

REPORT TO THE BOARD

Item:	Early Literacy Initiative Update
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Early Literacy Initiative 2026–2027 Update

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with an update on the continued implementation and refinement of the Natomas Unified School District (NUSD) Early Literacy Initiative during the 2026–27 school year.

The Early Literacy Initiative represents a districtwide commitment to strengthening literacy instruction and improving outcomes for students through aligned instructional practices, job-embedded coaching, professional learning, common assessment practices, and targeted instructional support. Building upon the foundation established during the initial implementation of the initiative last year, the work during our second year in 2026–27 uses teacher feedback to focus on strengthening systems, deepening instructional practice, and using student data to inform timely instructional action.

In the 2026-27 school year, NUSD is expanding its focus to support literacy instruction through third grade while continuing to strengthen foundational literacy practices in the earlier grades. The work is designed to provide teachers and administrators with the knowledge, tools, resources, and ongoing support necessary to respond effectively to student needs.

Our Goals for 2026–27

The Early Literacy Initiative is guided by a districtwide Wildly Important Goal (WIG) focused on improving student literacy outcomes. During the 2026–27 school year, NUSD aims to increase the percentage of kindergarten through third-grade students performing At or Above Benchmark on the DIBELS literacy assessment from 58% to 70% by the end of the school year.

In support of the district goal, the Early Literacy team’s goal is to increase the percentage of progress monitoring occurring at the prescribed frequency for students scoring “Well Below” and “Below” on our DIBELS assessments from 17% to 100% by end of year 2026-2027. It is our belief that when we ensure students identified as needing additional support are monitored consistently and that

instructional action is taken based on the data gathered from monitoring, we will see improved literacy outcomes for students.

Together, these goals reflect two interconnected priorities: improving student outcomes while strengthening the systems and adult actions that allow educators to identify student needs and respond quickly with appropriate instructional support.

Monitoring Implementation & Impact

As the Early Literacy Initiative continues to develop, NUSD is strengthening its systems for monitoring both implementation and impact. Student outcome data remains an important measure of effectiveness; however, understanding how instructional practices are changing and how teachers experience coaching and professional learning is equally important. Site administrators are responsible for teacher evaluations and ensuring that instructional practices are regularly implemented in classrooms. The Early Literacy team will support implementation through coaching, professional learning, and ongoing monitoring, using multiple sources of information throughout the 2026–27 school year to reflect on progress and make adjustments as needed to coaching and PD throughout the year.

- **Cycle Surveys:** Teachers participating in coaching cycles will complete pre- and post-cycle surveys to provide information about their confidence, understanding, and experiences with the instructional practices introduced in each cycle. Results will help the Early Literacy team evaluate the effectiveness of coaching and identify areas requiring additional attention.
- **Instructional Actions and Walkthroughs:** Classroom walkthroughs and observations will provide insight into how instructional practices and routines are taking shape across classrooms. These opportunities will support administrators and district leaders in developing a shared understanding of literacy instructional practices and how they are connected to the goals for each coaching cycle. Information gathered by site administrators, Supervisors of School and the ELI Coordinator will help the Early Literacy team identify trends, recognize growth, and determine where additional support may be beneficial.
- **Student Assessment Data:** Multiple measures will be used to monitor student progress and instructional impact, including DIBELS assessment data, UFLI Progress Monitoring, and diagnostic assessments. Together, these measures provide information about student literacy development and help educators identify where instructional adjustments or additional support may be necessary.
- **Teacher Focus Groups:** The Early Literacy team will conduct focus groups in the fall and spring to gather qualitative feedback about implementation, coaching, professional learning, and the barriers or supports that influence classroom practice.

Coaching & Instructional Support

Job-embedded coaching remains a central component of the Early Literacy Initiative. During the 2026–27 school year, Early Literacy TOSAs will continue to partner with teachers through ongoing coaching cycles designed to strengthen instructional practice. The coaching model extends professional learning beyond a single training session by providing teachers with opportunities to learn, observe, practice, reflect, and receive support within their own classrooms.

The Early Literacy team has developed four cycles to guide the focus of coaching and instructional support throughout the school year. Each cycle centers on specific instructional actions and establishes a common focus for professional learning and classroom support across participating grade levels. The focus of the cycle plan is to ensure that all students receive a full and comprehensive literacy block of instruction daily and to support teachers with implementing the research-based instructional practices within that daily literacy block.

