



Literacy Plan

Table of Contents

SJSD Mission, Vision, and Core Values	4
Introduction	4
Standards Based Curriculum	4
Missouri Standards Based Curriculum	4
SJSD Local Curriculum	5
Assessment	6
Data Based Decision Making.....	6
Instruction	7
National Reading Panel Pillars of Instruction.....	7
Phonemic Awareness.....	7
Phonics	8
Fluency	8
Vocabulary	8
Comprehension.....	9
SJSD Foundational Practices.....	9
SJSD Literacy Structure.....	9
Intervention	9
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support	9
Reading Improvement Instruction	10
Reading Success Plan (RSP)	11
RSP Instructional Support	12
Dyslexia and Related Disorders.....	13
Remediation as a Condition of Promotion.....	13
Special Education Delivery Model.....	13
Students with IEP's.....	14
English Language Development Program	14

English Learners	15
Leadership	15
Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)	16
SJSD Aspiring Leadership Cohort	16
Science of Reading Network	16
LETRS for Administrators/Lexia Learning	16
Sustainability	16
Early Learning.....	17
Benchmark Advance	17
LETRS/Lexia Learning	17
The University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations	18
Visible Learning	19
Mastery Connect.....	19
DIBELS 8	20
Instructional Coaches.....	20
Building Community/Family Support and Commitment	20
Vision Forward	21
Adult Literacy Programs	21
SJSD Attendance Plan.....	22
Parents/Caregivers Literacy Support.....	22
St. Joseph Reads.....	22
SJSD Literacy Team	24
Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention	24
SJSD Educator Preparation	24
SJSD Recruitment and Retention	25
Closing	26

SJSD Mission, Vision, and Core Values

- SJSD VISION STATEMENT: Empowering every learner, every day
- SJSD MISSION STATEMENT: Preparing students for a successful future
- CORE VALUES: Communication, Respect, Courage, Problem Solving, and Engaged Citizen

Introduction

In 2023, Missouri legislators enacted SB-681 causing the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to prioritize the science of reading for all literacy initiatives from birth through grade 12. This action provides Missouri educators with the support and resources necessary to enhance student learning and strengthen their understanding of reading development.

The St. Joseph School District's Comprehensive Literacy Plan serves as a resource and guide for parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and interested community members. The Plan defines important key terms, describes instruction and intervention, and outlines professional learning. This is a working document and will be updated as needed to reflect current practices, resources, professional learning, and revised DESE guidance.

Standards Based Curriculum

Missouri Standards Based Curriculum

The Missouri Learning Standards define the knowledge and skills students need in each grade level and course for success in college, other post-secondary training, and careers. These expectations are aligned to the Show-Me Standards, which define what all Missouri high school graduates should know and be able to do.

In January 1996, Missouri adopted the Show-Me Standards, a demanding set of content and process standards that have proved to be an excellent frame of reference for student performance in Missouri. Grade-level expectations (GLEs) were then developed to provide grade by grade targets for instruction for teachers. Those expectations were regularly revised, based on teacher feedback and new research. As End-of-Course (EOC) assessments were developed at the high school level, Course-level expectations (CLEs) were created to provide teachers with course-specific objectives.

The latest iteration of expectations aligned with the Show-Me Standards is called the Missouri Learning Standards. The Missouri Learning Standards help ensure students learn basic and higher-order skills, including problem solving and critical thinking. The standards are relevant to the real world and reflect the knowledge and skills students need to achieve their goals. Learning outcomes improve when students, parents, and teachers work together toward shared goals. The Missouri Learning Standards give school administrators, teachers, parents, and students a road map for learning expectations in each grade and course.

SJSD Local Curriculum

The Saint Joseph School District is committed to maintaining high-quality, rigorous curriculum for all educational programs for nearly ten thousand students. At the state level, the Missouri Learning Standards define the knowledge and skills students need in each grade level and course for success in college, other post-secondary training, and careers. These state standards help ensure students learn basic and higher-order skills, including problem solving and critical thinking. Learning outcomes improve when students, parents, and teachers work together toward shared goals. The Missouri Learning Standards give school administrators, teachers, parents, and students a road map for learning expectations in each grade and course.

In 2020-2021, there was collaboration across the state that reviewed and analyzed each Missouri Learning Standard in the four core areas (Math, English, Science, and Social Studies). During this time, key stakeholders identified which standards should be designated priority to accelerate student learning. Research indicated that to be designated priority, the standard must have endurance, leverage, and essentiality. These priority standards serve as a solid frame upon which specific teaching and learning decisions are built. These identified priority standards maintain that the learning focus is life-worthy, essential for the next course, or measured, reported, and determined important by our Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), our state assessment.

