

2012

# Colorado Department of Education Strategic Literacy Plan

A Roadmap to Guide CDE in Improving Literacy  
Achievement for Colorado's Children



## Executive Summary

Literacy is the gateway to success in school, career, and life. With the ever increasing necessity of postsecondary education for career access, the need for all students to read, write, and communicate effectively cannot be overstated. By the year 2018, it is estimated that 63% of all jobs will require some college experience<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, it is essential that all students graduate from high school postsecondary and workforce ready. To ensure all of Colorado's children are fully prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of today's competitive, global workplace, the efforts of educators and communities must be combined and relentlessly focused on the common goal of literacy for all.

Colorado is committed to delivering high quality education with literacy at the forefront for all students. To meet this challenge, Governor John W. Hickenlooper and Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia have initiated a statewide campaign to focus public attention on the importance of literacy achievement for all of Colorado's students and articulate a path forward to supporting Colorado's children through *Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative*. At the same time, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) initiated the development of a Strategic Literacy Plan (SLP), which creates a framework to guide the CDE in its mission to ensure:

- All students enter kindergarten ready to learn;
- All students are literate by third grade;
- All students enter fourth grade on time;
- All students perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts by eighth grade;
- All students graduate; and,
- All students enroll in post-secondary education or graduate workforce-ready.

Taken together, the Early Literacy Initiative and the CDE Strategic Literacy Plan chart a collaborative path forward to positively impact literacy for all of Colorado's children.

## Rationale

Literacy achievement for Colorado's children is stagnant. While there is reason for encouragement in literacy achievement of Colorado's children, such as signs that some achievement gaps are closing and that modest gains are being realized in grades six and seven, little improvement in literacy achievement for Colorado's children has been seen over the last decade.

Reading proficiency levels at third grade, a critical indicator of later reading success, show that Colorado is not adequately preparing children for future academic success. Data from the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) show that little more than 70% of children in third grade are performing at the proficient level in reading, with students who are economically disadvantaged or English learners faring worse than their peers. More alarmingly,

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<sup>1</sup> Carnevale, Smith & Strohl (2010).

students who lag behind in reading at third grade tend to remain behind, with only 35% of students performing in the unsatisfactory range moving to higher performance ranges in subsequent years.

The literacy achievement of Colorado's children signals the need for intensive and coordinated efforts in policy and practice. The CDE Strategic Literacy Plan articulates the department's plan for addressing departmental policies and practices to improve literacy achievement for all of Colorado's children.

## Colorado Department of Education Literacy Goals

The CDE has identified three literacy goals. The objectives and strategies identified in the SLP all lead to the achievement of these goals:

- ***All families and care-givers have access to literacy support for young children.*** Supporting early literacy prevents gaps later.
- ***The literacy achievement gap is eliminated.***
- ***All Colorado students have the literacy and language skills to meet the growing demands of knowledge-based global society.*** All students must be sophisticated in their use of language and literacy skills to be productive and contributing members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## Purpose and Essential Elements for Literacy Achievement

In order to meet the department's literacy goals, the state must take a systematic approach. However, the literacy support capacity at the CDE is at a crossroads. The department's Literacy Grants and Initiatives Office, which once supported three major grant programs (Colorado Reading First, the Rural Secondary Literacy Project, and Read to Achieve) has had funding diminished to the point of only maintaining a single literacy program, Read to Achieve, through a single staff member. The reliance on grants to support literacy achievement for Colorado districts and schools has proven unsustainable.

With the importance of literacy achievement, the CDE leadership determined the need for all departmental units to be engaged in improving literacy outcomes for Colorado children. Thus, in 2011 a comprehensive and careful examination of all department-led programs and initiatives impacting literacy achievement was initiated. The process involved an environmental scan of the Essential Elements for a system-wide approach to improving literacy outcomes:

- Standards-Based Curriculum
- Instruction and Intervention
- Comprehensive Assessment
- Leadership
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Educator Preparation and Professional Development

The CDE conducted an analysis of the current state of departmental capacity related to each of the Essential Elements, determining next steps to take in order to progress toward its literacy goals. From this review, objectives were identified and prioritized according to an analysis of potential impact, resource allocation, and the department's strategic priorities. The review process in 2011 proved that the department's strategic priorities should be leveraged to improve student outcomes in literacy. At the same time, the review process allowed the department to identify several high impact projects to build on previous initiatives and programs from across the department to impact literacy achievement. The SLP documents this review process and lays the foundation for future departmental literacy initiatives.

## INTRODUCTION

Literacy is the gateway to success in school, career, and life. With the ever increasing necessity of postsecondary education for career access, the need for all students to read, write, and communicate effectively cannot be overstated. By the year 2018, it is estimated that 63% of all jobs will require some college experience<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, it is essential that all students graduate from high school postsecondary and workforce ready. To ensure all of Colorado's children are fully prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of today's competitive, global workplace, the efforts of educators and communities must be combined and relentlessly focused on the common goal of literacy for all.

Colorado is committed to delivering a high quality education with literacy at the forefront for all students. To meet this challenge, Governor John W. Hickenlooper and Lieutenant Governor Joseph A. Garcia have initiated a statewide campaign to focus public attention on the importance of literacy achievement for all of Colorado's students and articulate a path forward to supporting Colorado's children through *Colorado Reads: The Early Literacy Initiative*. At the same time, the Colorado Department of Education initiated the development of a Strategic Literacy Plan (SLP), creating a framework to guide the CDE in its mission to ensure:

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## Purpose and Background

The CDE considers literacy the foundation for student achievement in all content areas. Recognizing the critical role that literacy plays in the academic success of all of Colorado's children, the CDE has initiated a Department of Education

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<sup>2</sup> Carnevale, Smith & Strohl (2010).

Strategic Literacy Plan (SLP). The SLP will serve as a focal point for all of the department's efforts to support Colorado districts, schools, and communities to make certain all Colorado children are on track to meet the literacy demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Critical to this goal is ensuring all Colorado students learn to read by third grade, thus enabling them to read to learn and experience greater academic success.

Changing Colorado's achievement trajectory for literacy will not happen by chance but by intention. Postsecondary and workforce readiness requires an aligned, focused education system from birth. The SLP helps coordinate all components of Colorado's education reform agenda for the purpose of impacting literacy achievement. To that end, the SLP articulates an intentional, integrated, and strategic birth through postsecondary plan that builds on: (a) the Response to Intervention (RtI) framework of multi-tiered systems of instruction and support, (b) the rigorous Colorado Academic and English Language Proficiency Standards<sup>3</sup>, (c) a comprehensive approach to educator effectiveness, including educator preparation and professional development, (d)

*From 2003 to 2010, the federally funded **Colorado Reading First** (CRF) grant program supported over 10,000 students in 85 schools and 54 school districts in applying scientifically based reading research and proven instructional and assessment tools to ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of third grade. CRF also provided professional development to administrators, K-3 teachers, K-12 special education teachers, reading coaches, regional consultants, and CRF staff through state conferences, regional trainings, online courses, and webinars.*

Colorado's accountability and support system, (e) collaboration across CDE units and (f) collaboration with/among community service providers. The SLP effectively charts the path for the CDE policies and support to schools, districts, state partnerships, and educator preparation programs focused on a common goal: literacy for ALL of Colorado's children.

