Reading, High Frequency Word Mapping	Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds, Echo Reading	Frayer Model, Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds, Shared Writing
2nd	Literacy Pillar	Phonics	Vocabulary & Comprehension	Fluency & Phonics	Comprehension & Fluency (sentence-level)	Vocabulary, Comprehension & Writing
	District Aligned Instructional Routine	Sound-Spelling Mapping	Frayer Model, Interactive Read-Alouds with Think-Alouds	Repeated Reading, Multisyllabic Word Mapping	Interactive Read-Alouds, Echo Reading	Frayer Model, Interactive Read-Aloud with Think-Alouds, Shared and Independent Writing

Further, the early literacy TOSAs will meet with administrators regularly to discuss the instructional strategies and routines they are implementing with TK-2 teachers. These conversations will support site principals and assistant principals in providing feedback to teachers aligned to the Science of Reading, early literacy instructional routine, and the 5 coaching cycles. All site administrators reviewed the coaching model and coaching cycles at the Leadership Institute from July 29 to August 1. Administrators are encouraged to observe coaching cycles on their campus to deepen their understanding of early literacy instruction and coaching expectations.

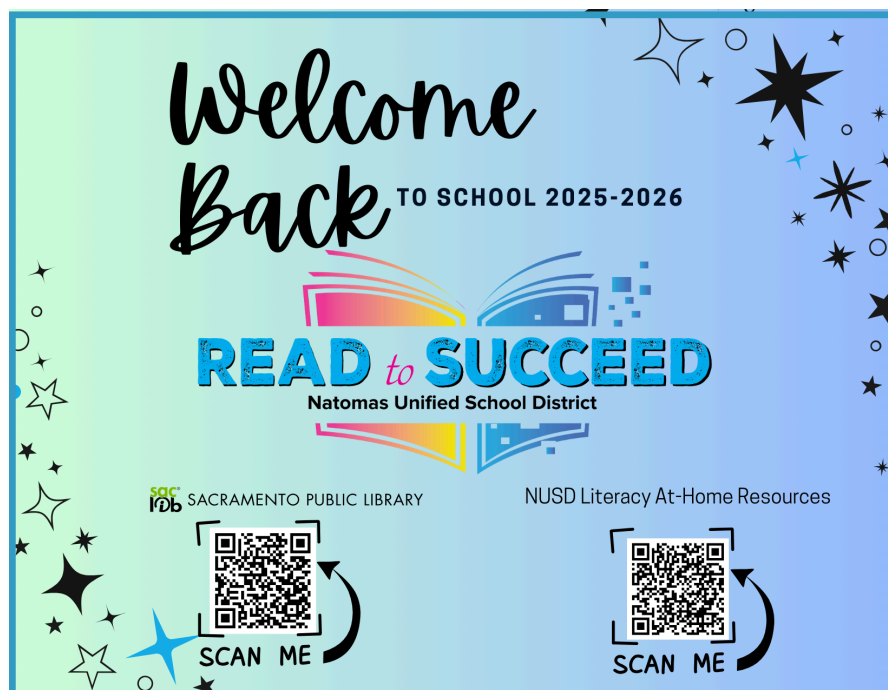
Parent and Family Engagement and Communication

Recognizing that families are essential partners in early literacy, NUSD is expanding its approach to engage and empower parents to support reading at home. A dedicated Early Literacy webpage is being developed on the district website, which will serve as a central hub for family-friendly information and resources. This webpage will include:

- An overview of the Early Literacy Initiative and the Science of Reading research
- Guidance on how families can support foundational reading skills at home
- A monthly featured book selection, available in classroom and public libraries, along with take-home activities that connect reading to fun, meaningful home experiences
- Printable versions of these activities will also be sent home with students each month

In addition, all families have access to a Family Early Literacy Toolkit, which includes practical resources they can use to build early reading skills at home. This toolkit includes family read aloud tips, links to online reading platforms such as Storyline Online, activity pages for highlighted books, and information about how to connect with local libraries. To further foster a love of reading and a sense of community, NUSD will also host Cultural Author Nights throughout the school year. These family-friendly events will celebrate diverse voices in literature, provide opportunities for students and families to meet authors, and build excitement around reading across cultures and communities. These efforts aim to strengthen the connection between home and school by making early literacy accessible, engaging, and culturally responsive for all families in our district.

Strengthening the connections this year began at Back to School Night. All families were given a 5x7 literacy card with tips for supporting literacy at home in grades TK-12 and links to literacy resources for families to access. These resources include QR codes to the Sacramento County Public Library website and the NUSD Literacy Webpage. In addition to these resources, the card featured a literacy activity for students and families to complete in their school site's library. Once the literacy activity was completed and checked by the school site Library Media Tech or designated staff member, students were entered into a raffle to win books. Books selected for the raffle are titles aligned to Hispanic Heritage Month and were differentiated for elementary and secondary grades. School sites held the raffle drawing in the days following Back to School Night to provide time for all families to complete the literacy activity and have an opportunity to be part of the raffle. An example of the literacy cards for elementary sites is below:







Home Reading Strategies



- 1 **Book Walk:** Engage your child in conversation as you preview the book before you read it. Make predictions and generate questions about the story before you read. Point to key words and pictures as you preview the book. This supports developing language and comprehension skills prior to reading the text.
- 2 **Jump-In Reading:** Enjoy reading a story with family members by allowing each person to read a portion of the story. This technique motivates your child to read a longer text.
- 3 **Visit The Library Early and Often:** Public libraries are great resources for books, helpful advice about authors and illustrators, story times, and more. Make visiting the library part of your family's routine.

Literacy

B I N G O

	Use the Destiny App to locate 1 book available in your library	
Locate the picture book section of your library	FREE	Find the place in the library where you go to check out a book
	Find a cozy reading spot that you could enjoy in the library	

Complete the bingo card to be entered into the book raffle! Show your completed bingo card to your school librarian.


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Ed Services staff and site leaders will closely monitor implementation throughout the year using multiple metrics:

- Analysis of assessment data (DIBELS and writing samples)
- Classroom observations and coaching logs
- Teacher feedback and implementation data from TOSAs
- Ongoing leadership support and PLC feedback

The Early Literacy Initiative is a research-driven commitment to our youngest learners and aligns with NUSD's core values. By grounding instruction in the Science of Reading research, providing aligned professional development, ensuring consistent materials and assessments, and embedding in-class coaching, NUSD is building a coherent, systemwide approach to literacy instruction from TK through second grade.

