

WA State Literacy Framework K-6

Section One: Framework Overview

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

The WA State Literacy Framework K-6 is comprehensive guidance designed to improve literacy education across Washington. Grounded in evidence-based practices, this framework provides a statewide systems approach that connects literacy instruction to state learning standards, policies, and guidelines to enhance student outcomes. The framework outlines essential components for implementing equitable and high-quality programs within an MTSS. This framework leverages the most effective evidence-based literacy practices to fully realize this vision across our state.

Additionally, OSPI prioritizes ensuring access to literacy resources, and to that end this framework will describe evidence-based approaches to do so. Literacy includes a range of skills and concepts, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These skills are essential for effective communication and comprehension and forming the foundation for academic success and lifelong learning.

It is important to acknowledge that literacy is more than just a collection of skills; it is deeply intertwined with human experience. Literacy is inherently social, used to convey ideas, build relationships, create meaning, and think critically about our world. Understanding and application are shaped by students lived experiences, personal and social realities, and the relationships they build within their communities.

Who Can Benefit from this Framework?

The WA State Literacy Framework K-6 serves as a guiding resource for multiple audiences:

- **Teachers and Paraeducators** provide classroom instruction and support student learning.
- **Literacy Specialists and Instructional Coaches** offer expert consultation and resources for improving literacy.
- **District Leaders and Building Administrators** ensure the implementation of effective literacy strategies, high quality instructional materials, and maintain systems for literacy learning.
- **Families, Caregivers, and Community** as literacy partners by providing connections that support relationship between schools and those that support children's literacy inside and outside of school.



This Framework: Structure, Evidence, and What Comes Next

To support meaningful implementation, this framework is organized into distinct, interconnected sections that reflect the complexity of literacy development and instruction. Each section begins with an overview that defines the topic and explains its role within a comprehensive literacy system.

Following each overview, the framework presents key practices and implementation strategies grounded in research. These practices are informed by a wide body of evidence, often referred to as the science of reading, which includes research from cognitive science, linguistics, neuroscience, and education. This foundation ensures that instructional recommendations are both effective and aligned with how students develop literacy skills and concepts.

Strong Tier 1 instruction is the foundation of successful literacy systems. The primary focus of the framework is intended for Tier 1 instruction, as the core literacy instruction provided to all students in the general education setting. High-quality Tier 1 instruction is critical for preventing reading difficulties and ensuring students have equitable access to effective, evidence-based teaching. It is the most effective form of prevention and the greatest opportunity to meet the needs of all learners before gaps emerge. While Tier 1 is the central focus, references to Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports are included throughout, showing how literacy practices align within a broader (MTSS).

What's Ahead

The framework includes the following sections, each of which highlights a critical component of effective, inclusive literacy systems:

- Section 2: Student Belonging
- Section 3: Literacy for All Learners
- Section 4: Families, Caregivers, and Communities
- Section 5: Oral Language
- Section 6: Writing
- Section 7: Reading
- Section 8: Research, Media Literacy, and Digital Citizenship
- Section 9: Standards, Planning, and Content Integration
- Section 10: Assessment

Connection to WA Learning Standards (2026)

The WA State Literacy Framework K–6 is designed to complement the K–12 English Language Arts (ELA) Learning Standards (2026), by providing additional instructional guidance for educators. The framework and standards have distinct purposes. The standards are student-centered and focus on learning outcomes while the framework provides a structured approach to implementing best practices for student learning. Despite their distinct purposes, both the

framework and the learning standards are aligned in their goal of engaging and supporting students to achieve academic success.

Key Shift, Key Understandings, and Student Literacy Practices

A key shift is woven throughout the WA ELA 2026 Standards: **Students are active decision-makers**. Students will navigate complex communication demands in their careers, education, and personal lives. This shift recognizes and builds students' capacity to make thoughtful, purposeful choices as they read, write, speak, listen, and engage with media messages—positioning them as active agents in their own learning.

Key Understandings of Literacy

This shift is also grounded in and made possible by six **key understandings** about literacy. These understandings highlight why students use literacy to pursue personal, academic, community, and other goals.