Impacting student achievement in literacy requires more than making small adjustments. It takes a systematic approach. As such, the CDE identified six essential elements to serve as an organizational framework for literacy development throughout the state.

1. Standards-Based Curriculum
2. Instruction and Intervention
3. Comprehensive Assessment
4. Leadership
5. Family and Community Partnerships
6. Educator Preparation and Professional Development

The department's SLP facilitates the systematic network of supports needed to make achievement gains. Ultimately, student gains will be realized through full implementation of these essential elements.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the term *standards* in this document includes the entire body of expectations for Colorado's students: the Colorado Early Learning Development Guidelines, the Colorado Academic Standards, the Colorado English Language Proficiency Standards, and the Extended Evidence Outcomes.



Finally, the SLP is integrated within the context of an unprecedented education reform effort underway in Colorado that has resulted in higher expectations for districts, schools, administrators, educators, and students. Senate Bill 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K), stipulates higher expectations for students. Colorado set a new course for K-12 education with CAP4K in 2008, which calls for creating a seamless preschool through postsecondary system that includes postsecondary and workforce ready standards<sup>4</sup> and an assessment system to monitor progress toward postsecondary and workforce readiness starting with kindergarten. Higher expectations for districts and schools centers on student outcomes and was set in motion with the passage of Senate Bill 09-163 (SB 163). This legislation streamlines Colorado's accountability system for districts and schools through four key metrics pertaining to all student groups: (a) academic achievement, (b) academic growth, (c) reducing achievement gaps, and (d) postsecondary and workforce readiness. Higher expectations for administrators, as instructional leaders, and educators are articulated in Senate Bill 10-191(SB 191), with the focus on increasing educator effectiveness. SB 191 calls for greater accountability for student outcomes by requiring evaluations of principals and teachers incorporate measures of student growth. The education reform agenda for Colorado, evident through these three pieces of legislation, comprehensively addresses key levers for educational change for the state.

**SB 08-212, Colorado's Achievement Plan for Kids (CAP4K)**, initiated new standards and assessments to support an aligned P-20 system, from early school readiness expectations and postsecondary and workforce competencies. The new **Colorado Academic Standards** are benchmarked to national and international exemplars and Colorado's reading, writing, and communicating standards are anchored in grade level expectations equivalent to 44 other states. These new rigorous standards require more of Colorado students in terms of content knowledge and skills. The standards reflect workforce readiness and 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as critical thinking and reasoning, self-direction, collaboration, information literacy and invention.

The Strategic Literacy Plan creates a roadmap for the CDE to positively impact literacy achievement. Postsecondary and workforce readiness requires an aligned, focused education system from birth. Thus, Colorado's approach hinges upon implementing all elements of the education reform agenda to foster the greatest impact on student outcomes. All literacy efforts build on the implementation of Colorado standards and assessments, the educator effectiveness initiative, and accountability and support provisions. The Response to Intervention (RtI) framework provides a systematic approach to implementation of these reform efforts.

Colorado's **new state assessment system** will signal mastery of Colorado Academic Standards at grade level and measure progress toward post workforce readiness. Additionally, transitioning to the new system allows for a focus on assessing early childhood school readiness in kindergarten, building on the existing Results Matter preschool assessment tools. Ongoing feedback, student relevance, and interim results each represent a new approach to the role of assessment.

The CDE embarked on the development of the SLP as an outgrowth of the 2009 – 2010 department wide process to articulate a common voice about literacy for the CDE. The CDE leaders and staff collaborated to develop the Colorado Literacy Framework that informs the department's work in literacy and provides the foundation for the department's

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the term *standards* in this document includes the entire body of expectations for Colorado's students: the Colorado Early Learning Development Guidelines, the Colorado Academic Standards, the Colorado English Language Proficiency Standards, and the Extended Evidence Outcomes.

support for literacy achievement. The SLP builds on the groundwork laid by the Colorado Literacy Framework, giving form to its principles and enabling the department to provide leadership, consultation, and professional development to Colorado's 178 local school districts and local communities, ensuring all of Colorado's students master Colorado's Academic Standards.

In November 2010, the CDE received a Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy formula grant from the U. S. Department of Education to support the work of a state literacy team in the development and implementation of a literacy plan designed to address the needs of children birth through grade 12. The CDE formed a state literacy team comprised of internal Literacy Leadership Team (LLT) and an External Literacy Advisory Team. The LLT consists of representatives from all units within the department that impact literacy: Response to Intervention; Exceptional Student Services ; Gifted Education; Language, Culture, and Equity; Federal Programs including Title I; Read To Achieve; the State Library and public libraries; Early Childhood Initiatives; and Teaching and Learning. The External Literacy Advisory Team includes representatives from across the state who demonstrate literacy expertise with specific age groups or specific student demographic groups. The SLP development work also included national experts in literacy who provided ongoing support and guidance throughout the development of the plan. A list of the members of the state literacy team may be found in Appendix A.

Also, the Colorado SLP is in congruence with national efforts to improve literacy outcomes. In the anticipated re-authorization of the ESEA, the United States Department of Education published the *Blueprint for Reform* (March 2010) calling for states to “develop comprehensive, evidence-based, Pre-K-12 literacy plans and to align federal, state and local funds to provide high-quality literacy instruction” (p. 26). Colorado's SLP not only provides a roadmap for department literacy initiatives and support, but also meets this anticipated federal requirement.

From early childhood to postsecondary and workforce readiness, the preparation, progress, and success of each student is at the center of the work of the Colorado Department of Education. The department's SLP represents a truly comprehensive plan developed through meticulous and systematic review of all leverage points that support the department's ability to greatly impact literacy achievement.

Colorado approaches its responsibility for producing literate, postsecondary and workforce ready students with urgency and commitment.