The Saint Joseph School District frames curriculum on these Missouri Learning Standards. Research confirms that when districts adopt standards-based learning, students take ownership of their education and achievement soars. Our curriculum is focused and sets out a pacing guide that can be accomplished in a school year. Our writers align our district's priority standards with the state's work. This allows our district to provide a guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned to the Missouri Item Specifications. All SJSD students have the opportunity to learn the priority standards that support the overarching learning intentions and the success criteria needed to

meet each standard. Our curriculum is a living document; it is reviewed and revised on a rotating basis in connection with state work and research.

The St. Joseph School District curriculum is reviewed and revised on a rotating basis, supported by the [SJSD Professional Development Plan](#) related to content-area or grade level instructional best practices preceding curriculum revision and resource adoption. The SJSD curriculum focusses group lead teacher teams in collaboration around curriculum development, standards alignment, select/align resources, manage/distribute aligned resources, revise/publish curriculum, and provide input for the resolution of curriculum and instructional based issues. This job reports to the Director of Curriculum & Instruction.

In 2022, curriculum maps were published for all educators in alignment with the pacing of the SJSD scope and sequence. SJSD Administrators utilize curriculum maps to ensure the local curriculum is implemented with fidelity. The Saint Joseph Curriculum Handbook serves as the continuum for curriculum development, publishing, and deployment. As a function of continuous school improvement, a curriculum audit was conducted at the beginning of the 2023 school year, by a Northwest Regional Professional Development Center consultant. The St. Joseph School District (SJSD) gathers a variety of data to establish student baseline and monitor growth. Additionally, the SJSD leverages its Comprehensive School Improvement Plan's infrastructure of continuous improvement to provide multiple pillars of literacy support. The data outlined in the SJSD Assessment Plan are used to generate a body of evidence used to make decisions about interventions. More specifically, and central to literacy, evidence can lead to developing a Reading Success Plan (RSP). The determinant RSP metrics and processes are more fully described in the Intervention section of this plan. In addition to the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) testing, SJSD also conducts testing pursuant to the Missouri Continuous School Improvement Plan (MSIP6) and Senate Bill 681.

Assessment

Data Based Decision Making

The SJSD recently adopted a new process for improving instruction by implementing the GAINS model of data-based decision making. The model is defined by four unique processes: (1) gather data; (2) analyze data; (3) intentionally act and analyze again; and (4) notice and adjust. The GAINS model is deployed and implemented with a focus on SJSD formative assessment. This data includes, but is not limited to, the data described in the SJSD assessment descriptions.

[The SJSD assessment plan](#), along with building level assessment plans, are used to ensure formative assessments are utilized weekly, if not daily, across the district. In this way, teachers and administrators are consistently analyzing formative assessment through data teams/walls to better understand how to develop and differentiate instructional design. Further, teachers use this data to help students set goals as they become assessment-capable learners and progress towards proficiency.

Instruction

Evidence substantiates that every student receives effective, differentiated Tier 1 core literacy instruction from high-quality research-based curricula and instructional strategies aligned to state standards. To build a foundation for an exemplary implementation, educators need a clear picture of the type of instruction happening during instruction of the literacy block and interventions.

The National Reading Panel Report (2023) research shows that ALL students need at least 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction each day to become strong readers, and that this instruction must be systematic, explicit, scaffolded, and differentiated across the classroom. The Saint Joseph School District has outlined 175 minutes for explicit reading, writing, speaking, and listening instruction in grades K-6. Expectations for our reading instruction include explicit and systematic instruction in the following areas: phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and spelling. The Saint Joseph School District provides our teachers with a structure to ensure each of those components are incorporated into their lesson design and instruction.

National Reading Panel Pillars of Instruction

Learning to read is a complex task for beginners. They must coordinate many cognitive processes to read accurately and fluently, including recognizing words, constructing the meanings of sentences and text, and retaining the information read in memory.

Phonemic Awareness

Correlational studies have identified phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during their first 2 years in school. Phonemes are the smallest units constituting spoken language. English consists of about forty-

one phonemes. Phonemes combine to form syllables and words. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to focus on and manipulate phonemes in spoken words.

Phonics

Systematic phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses the acquisition of letter-sound correspondences and their use to read and spell words (Harris & Hodges, 1995). The goal in all phonics programs is to enable learners to acquire sufficient knowledge and use of the alphabetic code so that they can make normal progress in learning to read and comprehend written language.