Coaching cycles include opportunities for TOSAs to model instructional practices, co-teach alongside teachers, observe implementation, and support teachers as they independently apply new learning. Throughout each cycle, teachers and TOSAs reflect on instructional practice and student response to determine appropriate next steps.

Each coaching cycle identifies specific instructional actions and goals aligned to the focus of the cycle. These common practices provide teachers and administrators with a shared understanding of the instructional routines and actions being strengthened through the initiative. Clear instructional goals also allow NUSD to monitor implementation over time.

While the 2026–27 Coaching Cycle Plan provides a common framework, coaching is not intended to follow a one-size-fits-all model. Early Literacy TOSAs differentiate support based on the needs of individual teachers, grade levels, and school sites. Within each cycle, teachers have the opportunity to select a coaching focus area that best aligns with their professional goals and identified student needs.

This refinement to the coaching model was informed by reflection on the 2025–26 implementation and feedback from teachers. In response, NUSD incorporated differentiated options within each coaching cycle, providing teachers with greater flexibility and choice while maintaining a common framework for strengthening high-impact literacy practices.

By combining a common instructional framework with differentiated coaching, NUSD can strengthen consistency in literacy instruction while recognizing the unique needs of individual teachers and school communities.

The image below shows the NUSD plan for 2026-27 Early Literacy Initiative Coaching Cycles.

2026-2027 EARLY LITERACY COACHING CYCLES



4 COACHING CYCLES:

Establishing routines, word recognition, and language comprehension



3 DATA TALKS:

Gap analysis and action planning to support system and student needs



TOSA SUPPORT INCLUDES:

Modeling, implementation coaching, and follow-up support

CYCLE

1

LITERACY BLOCK FOUNDATIONS

Aug. 24- Oct. 2

ACTIONABLE OUTCOME



I will establish routines that support systematic, explicit instruction within my comprehensive literacy block.

FOCUS



Support literacy block instruction through:

- Building and managing small groups
- Integrated Reading & Writing Routines
- UFLI, Word Origins, Heggerty lesson routines

REFLECTIONS

Do I consistently:

- ✓ Use data to create flexible small groups targeting specific skill needs?
- ✓ Regularly adjust groups based on student performance?
- ✓ Use an I Do-We Do-You Do gradual release model?
- ✓ Provide both affirmative and corrective feedback?
- ✓ Establish and explicitly teach participation and engagement routines?
- ✓ Maintain routines that maximize instructional time?

CYCLE

2

WORD RECOGNITION

Choose:

Tier 1 Whole Group or Tier 2 Small Group

Oct. 26- Dec. 11

ACTIONABLE OUTCOME



I will plan and deliver effective instruction focused on sound-symbol-meaning correspondence and implement daily decoding and encoding routines.

FOCUS



WORDS

- Decoding routines
- High frequency word instruction
- Irregular word instruction



LETTERS

- Sound-symbol correspondence
- Letter formation
- Letter-sound connections



SOUNDS

- Phonemic Awareness
- Phoneme-grapheme mapping
- Blending and segmenting

REFLECTIONS

Do my lessons include:

- ✓ Practice with letters, sounds, and patterns to build automaticity?
- ✓ Opportunities to both read & write target skills?
- ✓ A systematic routine that reduces cognitive load?
- ✓ Guided and independent practice opportunities?
- ✓ Multimodal scaffolds for all learners?
- ✓ Immediate corrective feedback during instruction?

CYCLE

3

LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

Jan. 5- Feb. 12

ACTIONABLE OUTCOME



I will implement explicit instruction when teaching across the five strands of language comprehension.

FOCUS



Vocabulary routines



Building knowledge routines



Sentence-level comprehension



Planning for wide reading



Integrated reading and writing

REFLECTIONS

Do I:

- ✓ Provide wide reading opportunities using coherent text sets?
- ✓ Build background knowledge across topics and domains?
- ✓ Explicitly teach Tier 2 or Tier 3 words?
- ✓ Teach language comprehension alongside word recognition?
- ✓ Facilitate structured discussion and oral language practice?
- ✓ Provide appropriate scaffolds for multilingual learners?

CYCLE

4

CHOICE CYCLE

Mar. 8- April 23

TEACHERS SELECT THE AREA OF GREATEST IMPACT:

OPTION A
Word Recognition



OR

OPTION B
Language Comprehension



REFLECTIONS

Does my instruction include:



Explicit Instruction



Modeling



Guided Practice



Independent Practice



Affirmative and Corrective Feedback



Instructional decisions informed by student data

Curriculum, Materials & Supply Support

Access to high-quality instructional materials is an important component of successful implementation. As NUSD continues to strengthen literacy instruction and expand support through third grade, the Early Literacy team is working to ensure that teachers have the resources needed to implement instruction effectively.