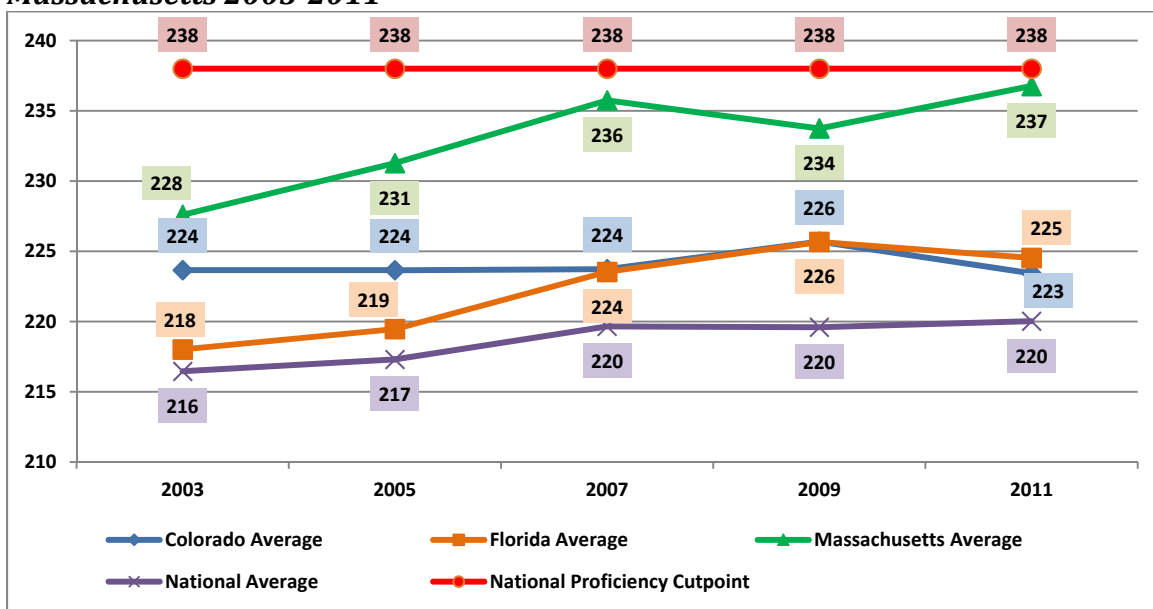
*The Colorado Department of Education supports the Department of Higher Education in the certification process for Colorado **teacher preparation programs**. CDE provides reviews teacher preparation programs based on alignment with the Performance Based Standards for Colorado Teachers and the Endorsement Standards for each content area. This process involves a rigorous review of the literacy programs offered in the state and holds institutions of higher education responsible for training teachers to support student literacy development. Through the department's work to implement Educator Effectiveness (SB 10-191), revisions to the teacher endorsement standards are anticipated to reflect more rigorous academic standards for students.*

## LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT IN COLORADO

The purpose of this section is to provide a longitudinal look at Colorado's literacy achievement. To begin to frame Colorado literacy, it is important to have points of comparison. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provides a consistent assessment that is given to fourth and eighth grade students in participating states every two years. Note that not all fourth and eighth grade students take the NAEP. Rather, the assessment is based on representative samples of the fourth and eighth grade student population of the state and the nation. Additionally, the assessment is a rigorous assessment designed with high standards for proficient achievement<sup>5</sup>.

Figure 1 provides the recent history of the NAEP fourth grade reading scores for the United States, Colorado, Florida, and Massachusetts. Florida and Massachusetts are included in the analysis because they are reform-minded states like Colorado. The red line at 238 represents the NAEP proficiency cut point for fourth-grade reading. The national average score varies between scores of 216 and 220. Every year, all three states exceeded the national average, but only one came close to the NAEP proficiency cut point. (See Appendix B for corresponding percent NAEP proficient and advanced).

**Figure 1: NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Results—National, Colorado, Florida and Massachusetts 2003-2011**



In 2003, Colorado's score was ten points higher than Florida's and four points lower than Massachusetts'. Colorado and Florida had identical scores in 2007 and 2009 meaning that fourth graders in Florida had made substantial gains during that time while Colorado made little progress. In 2011, Florida declined by one point, while Colorado declined by three

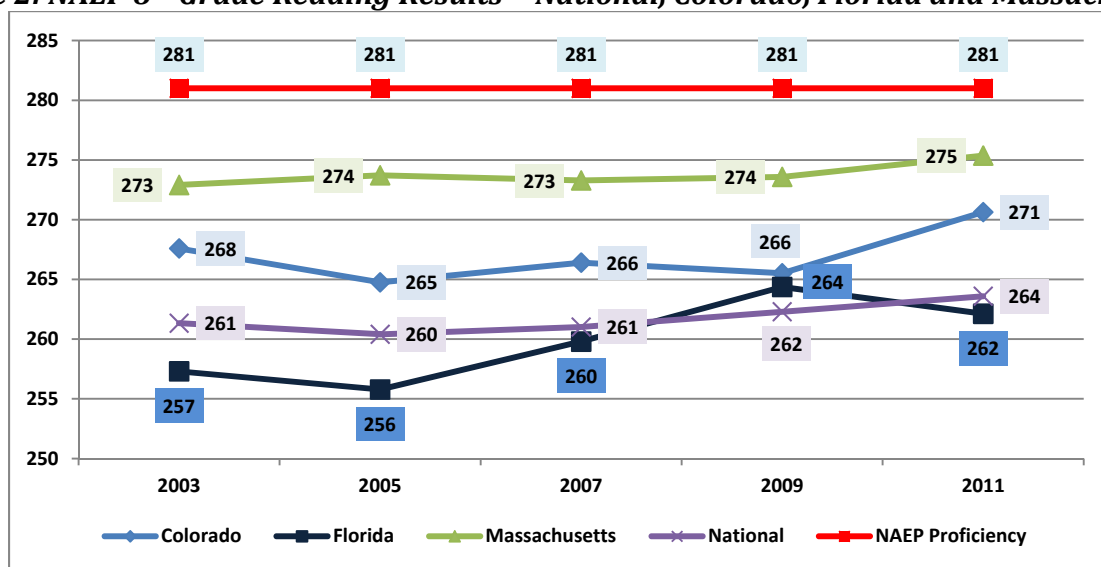
<sup>5</sup> "Proficient achievement on the NAEP is defined as "solid academic performance exhibiting competency over challenging subject matter. Competency over challenging subject matter is not easily attained... In particular, it is important to understand clearly that the Proficient achievement level does not refer to "at grade" performance."<sup>5</sup>



points falling below Florida's scores for the first time. It is interesting to see how Massachusetts made a nine point gain over time almost reaching the NAEP cut point for proficiency in 2011 while Colorado's scores have remained flat or fallen over the same period of time. This data provides alarming evidence that Colorado has not made progress in reading while the fourth graders in other states have. The NAEP results lend new urgency for examining Colorado literacy.

Figure 2 provides the recent history of the NAEP eighth grade reading scores for the United States, Colorado, Florida, and Massachusetts. The red line at a scale score of 281 represents the NAEP cut point for reading. The national average score varies between scores of 261 and 264. Every year, results for both Colorado and Massachusetts exceeded the national average. Florida was below the national average on the eighth grade NAEP reading test in 2003, 2005, 2007, and 2011. Florida's 8<sup>th</sup> grade results are somewhat surprising given their strong 4<sup>th</sup> grade results seen in Figure 1. Colorado's eighth grade reading results reached a high point in 2011 after a fairly flat performance in 2003 through 2009. This data provides evidence that Colorado has made recent progress in eighth grade reading. In 2013, when the NAEP eighth grade reading test is given again, it will be interesting to see whether Colorado's progress continues. (See Appendix B for corresponding percent NAEP proficient and advanced).