1. **Students' experiences matter:** Literacy learning is shaped by students' lived experiences. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are filtered through their personal and social realities, including experiences, values, relationships, and aspirations.
2. **Language is social:** Language is inherently social, used to build relationships, convey ideas, and create meaning within a community.
3. **Language domains are interdependent and integrated:** Reading, writing, speaking, and listening develop together and should be taught in an interconnected way.
4. **Literacy is more than the sum of its skills and subskills:** Literacy is not just about mastering individual skills; it involves using these skills for meaningful, purposeful communication.
5. **All texts are multimodal:** Literacy instruction must recognize that texts include written words, images, sounds, and other forms of communication.
6. **Literacy skills connect to students' histories, are relevant to their current realities, and prepare them for unknown futures:** Students need adaptable literacy skills that are useful in both their present and future lives.

Student Literacy Practices

To support the key shift, the standards highlight six **literacy practices** that guide students in making decisions as they use literacy in real-world ways. These six practices are a consistent thread throughout the WA ELA 2026 standards. Rather than being tied to specific grade levels, they reflect the ongoing development of students' literacy expertise—skills that deepen and expand each year.

When students are active decision-makers, they do these literacy practices:

1. Use Literacy for Their Own Purposes

- Connect reading, writing, and speaking to their interests, identities, and goals
- Reflect on why they are engaging with a text or task

- Use texts to explore questions and ideas that matter to them
- Evaluate their work and feedback based on their purpose

2. Consider the Communicative Situation

- Think about their purpose, message, and audience
- Consider the context, platform, and setting for communication
- Make choices that help their message reach the audience effectively

3. Use and Adapt Genres to Create Multimodal Texts

- Recognize patterns and features of different genres
- Choose genres that fit their purpose and audience
- Adapt genre conventions when creating texts
- Use visuals, structure, and media to communicate ideas

4. Use Flexible, Recursive Processes

- Approach reading, writing, and communication as a process
- Plan, draft, revise, edit, and share their work
- Move flexibly between steps as they develop ideas and respond to feedback

5. Make Meaning Through Their Experiences and Perspectives

- Connect texts to their experiences, identities, and perspectives
- Use personal knowledge to interpret and question texts
- Reflect on how perspectives shape understanding and responses

6. Critically Examine Texts Through Various Lenses

- Ask questions about perspective, bias, and missing voices
- Analyze how texts influence ideas and audiences
- Evaluate credibility, logic, and fairness of information and media

Literacy as a Civil Right

At the heart of this framework is the belief that literacy is a civil and human right, and every child must have access to high-quality literacy instruction. Literacy is foundational not only to academic success, but also to economic opportunity, civic engagement, and overall well-being. By integrating evidence-based instructional practices, formative assessments, and responsive teaching, the framework addresses systemic inequities that have historically limited access to high-quality literacy instruction, particularly for students from underserved communities in our state.

Schools serve as literacy hubs, providing essential resources and fostering strong partnerships with families and communities. The framework encourages family engagement and recognizes that educators, parents, and community leaders must work together to create inclusive learning

environments that empower all students. In doing so, the access and opportunity which follows literacy extends beyond the school walls and into the community.

Literacy Leadership and Advocacy

Effective literacy leadership is central to the success of this framework. School and district leaders play a crucial role in:

- **Strengthening Tier 1 Instruction:** Ensuring all students receive high-quality, evidence-based core literacy instruction.
- **Using Data to Drive Instruction:** Training educators to collect and interpret student data efficiently and reliably, using assessments to inform instruction.
- **Content Integration:** Support and advocacy for content integration.
- **Differentiating Literacy Instruction:** Supporting teachers in adapting time, content, and support levels based on students' assessed needs.
- **Building Collaborative Literacy Communities:** Fostering collaboration among educators, families, and community in ways that promote literacy skills.
- **Promoting Continuous Improvement:** Engaging in ongoing assessment and refinement of literacy practices to ensure responsiveness to student needs.

By emphasizing student strengths and personalized instruction, this framework fosters a growth-oriented learning environment where all students can succeed. To ensure all students develop strong literacy skills, the framework outlines a multi-tiered approach to reading instruction and intervention, particularly in the primary grades:

- **Early Screening and Identification:** Schools should use valid, reliable screening tools to identify students who need additional literacy support.
- **Targeted Interventions (Tier 2 & Tier 3):** Educators provide explicit, systematic instruction for struggling readers, ensuring individualized support.
- **Ongoing Progress Monitoring:** Regular assessment of students receiving interventions allows teachers to track growth and adjust instruction as needed.
- **Empowering Educators:** Providing teachers with high-quality professional development in effective reading interventions and data-driven decision-making.