During the 2026–27 school year, NUSD is providing supplemental instructional materials to third-grade classrooms to support literacy instruction. These materials provide teachers with accessible resources that can be used to support daily instruction and targeted student practice. In addition to our core curriculum, Wonders, NUSD has also continued to support access to supplemental University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) materials for foundational skills instruction in kindergarten through third grade. Providing teachers at sites that are new to implementing UFLI with the necessary instructional resources helps reduce barriers to implementation and promotes greater consistency across classrooms.

The Early Literacy team will continue to monitor teacher and site needs throughout the school year and respond to emerging material and supply needs. This ongoing attention ensures that professional learning and coaching are paired with the practical resources teachers need to apply instructional practices with students.

Professional Learning

Professional learning is an essential component of the Early Literacy Initiative and provides the foundation for strengthening educator knowledge and instructional practice. During the 2026–27 school year, NUSD is providing multiple opportunities for teachers and instructional staff to strengthen their understanding and implementation of evidence-based literacy practices. Learning opportunities are intentionally aligned to instructional priorities and scheduled throughout the year to provide continued opportunities for learning, application, and reflection.

On August 10th, Early literacy was the focus for NUSD's Pre-Service learning for all TK through third grade teachers. The focus on literacy will continue throughout the year during Staff Development Early Release (SDER) Days and additional professional learning sessions in November. These opportunities provide teachers with time to deepen their understanding of key literacy practices, collaborate with colleagues, and connect new learning to classroom instruction.

In addition to districtwide learning opportunities, teachers and instructional staff will receive targeted professional development opportunities aligned to specific instructional resources and NUSD priorities. This includes learning related to:

- **UFLI**, to support effective implementation of foundational literacy instruction and intervention;
- **Word Origins**, to support the expansion of aligned literacy instruction into third grade and beyond;
- **DIBELS**, to strengthen educators' understanding and use of assessment data; and
- **Classtime**, to support the use of formative assessment information, from Wonders selections, to identify student needs and inform instruction.

New learning is reinforced through coaching cycles, classroom-based support, collaboration, and opportunities to analyze student data. This connection between professional learning and practice allows teachers to apply new strategies, reflect on implementation, and receive additional support as they refine their instruction.

By aligning districtwide learning with targeted training, coaching, and ongoing instructional support, the Early Literacy Initiative is building a coherent system for strengthening educator capacity and supporting improved literacy outcomes for students.

System to Monitor Instructional Action

The Early Literacy Initiative is building a consistent system for using assessment and instructional data to identify student needs, determine appropriate supports, and guide instructional decisions. The goal is to move beyond simply collecting assessment results toward a shared process in which educators regularly examine data, identify patterns, take action, and monitor the impact of that action.

NUSD uses common assessment measures to establish a shared understanding of student literacy performance and growth. DIBELS benchmark assessments and Reading Difficulties Risk Screening (RDRS, a screener for dyslexia and other reading difficulties) provide information about students' foundational literacy skills and help identify students who may require additional support. Progress monitoring provides more frequent information for students receiving additional support, allowing educators to determine whether instruction is having the intended impact and whether adjustments are needed. Diagnostic assessment information provides an additional layer of information to help educators understand student needs and inform instructional planning. Together, these measures create multiple opportunities to identify needs, monitor growth, and adjust instruction.