**Figure 2: NAEP 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Results—National, Colorado, Florida and Massachusetts 2003-2011**



## Exploring Literacy in Colorado

Literacy success is essential early in a child's education. It begins with support from families and caregivers and continues through intentional and focused literacy instruction in school. From preschool on, school children in Colorado receive instruction focused on the developing the literacy skills needed to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Colorado's new literacy standards (which include the national Common Core State Standards) beginning in kindergarten focus on the skills that children need to develop literacy competency for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Literacy achievement in Colorado has been a focus for years. In 1997, Colorado passed the Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) that concentrated on reading development from kindergarten through third grade. The Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) in reading also was administered to fourth graders for the first time in 1997. In 1998, the CSAP was expanded to include third grade reading since this grade is a key milestone in literacy development. The CSAP testing program continued to grow each year until by 2003, it encompassed reading, writing, and math in grades three through ten and science in grades five, eight, and ten.

*The **Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA)** was enacted in 1997 by the Colorado General Assembly to ensure that, by third grade, all students have the literacy skills essential for success in school and life. CBLA calls for local school districts to identify students who are reading below level and give them necessary reading interventions. Schools provide annual data reports to the state on numbers of students receiving interventions through Individual Literacy Plans.*

Current knowledge about Colorado's literacy achievement is based on the CBLA and the CSAP reading outcome measures. Analysis of Colorado literacy achievement begins with an examination of the outcomes for our youngest children.

### Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA)

The goal of the CBLA is to promote early childhood literacy statewide in order to ensure all children read at grade level by the end of third grade. CBLA requires school districts to identify children making insufficient progress in order to provide these students with appropriate reading intervention and bring them to proficiency by the end of third grade. Between 1998 and 2005, districts were required to compile lists containing the number of students who were and were not reading at grade level and supply the lists to the CDE. This method did not provide enough information to determine whether students identified as reading at grade level achieved proficiency when they took their third grade CSAP assessment.

In 2005, the State Board of Education changed the data collection rules for the CBLA. Districts were required to provide information by individual student including their State Assigned Student Identifier and one score from one of the approved three CBLA assessments. This data was collected by the CDE starting in 2008. This provided the CDE the opportunity to examine the predictive validity of the CBLA assessments and classification system in regard to the third-grade CSAP scores for students. It also made it possible to examine the relationship between CBLA tests taken in kindergarten, first and second grade and later third-grade CSAP outcomes.

*The state funded **Read To Achieve (RTA)** grant is designed for kindergarten through third grade students and students between third and fourth grades whose reading readiness or literacy and reading comprehension skills are below the levels established by the State Board of Education, pursuant to CBLA. At its peak in 2001, RTA served 553 schools and over 28,000 students. Currently, 47 schools receive grant support to implement scientifically based reading interventions, and on-going professional development is provided to schools through on-site coaching, monthly data webinars, networking day meetings, and regular school visits by Colorado Department of Education staff.*

The results of these analyses showed about 90 percent of the students functioning at grade level by the CBLA assessments and classification were proficient or higher on the third grade CSAP reading assessment given the same year. Further, about 85 percent of second-grade students who were classified by the CBLA as at grade level were

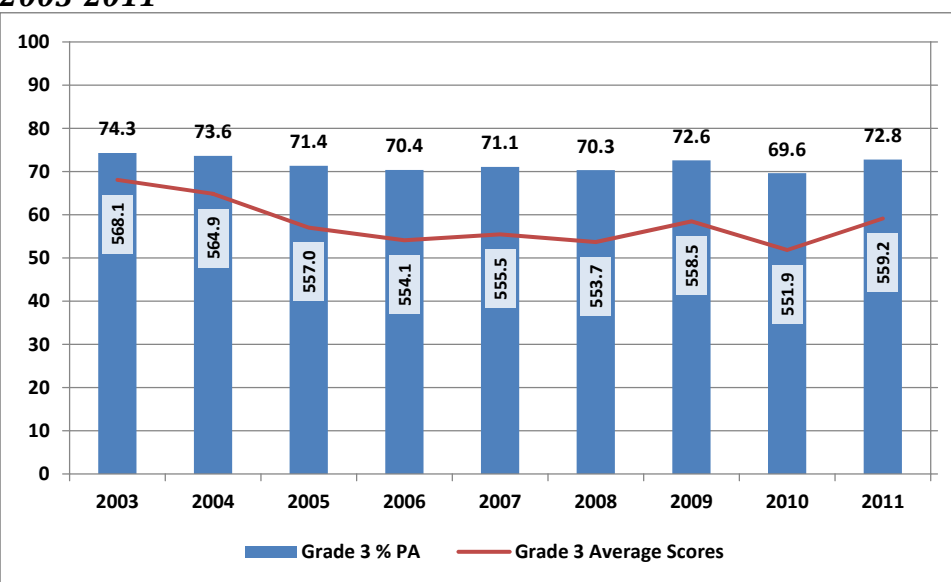
proficient or higher when they took the third-grade CSAP a year later. Similarly high classification percentages (greater than 80%) for first-grade and kindergarten students were obtained as well. The results are available in Appendix A.

As would be expected, the results for students who were not at grade level showed lower percentages of correct classification by third grade. Over time, many, but not all, of these students would be expected to improve their reading skills and move from ‘not being at grade level’ to being ‘at grade level’ and show proficiency in grade three.

### Colorado Student Assessment Program

Colorado tracks student literacy achievement through the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading and writing assessments administered in grades three through ten. Over time, approximately 70% of Colorado’s children perform at grade level or above in reading. Meaning over 30% of Colorado’s students consistently achieve at levels considered “unsatisfactory” or “partially proficient”. Figure 3 illustrates the stagnancy of reading achievement for Colorado’s third grade students from 2003-2011<sup>6</sup>. Scale scores reflect the same stagnancy, as the average scale score has not varied much over time. These results are unacceptable.