Balancing Guidance with Flexibility

Our shared goal is to ensure every student in Washington develops strong literacy skills that lay the foundation for lifelong learning and success. However, this framework is not a one-size-fits-all mandate. OSPI outlines the systems and practices that research shows are most effective, but it is up to each district to take leadership in adapting and implementing these in ways that reflect their unique local context, needs, and student populations. Districts prioritize early literacy by investing in professional development, fostering collaboration, and using data to drive continuous improvement. The framework encourages innovation and flexibility, empowering schools to build systems that are both aligned with best practices and responsive to their communities.

Alignment to Evaluation and Instructional Models

The WA State Literacy Framework K–6 aligns with established evaluation and instructional models to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive approach to literacy education. These models provide evidence-based strategies and best practices that support the framework's goal of enhancing student outcomes and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. The framework aligns with commonly used instructional models:

- Washington State Teacher Criteria ([RCW 28A.405.100 2\(b\)](#))
- Center for Educational Leadership's 5 Dimensions (CEL 5D) of Teaching and Learning
- Marzano's Framework
- Danielson Framework for Teaching

The framework provides educators with evidence-based practices to meet Criterion 4 of the [Washington State Teacher Criteria](#) by delivering focused, coherent, and equitable instruction across all five ELA domains, which meets diverse student needs. The instructional practices promote culturally and linguistically responsive teaching, UDL, and the use of formative assessment practices to adjust instruction in real time, ultimately improving student learning. The framework also supports educators in meeting Criterion 4 by growing and deepening their content-area knowledge in the domains of reading, writing, speaking, listening, digital forums, language, research, and media literacy. Equipped with the framework, educators are empowered to design instruction that is rigorous, developmentally appropriate, and aligned with grade-level expectations.

K–6 Instructional Framework Supports Criterion 4 by:

- Aligning instruction with grade-level standards.
- Using appropriate, evidence-based teaching strategies.
- Designing coherent units and assessments.
- Demonstrating strong content knowledge of ELA.
- Promoting equity and consistency across classrooms.
- Collaborating professionally to improve practice.
- Addressing diverse student needs through responsive instruction.
- Using data and formative assessments to guide teaching.
- Ensuring all students have access to high-quality ELA learning.

Key Terms to Introduce in the Framework

1. **Comprehensive Literacy Instruction:** An approach that integrates multiple components of literacy, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening.
2. **Core Instruction:** High-quality, evidence-based, literacy instruction and support provided to all students. Sometimes referred to as Tier 1 (Universal supports).
3. **Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction:** Teaching practices that recognize and build on students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
4. **Data-Driven Decision Making:** The process of using assessment data to inform instruction, intervention, and policy decisions.
5. **Early Literacy:** Early literacy encompasses foundational reading skills such as print

concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, word recognition, and fluency for the purpose of communicating and comprehension. Additionally, they are learned through reading, writing, speaking, and listening to support language and vocabulary development.

6. **Equity in Literacy Education:** Ensuring all students, regardless of language, age, ability, race, culture, socio-economic status, or geography have access to high-quality literacy instruction and resources.
7. **Evidence-Based Practices:** Instructional approaches and interventions that have been tested through high-quality research and demonstrated to improve literacy outcomes across diverse settings.
8. **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** A framework for delivering high-quality instruction and interventions at varying levels of intensity based on student needs.
9. **Multilingual learner (ML):** A student who is learning in more than one language. This includes students who are developing proficiency in English while maintaining their home language.
10. **Research-Based Instruction:** Teaching methods grounded in educational research and cognitive science, designed to align with how students learn best.
11. **Science of Reading:** A body of research from multiple fields related to literacy that explains how people learn to read and write, encompassing elements such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. A comprehensive view also includes, but is not limited to, research related to motivation, engagement, genre, reasoning, criticality of text, and how multilingual students learn to read and write.
12. **Structured Literacy:** A comprehensive approach to literacy instruction based on scientific evidence, emphasizing explicit, systematic, cumulative teaching of foundational reading skills in key areas such as phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol correspondence (phonics), syllables, morphology, semantics, and syntax.