Fluency

Fluent readers can read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. Fluency depends upon well-developed word recognition skills, but such skills do not inevitably lead to fluency. Skilled readers read words accurately, rapidly, and efficiently. Oral reading practice and feedback or guidance are most likely to influence measures that assess word knowledge, reading speed, and oral accuracy. Repeated reading and other guided oral reading procedures have clearly been shown to improve fluency and overall reading achievement.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary occupies an important position in learning to read. As a learner begins to read, reading vocabulary encountered in texts is mapped onto the oral vocabulary the learner brings to the task. The reader learns to translate the (relatively) unfamiliar words in print into speech, with the expectation that the speech forms will be easier to comprehend. Benefits in understanding text by applying letter-sound correspondences to printed material come about only if the target word is in the learner's oral vocabulary. When the word is not in the learner's oral vocabulary, it will not be understood when it occurs in print. Teachers utilize student-friendly, non-linguistic pictures to build background knowledge. Vocabulary occupies an important middle ground in learning to read. Oral vocabulary is a key to learning to make the transition from oral to written forms. Reading vocabulary is crucial to the comprehension processes of a skilled reader.

Comprehension

Comprehension is critically important to the development of children's reading skills and therefore their ability to obtain an education. Comprehension is a complex process. Reading comprehension is further defined as "intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader" (Durkin, 1993). According to this view, meaning resides in the intentional, problem-solving, thinking processes of the reader that occur during an interchange with a text. The content of meaning is influenced by the text and by the reader's prior knowledge and experience that are brought to bear on it. Reading comprehension is the construction of the meaning of a written text through a reciprocal interchange of ideas between the reader and the message in a particular text (Harris & Hodges, 1995, definition #2, p. 39).

SJSD Foundational Practices

The St. Joseph School District constructed and vetted the [SJSD Foundational Practices](#) through a team of educators, instructional coaches, and administrators. The Foundational Practices serve as an anchor for essential components to be observed in any PreK-12 classroom.

SJSD Literacy Structure

The St. Joseph School District is strongly committed to creating an environment that promotes high achievement for all students and believes quality literacy instruction includes the following essential lesson components embedded within the [SJSD Literacy Structure](#) and the [SJSD Learning Framework](#). Classroom teachers employ a variety of evidence-based instructional interventions at the classroom level to assist students who may be at risk of falling below grade-level expectations. In addition, the board requires districtwide compliance with the instructional interventions detailed in this policy, as required by law.

Intervention

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

MTSS acts as an umbrella that includes a few other tiered systems of support such as Response to Intervention (RTI), a multi-tier approach to the early identification and support of students with learning and behavior needs. [An SJSD MTSS intervention](#) is an intentional, research, or evidence-based program, instructional activity, or strategy, to target a specific academic/social-emotional/behavioral skill. Interventions are delivered with a specific frequency and duration

over a defined number of weeks, depending on the level of need. Interventions may be delivered in a variety of contexts such as small groups, one on one, after school, and tutoring. See [SJSD BOE Policy](#).

These RTI tiers provide levels of support for students demonstrating need. Educators will reference the [DESE literacy flowchart](#), when making targeted instructional decisions. The three tiers of RTI are:

Tier 1: Whole class instruction/core instruction

Tier 1 includes all students in the general education classroom. Students in Tier 1 may work in small groups, and have learning supports that fulfill their needs. If a student exhibits a greater need than the general classroom instruction can address, then this student moves onto Tier 2.

Tier 2: Additional small group interventions

Students demonstrating a need for Tier 2 will receive additional small group instruction. It is important to note that students continue to receive everyday core instruction within the classroom. Educators will monitor the students' progress in this tier and if the student shows improvement, they may move back to Tier 1. If the student does not show improvement, the student may move to Tier 3 to receive additional support.

Tier 3: Intensive interventions

Tier 3 is the most intensive level of support. Students demonstrating a need for Tier 3 support will continue to receive core instruction in the classroom and additional small group/individual instruction outside of the classroom. Additionally, they will receive a stronger dose of intervention, often in the form of individualized lessons with a specialized reading educator.

Reading Improvement Instruction

The district will provide a reading success plan designed to remediate identified areas of reading deficiency to students who need reading assistance, as required by law. The plan will include intensive instructional services and supports as appropriate according to the students' needs. The services and supports may include additional scientific, evidence-based reading instruction and other strategies prescribed by the district.

Reading Success Plan (RSP)

Early literacy education is critical to a student's long-term academic success. Therefore, it is important to identify students who have a substantial reading deficiency or are at risk for reading disabilities such as dyslexia, as early as possible. Early identification allows educators to provide instructional support targeted to individual student needs, to monitor student progress and response to instruction over time, and to adjust instruction as needed. The district will provide a reading success plan for students who:

1. Exhibit a substantial deficiency in reading that creates a barrier, based on teacher observation or reading assessment, to reading progress; or
2. Have been identified through the statewide dyslexia screening as being at risk of dyslexia or have a formal diagnosis of dyslexia.

A substantial reading deficiency exists when a student is one or more grade levels behind in reading or reading readiness. Beginning 2026-2027, SJSD will utilize the DESE approved mCLASS DIBELS 8 as a Missouri Foundational Reading and Dyslexia Screening Assessment. [DIBELS guidance documents](#) will inform student RSP's.