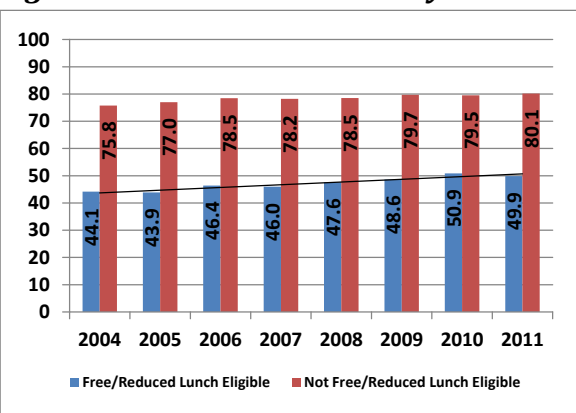
**Figure 3: 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Percent Proficient & Advanced and Average Scores 2003-2011**



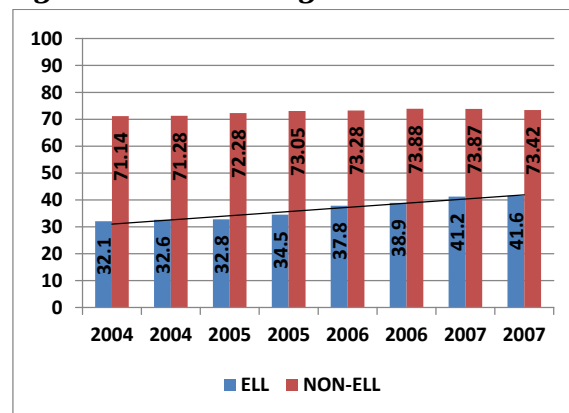
As revealed in Figures 4 and 5, students who are economically disadvantaged and English learners tend to fare worse than their peers. However, there is improvement from 2004 to 2011 as indicated by the trend lines in both figures. The performance of the target groups (FRL & ELL) is improving over time while the performance for the reference populations (non-FRL and non-ELL) is remaining stable. This would indicate some moderation of the achievement gaps in these areas. However, the progress is slow. Efforts to improve literacy outcomes have positively impacted literacy achievement trends for these groups, but at a slow rate.

<sup>6</sup> Complete grade by grade results for CSAP reading can be found in Appendix A.

**Figure 4: Grade 3 Economically Disadvantaged**



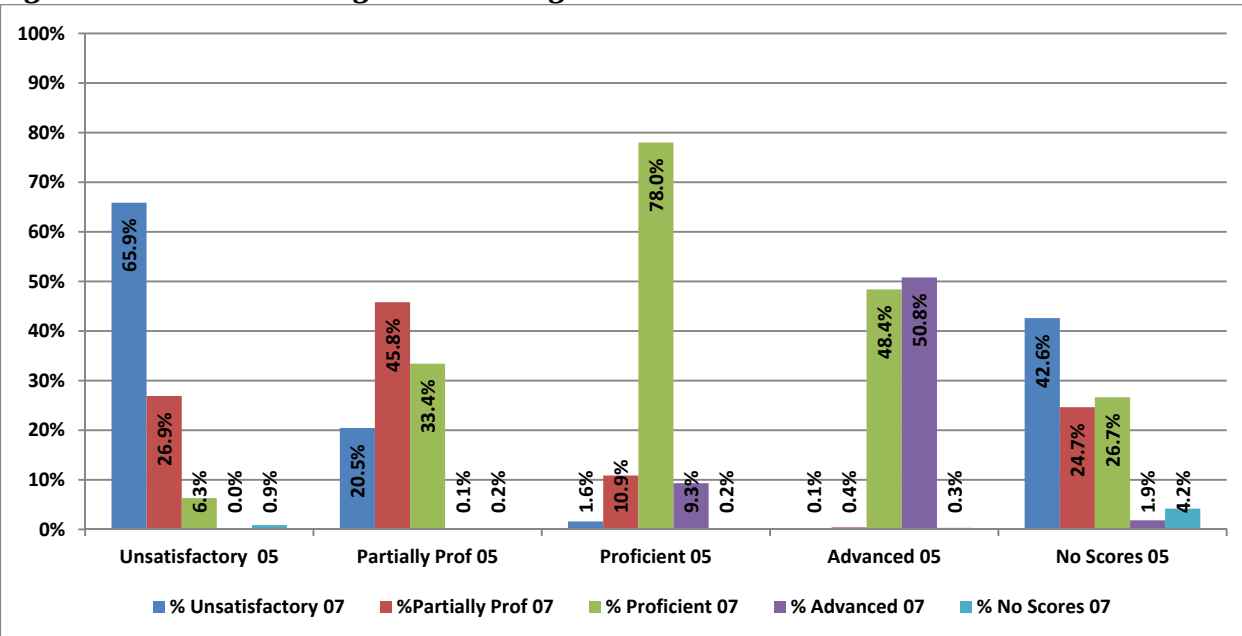
**Figure 5: Grade 3 English Learners**



The ability to read at grade level by third grade is considered an important indicator for becoming a literate adult. Students who lag behind in reading at third grade tend to remain behind. If a student is behind in reading, it is extremely important to provide him or her with targeted intervention to aid in getting the student back on track. Trend analysis of the third grade data provides compelling evidence of this disturbing issue.

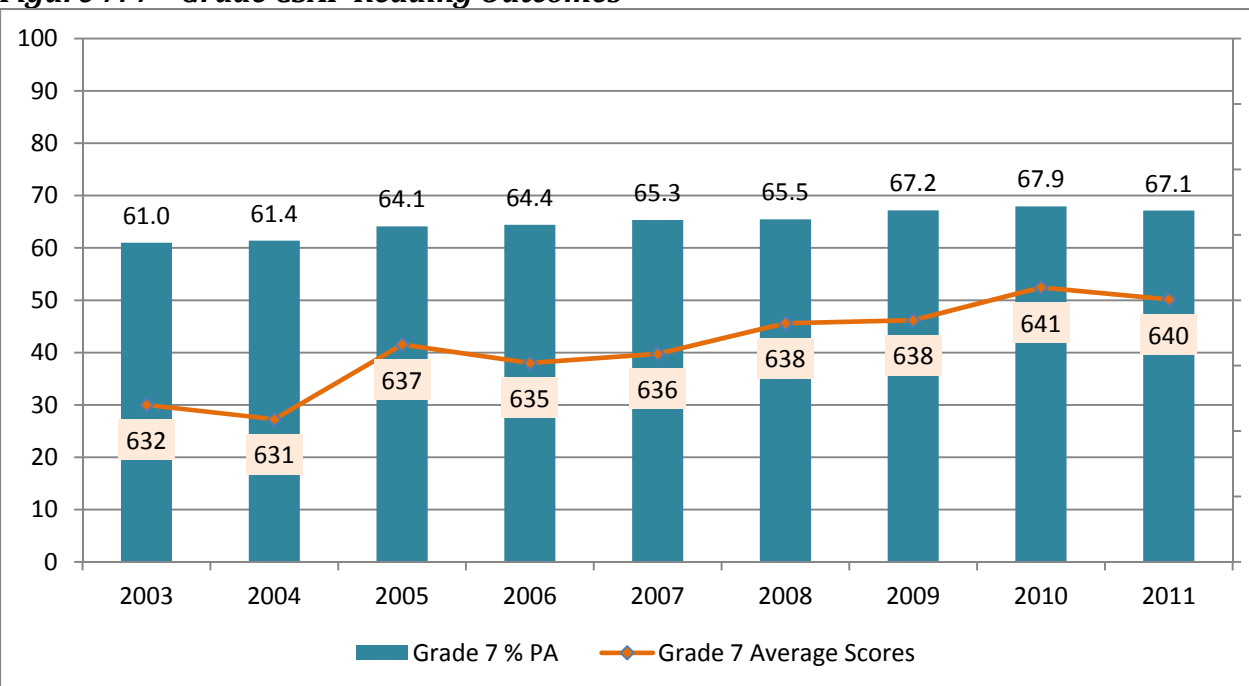
Figure 6 shows that of the 3rd grade students scoring in the unsatisfactory category in 2005, 65% again scored in the unsatisfactory category as fifth graders in 2007. This means only 35% who originally scored in the unsatisfactory category in 2005 scored in a higher category in 2007. This trend has persisted for several years. Fourth and fifth grade results indicate little progress on the CSAP. The fourth grade NAEP results are consistent with the fourth-grade CSAP results.

