

WA State Literacy Framework K-6

Executive Summary

This document is a section from the [Washington State Literacy Framework K-6](#). Refer to the main source for more information. If you have policy questions related to the WA State Literacy Framework K-6, please contact ELA@k12.wa.us.

Vision and Purpose

Every student in Washington deserves access to high-quality, evidence-based, Tier 1 literacy instruction, delivered consistently across classrooms, grades, and schools. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is committed to every student in Washington state developing strong literacy skills, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, civic participation, and economic opportunity. Achieving this vision requires system-level alignment across instruction, assessment, professional learning, and community engagement. The Washington (WA) State Literacy Framework (K-6) serves as a statewide guide for strengthening literacy outcomes through coherent, equity-driven system design.

Developed by OSPI, The WA State Literacy Framework K-6 provides a comprehensive, research-aligned guidance for strengthening school systems through equitable, effective literacy practices. The framework empowers leaders and educators to build on existing strengths by continuously refining their district's literacy infrastructure and maintaining a coherent, aligned system that supports all learners. Grounded in the science of reading, and aligned with Washington state policy, this framework emphasizes systems-level coherence, cultural responsiveness, and inclusive, high-quality instruction. We affirm that all students are capable, and that strong Tier 1 instruction is the foundation of equitable systems.

Six Key Understandings

The literacy framework is built upon six high-level understandings to center equity and student agency in all literacy instruction:

1. Students' experiences matter.
2. Language is social.
3. Language domains are interdependent and integrated.
4. Literacy is more than the sum of skills and subskills.
5. All texts are multimodal.
6. Literacy skills are relevant to students' current realities and unknown futures.

Audience and Use

This document is intended for a wide audience including local educational agency leaders, school administrators, instructional coaches, classroom educators, families, and community members. It can be used as a tool for strategic planning,



designing a [Multi-Tiered System of Supports \(MTSS\)](#), guidance for professional learning, resource alignment, and instructional improvement. It supports shared responsibility and collaboration to build coherent, sustainable literacy systems that reflect the diverse needs of Washington's students.

Literacy Leadership and Advocacy

Leaders play a pivotal role in strengthening literacy systems. They must invest in professional learning, use student data to inform practice, and foster collaborative learning communities. Leadership includes ensuring that core instruction is evidence-based and equitably delivered across classrooms. Strategies include early screening, Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions, progress monitoring, and advocating for aligned instructional resources.

Organizational Structure of the Framework

The framework is organized into thematic, interconnected sections. Each section provides context, research, and implementation guidance. This structure supports both comprehensive understanding and targeted use.

Research Foundation

The framework is grounded in a broad and rigorous body of empirical research and scholarship, encompassing fields of cognitive science, linguistics, neuroscience, and education. This body of work informs the framework's structured literacy approach and supports evidence-based practices. The empirical research studies include findings from the [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\)](#), published by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), a division of the U.S. Department of Education. [WWC Practice Guides](#) are evidence-based resources developed by panels of national experts to support educators and policymakers in making informed decisions about instructional practices. These guides synthesize high-quality research into practical, actionable recommendations that are rated based on the strength of supporting evidence. In developing this framework, we drew directly from the WWC Practice Guides to identify and elevate instructional strategies that:

- Demonstrate strong or moderate evidence of effectiveness.
- Can be implemented at scale in diverse school contexts.
- Align with Washington state's goals for equity, inclusion, and systemic coherence.
- Support the implementation of the Washington (WA) English Language Arts (ELA) Learning Standards (2026).

Key Instructional Concepts

While these are just some of the major concepts included, more are explored throughout the full framework including:

1. **Student Belonging:** Foster belonging with culturally responsive teaching, inclusive texts, and the 'warm demander' approach. Belonging boosts academic performance and

student engagement.

2. **Literacy for All Learners:** Emphasizes inclusive, equitable instruction that recognizes and responds to the diverse strengths, needs, and identities of every student through an MTSS, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and culturally responsive teaching.
3. **Families, Caregivers and Community partnerships:** Strengthen literacy development through reciprocal, culturally grounded partnerships that extend learning beyond the classroom.
4. **Oral Language Development:** Integrate structured speaking and listening routines into daily instruction. Support diverse communication methods and affirm the linguistic assets of multilingual learners (MLs).
5. **Writing and Expression:** Scaffold writing from early mark-making to structured texts. Emphasize writing as a tool for identity, community-building, and critical thinking.
6. **Strong Foundational Reading Instruction:** Implement explicit, systematic, structured literacy based on the science of reading. Address phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
7. **Research and Media Literacy:** Equip students to think critically in a multimodal world by integrating digital literacy, media analysis, and research skills into ELA instruction.
8. **Standards, Planning, Content Integration:** Align ELA instruction with Washington state standards and meaningfully integrate literacy with other disciplines to reinforce content knowledge and language development.
9. **Assessment:** Use balanced assessment systems—including screening, progress monitoring, and formative feedback—to guide instruction and support learner growth.

Calling In Instructional Systems & Leadership

For effective instruction within the classroom, leaders must commit to a systemic and structured approach to early literacy, as outlined by the following key priorities in the framework:

- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** MTSS provides a framework for delivering high-quality literacy instruction at increasing levels of intensity based on student need.
- **Data-Based Decision Making:** Use universal screening and progress monitoring to inform and adapt teaching.
- **Culturally Responsive Teaching:** Affirm identity and experience through curriculum and pedagogy.
- **High-Quality Instructional Materials:** Adoption of materials aligned with state standards and inclusive of diverse learners.
- **Collaborative Professional Learning:** Use PLCs to co-plan and calibrate literacy instruction.

Evidence Based Instructional Design & Delivery

Within an effective system for literacy instruction, leaders, and educators must focus on structuring student experiences which prioritize:

- **Explicit and Systematic Instruction:** Plan, model, guide, and sequence instruction clearly.
- **High-Rate Student Interaction:** Use student centered engagement, open and relevant questions, peer talk, and discussion routines.

- **Timely and Specific Feedback:** Reinforce and/or correct understanding immediately.
- **Scaffolding and Gradual Release:** Use visual aids, sentence frames, and guided practice.
- **Differentiation:** Adjust based on student strengths, needs, and backgrounds.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL):** Ensure multimodal access and expression.
- **Standards and Content Integration:** Integrate with other subjects (e.g., science, social studies, arts, mathematics, physical education) in ways that strengthen both content knowledge and literacy skills, aligning instruction with state standards to support deeper learning across disciplines.

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