The district will notify parents/guardians of students identified for reading success plans, offer interventions, and provide strategies that parents/guardians may use to help the student obtain reading proficiency. In addition, parents will be notified when students exit an RSP.

RSP Requirements by Grade Level and Essential Reading Skill						
An RSP is required for every student identified as at risk for dyslexia or has a formal diagnosis of dyslexia at any grade level. All risk levels are determined by the vendor's cut scores.						
Grade	Phonemic Awareness	Phonics	Fluency	Vocabulary	Comprehension	Lexile
Kindergarten	At Risk					
Grade 1	At Risk					1 year or more below grade level
	Identified as at risk in either of these two essential skills		Identified as at risk in any two of these three essential skills			
Grade 2	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	1 year or more below grade level
Grade 3	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	1 year or more below grade level
An RSP is required for any student in grades 4 or 5 identified as at risk in any essential skill area.						
Grade 4	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	1 year or more below grade level
Grade 5	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	At Risk	1 year or more below grade level
						RSP Required

RSP Instructional Support

As identified in [SJSD Board Policy IGAB](#) the reading success plan will include intensive instructional services and support as appropriate according to the student's need to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency. Services and support may include additional scientific, evidence-based reading instruction, and other strategies prescribed by the district. The plan may include, but is not limited to:

- Small group or individual instruction;
- Reduced teacher-student ratios;
- More frequent progress monitoring;
- Tutoring or mentoring;
- Extended school day, week, or year; and
- Summer reading programs.

The district will provide intensive reading instruction during regular school hours and:

- Provide skill development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension;
- Include a scientifically based and reliable assessment;
- Provide initial and ongoing analysis of each student's reading progress;
- Provide a curriculum in core academic subjects to assist the student in maintaining or meeting proficiency levels for the appropriate grade.

At regular intervals, the district will notify a student's parent/guardian of the student's academic and other progress as well as other relevant information. SJSD will notify parents of students with RSP's of reading progress during each quarter.

The district will report to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on the specific reading intervention and supports implemented by the district and the reading assessment data collected for grades K–3. Some students may remain on a Reading Success Plan beyond third grade. These students will be required to continue taking state-approved beginning and end-of-year assessments until exiting the RSP.

Dyslexia and Related Disorders

In accordance with law, the district will screen students for dyslexia and related disorders and provide appropriate classroom support in accordance with guidelines developed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The district will provide screening results to the students' parents/guardians and district employees who have a legitimate educational interest.

SJSD Screening Process and Risk Factors for Dyslexia

A screening that indicates the possibility of dyslexia or a related disorder is not a diagnosis and is not sufficient to determine whether the student has a disability, as defined in law, that requires accommodation or special education. However, the district may use the information to provide additional classroom support and collect additional data to determine whether the student may need to be evaluated for special education or other accommodations in the future. The district will annually offer all teachers a minimum of two hours of training on dyslexia and related disorders.

Remediation as a Condition of Promotion

Students identified by the district as failing to master grade-level skills and competencies must remediate those skills and competencies before they are promoted to the next grade level. The superintendent or designee shall determine which skills and competencies must be mastered, how they are to be assessed, and what remediation is appropriate. Remediation may include, but shall not necessarily be limited to, a mandatory summer school program focused on the areas of deficiency or other such alternatives conducted by the district outside of the regular school day. Such remediation shall recognize that different students learn differently and shall employ methods designed to help these students achieve. If a student has a substantial reading deficiency at the end of third grade, the appropriate district staff will meet directly with the student's parents/guardians to discuss whether the student should be retained and will formulate or continue a specific plan to remedy the student's reading deficiency.

Special Education Delivery Model

Special Education students are provided with specially designed instruction for students based on their IEP goals. Students are serviced through regular classroom, co-teach, resource, daily

living skills, structured learning, or foundational skills models, to provide explicit instruction based on those goals. Students receive Tier 1 and Tier 2 literacy instruction in the regular classroom when they are capable and as guided by their IEPs. Extended School Year is offered to special education students that show regression or have severe disabilities that require services in the summer months to work on IEP goals. Special education students have the opportunity to attend summer school with regular education students. Special education students eligible for specialized reading services will receive support for literacy goals as identified in their Individualized Education Plan. Special education students who do not qualify for specialized reading services in special education will receive an RSP.

Students with IEP's

Students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that includes reading goals aligned with the area(s) of their SRD may not require an RSP. However, students who have an IEP that does not include reading goals aligned with the area(s) of their SRD and who meet the requirements for an RSP must have an RSP. The individual needs of the student should dictate the goals and support provided. All reading instruction must be evidence-based and grounded in the science of reading. Students with disabilities who have IEPs and are not on track for reading may require an RSP that aligns and does not conflict with their IEPs. Reporting and monitoring plans must follow the RSP guidance. All reading intervention and instruction must be evidence-based and aligned with the science of reading. Students with significant cognitive disabilities are exempt from taking the foundational reading skills assessment pursuant to section 167.268, RSMo. As a result, these students are exempt from all other requirements for RSPs. A student's IEP team should discuss and decide on this exemption annually. Each student's IEP should address foundational skills for literacy when applicable.