**Figure 6: Grade 3 Reading Status Change 2005-2007**



Sixth and seventh grade results provide a bright spot in reading achievement data. Both sixth and seventh grade show steady progress in terms of proficiency, with grade seven showing substantial gains. Seventh grade progress is highlighted in Figure 7. The percent proficient and advanced moved from 61 percent in 2003 to 67.1 percent in 2011. The scores improved from 632 in 2003 to 640 in 2011. Despite seventh grade improvements, eighth grade results have remained flat. This is consistent with the flat eighth grade NAEP results as well. Achievement data for ninth and tenth grade students are also unremarkable. Graphs of these results are available in the Appendices.

**Figure 7: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes**



In short, with the exception of grades six and seven, little reading progress can be seen over time either on the CSAP or on the NAEP. If third grade is the gateway to reading success, Colorado is not adequately preparing young readers in spite of a consistent 70% proficiency rate for third grade students. Too many third-grade children remain in the unsatisfactory category and are moved to more difficult reading before they have mastered the basics. Students scoring in the unsatisfactory category in third grade should receive strong reading intervention to give them the opportunity to become better readers. Even more importantly, efforts to identify and provide early high quality instruction and effective intervention for Colorado's young children must be bolstered. The recent results for grades six and seven on the CSAP and progress on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP are encouraging, but results must be maintained. The literacy achievement of Colorado's children signals the need for intensive and coordinated efforts in policy and practice.



## LITERACY VISION, GOALS, and SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Colorado's literacy vision and goals are aligned with the Colorado Department of Education's mission to provide all Colorado children equal access to quality, thorough, uniform, well-rounded educational opportunities in a safe, civil environment. In order to accomplish this mission, the CDE has identified four strategic priorities:

- Build a globally competitive workforce.
- Ensure every student is on track to graduate postsecondary and workforce ready.
- Implement the state's new academic standards aligned to postsecondary and workforce readiness.
- Design and implement the state's new assessment system aligned to the new standards.

The department's Strategic Literacy Plan supports both the mission and the strategic priorities of the CDE by providing a framework of action for all stakeholders to ensure every student develops the literacy skills necessary to graduate from high school postsecondary and workforce ready.

### Colorado's Vision for Literacy

Colorado's vision for literacy is nested within an Rtl framework. The Rtl framework promotes a well-integrated multi-tiered system of support for connecting general, compensatory, gifted, and special education in providing high quality, standards-based instruction and intervention that is matched to students' academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs. The Rtl framework is guided by a set of core principles which also define Colorado's vision for literacy (CDE, 2008). These core principles articulate the CDE's beliefs that:

- All children can learn to read and write as a result of effective teaching.
- All students must have access to rigorous standards-based curriculum and research-based instruction.
- All students must have access to effective universal instruction.
- Intervening at the earliest indication of need is necessary for student success.
- A comprehensive system of tiered interventions for differentiated instruction is essential for addressing the full range of student needs, including students below and above grade level.
- Collaboration among educators, families, and community members is the foundation for effective problem-solving, instructional decision making, and successful literacy outcomes.
- Ongoing and meaningful involvement of families increases student success.
- Effective leadership at all levels in the education system is crucial for successful literacy development.

These core principles inform the essential elements of the SLP, mapping the course for the CDE to positively impact literacy achievement for Colorado.

The department's SLP defines literacy as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in order to effectively communicate with others. The Colorado Academic Standards (2010) for Reading, Writing, and Communicating provide the context for the definition of literacy (p. 9):

A strong command of the language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) is vital for being a successful student and ultimately a productive member of the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. Language skills have always been fundamental for academic and professional success. However, students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are now facing more complex challenges in an ever-changing global society. Literacy – meaning the ability to construe a written, linguistic, alphabetic symbol system – is arguably the most important skill students acquire in preschool through twelfth grade education because it makes all other forms of higher-order learning, critical thinking, and communication possible.

The study of reading, writing, and communicating is therefore essential to all other study in early childhood education, primary school, and secondary school. Such study comprises not only the fundamental knowledge and skills of language arts (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), but also the knowledge and skills of discourse (dialogue and discussion) and rhetoric (the ability to make arguments and to think critically about arguments made by others) and the knowledge and skills involved in responding to imaginative literature.

Language skills are necessary for academic success in all disciplines. The ability to integrate reading, writing, speaking, and listening effectively builds understanding across all academic subjects as well as allowing for the development of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills within the context of these subjects. Critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self-direction, and innovation are vital 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.

The CDE understands literacy to encompass reading, writing, and communicating, and emphasizes the following skills and processes:

- Reading with understanding and responding thoughtfully to a variety of texts;
- Writing and speaking proficiently to clearly communicate ideas;
- Comprehending and producing meaningful texts;
- Choosing and applying strategies that support the fluent and proficient use of language arts; and,
- Employing literacy for lifelong learning, work, and enjoyment.

## Literacy Goals

Consistent with the goals of the Colorado Literacy Framework, the Colorado Department of Education Strategic Literacy Plan supports the state's realization of its literacy vision by achieving the following three literacy goals:

***Literacy Goal #1: All families and care-givers have access to literacy support for young children. Supporting early literacy prevents gaps later.***

Preventing literacy achievement gaps from starting early is imperative, as closing literacy achievement gaps later on is much more difficult. In the last 10 years, researchers have come to consensus on a definition of high-quality early learning experiences that target social and emotional needs as well as language, cognitive, and physical development. The work of organizations like the National Institute for Literacy has been the foundation for a number of early language and literacy initiatives, especially for grades Pre-K-3. Federal initiatives such as Head Start, Early Reading

First, and Reading First supported the understanding of effective early language and literacy experiences in order to prevent literacy achievement gaps from starting.