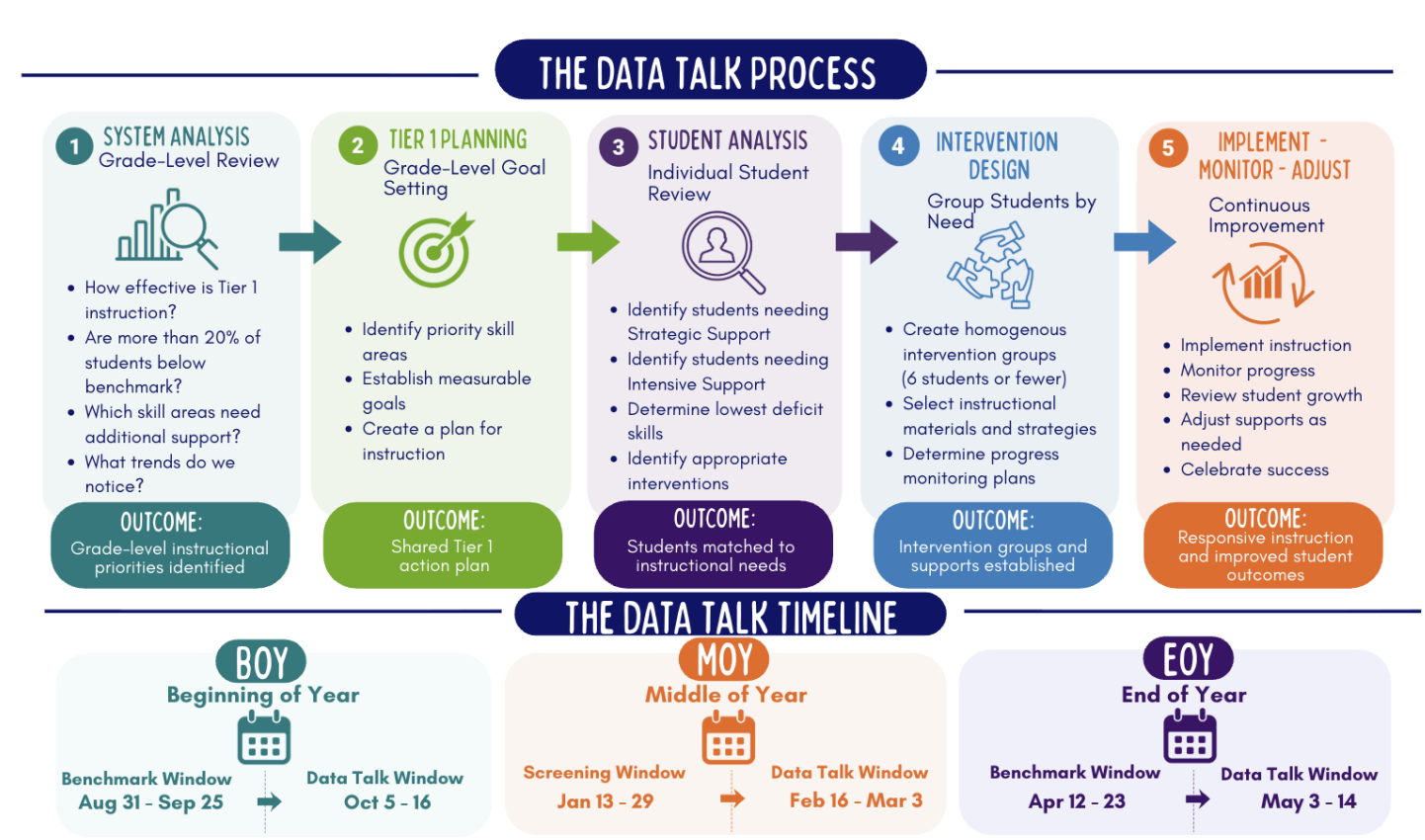
To support consistent use of data across schools, NUSD has developed a Data Talk Plan that establishes a common process and timeline for reviewing student performance. Data Talks provide educators with structured opportunities to examine assessment results, identify patterns, discuss instructional implications, and determine next steps.

The Data Talk process includes both system-level analysis and student-level analysis. At the system level, teams examine patterns across classrooms, grade levels, and school sites to identify areas of strength, areas of need, and opportunities to strengthen instructional practice.

At the student level, teams identify students who may need additional, intensified, or adjusted support. Educators use assessment and progress-monitoring information to determine appropriate instructional responses and establish next steps.

The NUSD ELI Team traveled to Pleasanton Unified School District on September 10 to observe Data Talks in action. This opportunity to collaborate with another LEA around core practices that support instructional decision making and student growth reflects NUSD's commitment to learning from others and continuously refining the Early Literacy Initiative in response to the needs of our community.

The image below provides an overview of the Data Talk Process and Timeline that will be implemented for all K-3 classrooms this year.



Ultimately, this system for instructional action connects the major components of the Early Literacy Initiative. Professional learning builds educator knowledge, coaching supports application, common materials reduce barriers to implementation, and assessment data provides evidence for determining next steps.

Together, these components create a continuous improvement system in which information about student learning is used to strengthen instructional practice and ensure that students receive the support they need to make progress toward grade-level literacy outcomes. The work is intentionally designed as an interconnected system: build knowledge, support implementation, examine evidence, take action, and monitor impact.