English Language Development Program

Educational philosophy: English Learners need support in promoting schema and comprehension of academic content. Vocabulary instruction and literacy instruction are essential parts of the English Language Development (ELD) program. Consideration is given to the language proficiency of students with a focus on monitoring progress and challenging students to perform at the next level. Collaboration between ELD teachers, paras, and content teachers is key in providing instruction that supports literacy and content area curricula, while enhancing the language proficiency of students. Parental involvement includes educational

opportunities to support literacy in the native language. Native language support is provided when possible and appropriate.

Elementary students are pulled out of the regular classroom for intensive English instruction. ELD teachers base service minutes on the WIDA level of proficiency for ELD students. An ELD-certified teacher provides explicit language instruction including grammar, vocabulary, and communication skills. ELD teachers also provide push-in services to assist students in the general education classroom with core subjects to support literacy as needed in content areas. After-school tutoring and summer school opportunities are offered to our elementary ELD students to provide continued instructional support in English language development. The St. Joseph School District secondary ELD services address the academic and social needs of newcomers, intermediate, and Long-Term English Learners. “Newcomers refers to K-12 students born outside the United States who have arrived in the country in the last three years and are still learning English” (U.S. Department of Education, *Newcomer Toolkit*, 2023, p. 6).

English Learners

English Learners (ELs) who have Individual Academic Plans (IAPs) and are not on track for reading may require an RSP that aligns and does not conflict with their IAPs. An LEA may choose to incorporate the RSP within the IAP (when allowable) or choose to have separate plans. Reporting and monitoring plans must follow the RSP guidance. All reading intervention and instruction must be evidence-based and aligned with the science of reading. Pursuant to 167.645, RsMo, students with an English language proficiency level below 2.0 on the WIDA Screener or ACCESS are exempt from taking the foundational reading skills assessment. For first semester kindergarten students, a student’s oral language proficiency level is used to determine eligibility for an RSP. The oral language proficiency level is a composite score calculated using the listening and speaking scores from the WIDA Screener.

Leadership

All individuals in a child’s life play a role in their development and learning. The St. Joseph School District Comprehensive Literacy Plan aims to support a community-wide approach to supporting and improving literacy outcomes.

Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS)

Each SJSD principal participates in the Missouri Leadership Development System (MLDS). MLDS provides ongoing professional learning to develop and support effective school leaders. Essential school leadership competencies were categorized in five domains. The domains summarize the main roles a principal must assume, oftentimes simultaneously, to effectively lead a school that is focused on teaching and learning. The MLDS continuum fosters development of leadership competencies in a comprehensive and progressive sequence (Aspiring, Emerging, Developing, and Transformational). Each level represents advancement in leadership growth across a principal's career beginning with pre-service preparation.

SJSD Aspiring Leadership Cohort

The St. Joseph School District offers Aspiring Leaders an opportunity for leadership development. Participants develop their leadership skills through research, reflection, and application. The annual cohort completes the leadership experience with a job shadow experience.

Science of Reading Network

In 2023-2024, a team of district leaders and building principals are hosting and participating in a Northwest Missouri Science of Reading network provided by Northwest Regional Professional Development & DESE Literacy consultants.

LETRS for Administrators/Lexia Learning

The Saint Joseph School District has a cohort of district and building principals engaged in learning with LETRS® for Administrators. This learning enables leaders to effectively support educators as they engage in the LETRS course of study and work to implement the learnings in their classrooms. The program also defines the systems and infrastructures required to successfully implement a sustainable literacy program aligned to scientifically based research.

Sustainability

In the ever-evolving landscape of education, one constant remains: the critical role of literacy in shaping the future of our students. Informed teachers are our best insurance against reading failures. While programs are helpful tools, programs do not teach; teachers do. This is why the

Saint Joseph School District is committed to ensuring that all its educators have access to evidence-based professional development opportunities in literacy and language instruction as outlined in Building Improvement Plans (BIP) aligned to the SJSD Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

Early Learning

Literacy forms its roots in early language exposure. Children become better readers when they grasp the powers of oral language at an early age. Strong oral-language skills in early learners translates to strong literacy skills later on. In the spring of 2023, the Saint Joseph School District adopted the Emerging Language & Literacy Curriculum (ELLC) as its approved early learning curriculum. It prepares preschoolers for success in kindergarten and gives them a strong foundation in oral language and literacy with this scientifically based curriculum. This program not only addresses all developmental domains with theme-based units, children's literature, multisensory activities, scaffolded instruction, and parental involvement but also creates an engaging environment with activity and play-based learning. All Saint Joseph School District early educators were trained in this DESE approved preschool curriculum in the summer of 2023 and began to implement the ELLC in the 2023-2024 school year.