In addition to early language and literacy research, evidence from studies of economically disadvantaged and minority students suggests the importance of families in helping to prevent the emergence of a literacy achievement gap. A well-known study by Hart and Risley (1995) revealed the impact of socioeconomic status on preschoolers' acquisition of words, with children from families

receiving welfare having significantly less vocabulary development than children from higher socioeconomic status households by the time they reached preschool. Children who grow up in environments with few or no literacy experiences are already playing catch-up when they enter school (Hart & Risley, 1995; Wolf, 2007).

Therefore, beginning at birth family members, child care providers, and educators must give students opportunities for continued literacy development through experiences with listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For the youngest learners, infants and toddlers, these experiences also include proper book handling behaviors, looking at and recognizing related story objects/pictures/tactile images, and story-reading behaviors (Schickedanz, 1999).

In addition to the family experiences a young child has within the home, partnerships between schools and community or statewide systems, such as early childhood councils, ensure that families from birth onward have voluntary access not only to high quality early childhood care and education opportunities but also to health and wellness services and other community supports that contribute to child development as a whole.

Colorado is committed to families and children in order to prevent the literacy achievement gap from starting early. The most significant and current early childhood initiatives for children from birth to age 5 in Colorado include:

- **Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care (EQ)** Initiative, a collaboration between the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care. The primary goal is to increase the quality and availability of responsive care for infants and toddlers throughout Colorado by strengthening the skills and knowledge base of Early Childhood professionals working with infants and toddlers, building capacity and promoting systematic change to foster increased quality and availability of care and services, and supporting leadership and collaboration at the community level.

*In 2009, Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL) was awarded a federal grant to create videos and a website to share rhymes, songs, and early literacy tips with parents, caregivers and librarians.*

*"Storyblocks: songs and rhymes that build readers" was launched in 2010. Each video includes a literacy tip and well as age-appropriate content for babies, toddlers, or preschoolers. CLEL and the State Library partnered with Rocky Mountain PBS to develop the videos which are shown on channel six as well as available through [StoryBlocks.org](http://StoryBlocks.org).*

***Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care Initiative.*** *Since 1999, the Expanding Quality in Infant Toddler Care (EQ) Initiative has been dedicated to increasing the quality and availability of respectful, responsive infant toddler care throughout Colorado. The EQ course of training helps those who work with infants and toddlers effectively support the early language and literacy skills which are essential to literacy development. A network of over 100 infant toddler specialists offer the EQ Curriculum and coaching to infant toddler caregivers in over 34 communities, and share their expertise with local Early Childhood Councils.*

- **Preschool Special Education** Services, a state and federally mandated program for three- and four-year-old children who meet state eligibility criteria of developmental delay or disability and are experiencing challenges in their learning and development.
- **Early Childhood Councils** which bring together dedicated partners from each of these service areas from across Colorado to coordinate, increase and improve the education, health, social/emotional, and parenting opportunities available to all young children and their families.
- **Child Find:** Children under the age of six may be referred at any time for an eligibility determination for early intervention (ages birth to three) or preschool special education services (ages three through five).
- **Colorado Preschool Program (CPP)** which serves 20,160 at-risk children in 170 of 178 school districts and the Charter School Institute. CPP has proven to close achievement gaps when data for CPP children is compared with at-risk children not in CPP, including lower rates of retention in grades K-3.
- Nationally recognized childhood outcomes measurement system, **Results Matter**. 44,000 children participate through Preschool Special Education, the Colorado Preschool Program, School Readiness Quality Improvement Program sites, Family Child Care Homes, Child Care Centers, Early Head Start, Head Start, and Charter School Preschool Programs. Results Matter leads the state's efforts to make the measurement of child outcomes the cornerstone of Colorado's early care and education system.
- **Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy:** All children deserve the joy of reading and the skills in life that literacy brings. Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy is passionately committed to strengthening children's literacy through library services and community advocacy.
- **Colorado Pre-K Academic Standards** and future **Early Learning Development Guidelines** (birth to eight). An effort is underway to create something about developmental and academic domains, early childhood providers and educators, align with the CAS.

#### **Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL)**

Launched in 2008, CLEL serves as an advisory board to the State Library and works on early literacy initiatives using evidence based techniques and best practices. CLEL's goals are to (1) educate and train library staff in providing early literacy story times for children, parents, and caregivers, (2) increase awareness of the importance of early literacy to all communities in Colorado, (3) cooperate with other state and national agencies involved with early literacy, and (4) promote the role of libraries in providing early literacy experiences. CLEL accomplishes this by providing early literacy research and information at [www.clel.org](http://www.clel.org), presenting early literacy information to parents and child care givers, training library staff in early brain development and early literacy techniques, and providing song, rhyme and book recommendations through [clel.org](http://clel.org), Facebook, Twitter, and [storyblocks.org](http://storyblocks.org).

**Results Matter** is a statewide early childhood assessment program in which teachers and families carefully observe young children in everyday routines and activities to develop portfolios that document what the children know and are able to do. Teachers refer to the portfolios as they assess children's learning and development in areas such as social and emotional development, language and literacy, mathematics, memory and problem solving. This rich body of information helps teachers and family members understand if children are on track for success, and helps them plan effective, engaging experiences that support positive outcomes.

While preventing literacy achievement gaps from starting early is imperative, educators must also continue working to prevent literacy achievement gaps from emerging in the adolescent years. Organizations such as the Alliance for Excellent Education (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006) suggest that “many third grade readers will falter or fail in later grade academic tasks if the teaching of reading is neglected in the middle and secondary grades (p. 1). Thus, educators must

become competent at ensuring every student moves beyond basic literacy skills to higher level skills encompassed in the comprehension of text and the inclusion of literacy skill instruction in the content areas.

## ***Literacy Goal #2: The literacy achievement gap is eliminated.***

Once literacy gaps exist, they become more and more difficult to close. Unfortunately, literacy achievement gaps exist as early as preschool or kindergarten. Key to closing the literacy achievement gap is early identification and intervention. Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework to ensure early, appropriate identification and intervention for struggling students. When RtI is effectively implemented, the system is responsive to the needs of all students, from those who are struggling to those who are advanced.

This comprehensive, multi-tiered, instructional framework provides intervention and support more quickly to struggling learners than previous efforts, preventing the wait-to-fail phenomenon while also supporting the growth of all learners. Numerous studies provide evidence of the overall effectiveness of RtI (Burns, Appleton, & Stehouwer, 2005; Martson, Muyskens, Lau, & Canter, 2003; McNamara & Hollinger, 2003; VanDerheyden, Witt, & Gilbertson, 2007). These studies all point to the significance of providing intervention at the earliest indication of need, utilizing ongoing assessments to determine the specific focus of intervention, and monitoring progress frequently to ensure that interventions are successful.