Fall 2026 Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Results by Grade: DIBELS 8th + Lectura					
Grade	Percentage of Students Placing At Each Composite Level				Proficiency (%At + % Above)
	Well Below	Below	At	Above	
K	38.9%	17.0%	21.4%	22.7%	44.1%
1	37.2%	14.3%	22.5%	26.0%	48.5%
2	34.9%	13.8%	28.2%	23.1%	51.3%
3	30.9%	17.2%	28.9%	23.0%	51.9%
ALL	35.3%	15.6%	25.4%	23.6%	49.0%

Fall 2026 Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Results by School, By Grade					
Grade	Percentage of Students Placing At Each Composite Level				Proficiency (%At + % Above)
	Well Below	Below	At	Above	
ALS All	48.5%	14.4%	21.1%	16.0%	37.1%
K	55.3%	21.1%	10.5%	13.2%	23.7%
1	59.6%	12.8%	10.6%	17.0%	27.7%
2	35.4%	10.4%	31.3%	22.9%	54.2%
3	45.9%	14.8%	27.9%	11.5%	39.3%
BCS All	57.9%	11.5%	18.0%	12.6%	30.6%
K	57.4%	12.8%	12.8%	17.0%	29.8%
1	61.9%	11.9%	16.7%	9.5%	26.2%
2	64.4%	6.7%	20.0%	8.9%	28.9%
3	49.0%	14.3%	22.4%	14.3%	36.7%
HAH All	43.0%	17.9%	23.5%	15.6%	39.1%
K	42.9%	21.4%	18.6%	17.1%	35.7%
1	40.0%	15.4%	27.7%	16.9%	44.6%
2	52.6%	11.5%	20.5%	15.4%	35.9%
3	37.1%	22.5%	27.0%	13.5%	40.4%
HAS All	25.8%	15.5%	40.7%	17.9%	58.7%
K	17.6%	15.4%	40.7%	26.4%	67.0%

Fall 2026 Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Results by School, By Grade					
Grade	Percentage of Students Placing At Each Composite Level				Proficiency (%At + % Above)
	Well Below	Below	At	Above	
1	44.0%	14.3%	34.5%	7.1%	41.7%
2	19.5%	13.4%	42.7%	24.4%	67.1%
3	22.2%	19.4%	45.8%	12.5%	58.3%
HES All	23.5%	14.7%	25.4%	36.4%	61.8%
K	28.2%	18.3%	22.5%	31.0%	53.5%
1	26.4%	16.7%	13.9%	43.1%	56.9%
2	18.4%	19.7%	32.9%	28.9%	61.8%
3	22.0%	7.0%	30.0%	41.0%	71.0%
JFS All	37.8%	20.1%	23.4%	18.7%	42.1%
K	48.6%	20.8%	16.7%	13.9%	30.6%
1	35.3%	16.2%	23.5%	25.0%	48.5%
2	39.4%	14.1%	31.0%	15.5%	46.5%
3	26.9%	29.9%	22.4%	20.9%	43.3%
LGMA All	16.7%	12.5%	4.2%	66.7%	70.8%
2	14.3%	14.3%	0.0%	71.4%	71.4%
3	17.6%	11.8%	5.9%	64.7%	70.6%
NPE All	40.3%	15.3%	21.9%	22.5%	44.4%
K	50.5%	21.1%	16.8%	11.6%	28.4%
1	37.9%	8.7%	17.5%	35.9%	53.4%
2	38.4%	13.7%	26.0%	21.9%	47.9%
3	34.0%	18.1%	28.7%	19.1%	47.9%
PVS All	29.2%	12.7%	29.8%	28.3%	58.1%
K	29.1%	14.0%	23.3%	33.7%	57.0%
1	31.9%	9.7%	30.6%	27.8%	58.3%
2	28.4%	7.4%	32.6%	31.6%	64.2%
3	28.0%	19.4%	32.3%	20.4%	52.7%
TRE All	29.5%	14.4%	23.5%	32.6%	56.1%

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K	44.1%	10.3%	17.6%	27.9%	45.6%
1	21.6%	18.9%	25.7%	33.8%	59.5%
2	30.3%	16.7%	22.7%	30.3%	53.0%
3	23.4%	11.7%	27.3%	37.7%	64.9%
WRE All	34.2%	18.5%	22.6%	24.8%	47.3%
K	33.3%	15.3%	22.2%	29.2%	51.4%
1	31.1%	18.9%	18.9%	31.1%	50.0%
2	38.4%	20.9%	20.9%	19.8%	40.7%
3	33.3%	18.4%	27.6%	20.7%	48.3%