Benchmark Advance

In alignment with the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) list of approved core ELA instructional resources, the Curriculum and Instruction department facilitated a pilot of two state-approved ELA core resources.

Feedback from our pilot team and students demonstrated a preference for *Benchmark Advance*, one of only three core ELA resources approved by DESE. This preference was influenced by the program's emphasis on increasing access to print-rich materials, its balance of literary and informational grade-level texts, and its strong alignment with both the Missouri Learning Standards and the Saint Joseph School District Literacy Framework. The Academic Service Team recommended full district adoption of *Benchmark Advance* for grades K–6 and will launch implementation in Fall of 2025.

LETRS/Lexia Learning

The Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), is a comprehensive professional development program designed to enhance educators' knowledge and skills in the

field of literacy instruction. It provides teachers with evidence-based strategies and tools to effectively teach reading, writing, and spelling to students.

As part of [Missouri Read, Lead, Exceed](#), the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education announced that Missouri K–5 educators would be allowed to enroll in a Lexia LETRS® professional learning course at no cost to the teacher, the district, or their local education agency (LEA). To allow our Saint Joseph School District educators to participate in this initiative, a partnership with the local RPDC was established. The Saint Joseph School District strategically placed the five educator learning sessions on our district professional development days. Because of this partnership with our local RPDC, this allowed many more K-5 educators to take part in this initiative and an opportunity to experience this learning. In 2023-2024 school year, eighty-nine educators are studying and working to develop evidence-based foundational knowledge and skills to deliver explicit instruction that positively affects systematic change in literacy outcomes by taking part in the LETRS Missouri Read, Lead, Exceed Initiative. There are eight educators who have already completed Volume 1 & 2 and 54 educators who have completed Volume 1 of LETRS learning. SJSD supports teachers in ongoing literacy development through a site based LETRS trainer.

The University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations

The University of Florida Literacy Institute Foundations (UFLI) is an explicit and systematic program that teaches students the foundational skills necessary for proficient reading. It follows a carefully developed scope and sequence designed to ensure that students systematically acquire each skill needed and learn to apply each skill with automaticity and confidence. The materials and lesson structure will add to an educator's professional knowledge and skills in key areas: the process of reading acquisition, key linguistic elements necessary for reading, and evidence-based instructional methods that promote reading proficiency.

In the spring of 2023, the Saint Joseph School District approved the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) Foundations as its core K-2 program for teaching foundational reading skills. During the summer of 2023, the University of Florida's research team delivered professional learning and training in the UFLI Foundations to all elementary principals, K-2 classroom, reading, special education, and English language development educators. Implementation and continued learning support in the UFLI Foundations is a key component for the 2023-2024 school year. Classroom observations, webinars, videos of lesson components being taught, and other online resources will support the continued work with this core reading program.

Visible Learning

Visible learning for literacy requires that teachers understand which strategies and instructional routines are useful in which teaching situations. Not only will professional learning sessions focus on crafting learning intention and success criteria, but it will also provide learning on comprehension, how to give effective feedback to impact student learning, and develop processes and systems to collaborate with other educators to improve teaching and learning. John Hattie, educational researcher, has studied, analyzed, and evaluated performance indicators in work with teaching and learning. This work is known as *Visible Learning*.

The Saint Joseph School District has included his evidence-based research as part of professional learning for the 2023-2024 school year and is led by author and researcher, Kara Vandas. Under her leadership and direction, our educators are working to design a learner-centered curriculum with a key focus on clarity: learning intentions, success criteria, and exemplars.

Mastery Connect

In February of 2023, the University of Virginia Partnership for Leaders in Education (UVA-PLE) conducted a district readiness report for the Saint Joseph School District. This report focused on the St. Joseph School District's readiness to intentionally improve system conditions to enable next-level school improvement. One of their key areas of opportunity was to develop a formative assessment strategy at the high school level.

The Saint Joseph School District will provide professional learning to high school educators who instruct an EOC class on the work of formative assessment. This will allow equity across each of the three high schools in assessment practices and allow educators to best utilize data to transform their instructional decisions. It will also empower district leaders in the development of a more systematic approach to continuous improvement. Training was provided by *Instructure*. Their assessment platform, *MasteryConnect*, empowers educators to assess and track mastery of student understanding, share common assessments, and connect with other educators in an online professional learning community. Formative assessments are essential to literacy education in all such settings and contexts. By studying and applying formative assessment practices, educators can help improve literacy development and instruction for students.

DIBELS 8

SJSD Reading Interventionists and elementary principals participated in DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) training in August of 2023. All K-3 teachers participated in DIBELS training in August & February of 2024. Beginning in 2026, all K-6 teachers will provide benchmark beginning, middle, and end of year assessments. DIBELS is a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of literacy skills. DIBELS 8th Edition is the least invasive and is used widely in Title 1 schools across the nation. Each SJSD elementary school will have access to utilize the assessment for Tier 1-Tier 3 instruction. Teachers and reading interventionists utilize this progress monitoring (ongoing assessment) tool to help determine their next instructional steps as an integral approach toward moving students through the continuum of reading progression.

Instructional Coaches

The Saint Joseph School District utilizes a research-based, student-centered coaching model (Sweeney, 2022) to support teachers in better practices and designing learning experiences that positively impact student achievement, especially in student literacy outcomes. The coach's work includes designing and directing professional development, ensuring curriculum fidelity, supporting teachers in innovative practices, and locating resources to support learning experiences. They also seek out opportunities to disrupt and dismantle inequities related to school literacy data, curriculum, and instructional practices. Teachers need opportunities to receive coaching and support from experts in core literacy content, curriculum, and/or intervention. This coaching may be one-on-one or in small groups of teacher teams. The instructional targets are well defined and aligned to classroom observation data and student data. Coaching is driven by the needs of each teacher.

Building Community/Family Support and Commitment

Parents and families are a child's first teacher and need to have the necessary support to help children "learn to learn" in their early years of life. Improved coordination between systems will improve literacy outcomes for children by providing resources and support for parents, families, and caregivers. The St. Joseph School District values community support through school-business partnerships.

Vision Forward

Beginning in 2021, a broad-based group of citizens developed a long-range plan for the St. Joseph School District that reflects the community's priorities related to the future operations and educational opportunities for students in the district. Creative Entourage, a firm with experience in leading community engagement programs and members of the district's administrative team helped guide the Vision Forward process. Recommendations were made to the St. Joseph Board of Education in December 2022.

Adult Literacy Programs

This program provides services for adults seventeen and older who need their high school equivalency (HSE), English language learners, skill enhancement, and/or a path to career and college readiness skills. The AEL program has been a part of the community since 1954 when Principal Ruth Huston began the program as a service to the community.

The AEL program serves Andrew, Buchanan, Clinton, and DeKalb counties. In addition to the main location at the Keatley Center, there is a satellite location in Cameron. The AEL program serves approximately eight hundred students per year through HSE (High School Equivalency) or ELL (English Language Learners) courses. The St. Joseph Adult Education & Literacy (AEL) Program is located at the Robert Keatley Center at 1202 S 28th St, St Joseph, MO 64507.

The program includes the following, but is not limited to:

- AEL information and expectations
- All enrollment paperwork
- Personal inventories to assist you and the teacher
- Assessments to see your current skill levels in reading, math and language
- Information about goals and selecting proper achievable goals
- Success after AEL
- All materials are provided

SJSD Attendance Plan

The SJSD has a focused attendance campaign that was launched in the spring of 2022. Each building has an attendance plan and resources to create incentives and tiered interventions. Further, the SJSD created an employer toolkit so local businesses can promote good attendance within their own organizations and highlight its importance to our community's students. Each building Administrator has access to a secondary or elementary toolkit as well as monthly reports. The reports help buildings recognize and improve attendance.

The attendance program communicates attendance information with parents, district employees, and our community. The communication shared includes data about the impact of school attendance on academic achievement, personal letters that will alert parents when their child has missed a specific number of school days, and home visits from our community partners to offer additional information and support for families.

Our goal with attendance is to improve our school district's attendance. This is a key in improving the educational experience of our students, helping students build positive habits related to attendance—both for school and later for their jobs—and unites our community in sharing with our children the clear message that we value education.

Parents/Caregivers Literacy Support

The Saint Joseph School District believes that students are most successful when families and caregivers are supported and engaged with their child's education.

St. Joseph Reads

St Joseph Reads is a group of active community members and organizations in St. Joseph, MO, who embrace the concept that literacy is the foundation of a successful and thriving society. They work on projects to help promote and increase the importance of reading and literacy in our region. The group is focused on three main goals:

- Emphasizing the importance of developing and improving literacy skills for all ages.
- Marketing positive attitudes towards literacy and reading in the community.
- Informing the community about pre-K school readiness and helping kids be ready to start school.

The Literacy Summit held on Thursday, March 26, 2026, was designed for educators, business leaders, nonprofit directors, civic officials, and community advocates, the summit will convene stakeholders to develop a shared vision for literacy success in St. Joseph. This half-day summit will include round-table discussions, networking, and presentations from experienced literacy leaders.

Goals of the Summit:

- *Raise Awareness:* Highlight the urgent need to improve literacy rates in St. Joseph, sharing local data and national best practices.
- *Mobilize the Community:* Engage businesses, civic groups, and faith organizations as partners in advancing literacy.
- *Build Partnerships:* Connect schools, libraries, nonprofits, and community leaders around a common literacy action plan.
- *Secure Investment:* Inspire philanthropic, corporate, and government support to sustain long-term literacy efforts.

Desired Outcomes:

- A community-endorsed action plan with clear strategies for improving student and adult reading proficiency.
- Commitments from local organizations (schools, businesses, civic groups) to participate in and fund literacy initiatives.
- Formation of working groups/committees to implement tutoring programs, book access initiatives, and parent engagement strategies.
- Increased public understanding that literacy is not just an education issue, but a community-wide responsibility and opportunity.

SJSD Literacy Team

In May of 2026, The SJSD Literacy Team was established. The team reviewed district data, instructional resources, assessment updates, and the SJSD Literacy Plan. The recent cross-sector summary provided by the St. Joseph Reads Summit Report identified opportunities as; attendance challenges, family engagement, and middle school literacy proficiency results. Strengths identified were; high quality instructional materials, varied assessments for literacy, and LETRS professional development.

Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

SJSD Educator Preparation

New Teachers will be assigned a formal mentor for two years. [The SJSD New Teacher Induction Plan](#) & Mentor Discussion Guide will guide the training of new educators. New teachers will work with a district instructional coach to support professional development/growth plans focused on the Missouri Teaching Standards. The Saint Joseph School District will also host a series of learning events to support the work of our new teachers. Year Two teachers will attend learning sessions with one follow-up session with an instructional coach after implementation from the learning. Observation and additional coaching based on teachers' needs and requests.

Year One Instructional Support: Teachers will work with a district instructional coach to receive feedback regarding their instructional practices. This includes at least one observation with pre- and post-conferences during the first and second semester. Instructional coaches will also support professional development/growth plans focused on the Missouri Teaching Standards. The Saint Joseph School District will also host a series of learning events to support the work of our new teachers.

Year Two Instructional Support: Teachers will work with and be observed by a district instructional coach to receive feedback regarding their instructional practices. Year Two teachers will attend learning sessions with one follow-up session with an instructional coach after implementation from the learning. Observation and additional coaching based on teachers' needs and requests.

SJSD Recruitment and Retention

Grow Your Own-Current Students

The GYO program was started during the 2021-22 school year. The original intent was to select four students for each college grade level and four current employees to participate in the program. Participants are awarded \$2,000 per semester for a maximum of eight semesters. Additionally, they are offered summer employment and are paid as a full-time substitute when they do their student teaching in the SJSD. In return, they agree to work in the SJSD for at least one year for every year that they receive funding.

Grow Your Own-Current Employees

The GYO program was started during the 2021-22 school year. The original intent was to select four students for each college grade level and four current employees to participate in the program. Participants are awarded \$2,000 per semester for a maximum of eight semesters. Additionally, they are offered summer employment and are paid as a full-time substitute when they do their student teaching in the SJSD. In return, they agree to work in the SJSD for at least one year for every year that they receive funding.

Grow Your Own-Aspiring Teachers Program

Hillyard Technical Center (HTC), has recently begun an Aspiring Teachers program. It is a 2-year program for juniors and seniors who want to enter the teaching profession. The students in the program can come from the SJSD or any of the surrounding school districts that send students to HTC. Students may participate in the GYO program. The cost per student would be the same as all other versions of the GYO program.

Grow Your Own-Community Members

This proposal is to recruit up to twenty-four individuals who aspire to be teachers (currently possess less than a B.S. degree) and transition them into the GYO program. The amount listed is based on the same scholarship amounts given to current participants (\$2,000 per semester for up to eight semesters). This requires the same work commitment as our other GYO participants.

Pathway to Teaching-Current Employees

This is a new program for the district, and our first seven participants will be starting work with us this fall. The financial component of PTT is identical to the GYO program except that funding is only available for four semesters. All participants are enrolled in 2-year Alternative Certification programs that they complete as they teach.

Staff Recognition/Benefits

SJSD staff are recognized through a variety of ongoing awards. SJSD Foundation grants, quarterly and end of year awards are celebrated amongst all district employees. SJSD strives to employ staff who mirror the varied demographic of our student population. Employee retention is encouraged through benefits such as buy back of days and conversion days. Additionally, certified staff are provided with opportunities for additional wages through SJSD's Tutoring, Close the Gap, and summer school programs.

Academic Lab Lead Classrooms

In 2024, SJSD launched four elementary lab classrooms to recruit, develop, and retain staff in highly prioritized areas.

Closing

The St. Joseph School District's Comprehensive Literacy Plan serves as a resource and guide for parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and interested community members. This Plan addresses key components of the St. Joseph School Districts implementation of SB 681. This is a working document and will be updated as needed to reflect current practices, resources, and professional learning.