*The Colorado State Library (CSL), a unit of CDE, allocates federal funds for out-of-school literacy initiatives including **summer reading programs in public libraries**. These programs encourage recreational reading and are designed to reduce summer setback especially among students from low-income families. In 2010, over 200,000 children participated in summer reading programs.*

While utilizing the RtI framework, it is important that educators consider the instructional needs of all types of learners, including gifted students, in regards to closing the literacy achievement gap. Early intervention and tiered programming for advanced learners provides necessary challenge and may prevent underachievement. Interventions look different for gifted students than those for struggling learners. The earlier the intervention, the more likely the student will remain engaged in school and will use his or her literacy as a means to learn and think at higher levels.

The foundation of the three-tiered RtI framework is quality universal instruction and curriculum aligned to the state's standards. The National Reading Panel (2000) as well as various other studies (Foorman, Francis & Fletcher, 1998) found that quality curriculum and explicit instruction led to improved learning outcomes and reduced student failures (Burns et al., 2005). The curriculum and instructional practices should result in 80 percent or more of the students meeting expectations. It is important to note that if universal instruction is not effective with more than 20-25 percent of students, the school or district will have great difficulty maintaining the resources or personnel to provide adequate targeted and intensive intervention for those who require it. For that reason, universal screening and benchmarking is essential. This process allows school or district staff to identify the number of students on track, at risk, or in need of acceleration as well as signal systematic instructional issues. Universal screeners should be brief gauges of overall academic well-being of students and should occur not less than three times per year, allowing educators to intervene at the earliest indication of need. Because of the importance of the screening process, only measures with proven measures of reliability and validity should be used.



For students who do not adequately achieve in response to universal instruction, targeted or intensive interventions that are supplemental, advanced, specialized, and/or remedial in nature are required. This group of students should not represent more than 15-20 percent of the entire grade level student population. At the targeted level (or Tier II), small group instruction will be necessary. Instruction should be supplemental to universal instruction and targeted at very specific areas of need (Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes, & Moody, 2000; Gersten et al., 2009). Diagnostic assessments may be required to determine where breakdowns occur for students and what interventions can be used to target specific areas of need. According to a panel convened by the Institute of Education Science (Gersten et al., 2009), small group supplemental instruction at the targeted level should:

- Target the components of reading instruction in which the student needs additional support,
- Be implemented three to five times each week for approximately 20 to 40 minutes each session, and
- Build skills gradually with high student-teacher interaction and frequent opportunities to practice the specific skill(s) and receive feedback.

Interventions should be aimed at addressing a specific skill deficit/need area; accommodations that allow students access to text (e.g., more time to read, books on tape or in Braille, etc.) may be appropriate for developing background knowledge or access to content area classes but are not literacy interventions. Furthermore, gifted students may require additional assistance in reading. For students identified as gifted in reading, tier II instruction might require such targeted interventions as content acceleration, cluster groups, faster instructional pacing, compacting curriculum, or advanced supplemental language arts curriculum.

Interventions should be monitored at least monthly, if not bi-monthly, to determine efficacy. For those students who show inadequate response to targeted interventions (Tier II), more intensive intervention will be required (Tier III). At the intensive level (Tier III), interventions should be specific to individual students' needs, and should involve sufficient time, intensity, and frequency (Burns & Gibbons, 2008). Table 5 below reflects recommendations from the research (Burns et al., 2005; Christ, 2006; Elbaum et al., 2000; Gersten et al., 2009; Kavale & Forness, 2000; Reis, 2008) regarding effective intervention practices for targeted and intensive levels of support. Progress monitoring at the intensive level may occur once a week or more in order to inform instructional practices and to determine whether the student is responding with a sufficient rate of growth to close the skill/achievement gap within a reasonable period of time or to meet advanced learning goals.

**Table 1: Research-Based Effective Intervention Practices**

<b>Tier</b>	<b>Practice</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Universal, Targeted, and Intensive	Use explicit and systematic instruction	Gersten et al. (2009)
Universal and Targeted	Use groups of three to five students	Elbaum et al. (2000)
Universal and Targeted	Provide instruction in up to three foundational or advanced reading skills	Gersten et al. (2009)

Tier	Practice	Reference
Targeted and Intensive	Focus on underlying or advanced skills and structures Focus on skills to help advanced readers to access content above their current reading level	Gersten et al. (2009) (Reis, 2008)
Targeted and Intensive	Progress should be closely monitored	Christ (2006)
Intensive	Potential intervention components include (a) highly targeted, (b) provides an appropriate level of challenge for the individual student, (c) explicitly teaches a specific skill, (d) allows many opportunities to respond, and (e) provides immediate corrective feedback for an individual student.	Burns et al. (2008)
Intensive	Explicit reading comprehension instruction (e.g., vocabulary, pre- and mid-reading, and direct instruction of strategies) Instruction to enable advanced readers to engage with and think about complex text	Kavale & Forness (2000) (Reis, 2008)

An effective problem-solving (PS) process that aligns the tiers of instruction underpins the RtI framework. The PS process is an intentional process for improvement, creating a collaborative culture that engages in problem-solving at all levels (e.g. , Boards Of Cooperative Educational Services, district, school, classroom, and individual student). The PS model involves universally reviewing data, including disaggregation of data to determine whether curriculum and instruction meet the needs of all learners. It also includes problem-solving at the individual student level, relying on the use of data to make instructional decisions.

***Literacy Goal #3: All Colorado students have the literacy and language skills to meet the growing demands of knowledge-based global society.*** All students must be sophisticated in their use of language and literacy skills to be productive and contributing members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Growing demands of knowledge-based global society suggest the need for all students to be sophisticated in their use of language and literacy skills to be productive and contributing members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In support of CDE’s efforts, the Colorado State Board of Education adopted the Colorado Academic Standards in December 2010. The goal of the Colorado Academic Standards is postsecondary and workforce readiness for all high school graduates, meaning all Colorado high school graduates must be able to complete a first year course at a postsecondary institution without remediation.

### Supporting Research

The state literacy team, comprised of both internal and external advisory teams, utilized three age bands as an organizational structure to focus on the state level self-assessment and planning of next steps related to the Essential Elements of the plan (see section V). Those three age bands are:

- Birth to age 5
- Kindergarten to grade 5

- Grades 6 to 12

The following sections outline the research on typical development of language and literacy skills and instructional implications for each of the three age bands. Information regarding special populations of students is also included. The research provided in this section provides the basis for approaches in the SLP and can be helpful in assessing the level of literacy development for an individual learner in order to plan effective literacy instruction. Age bands were further revised for the state level self-assessment (Section V) to reflect the periods of reading development referred to as *learning to read* and *reading to learn*.

### ***Birth to Age 5***

*Recently developed **Qualitative Competencies & Quantitative Benchmarks for 21st-Century Colorado School Library Programs** by the State Library at CDE state the role of the school librarian as an essential component for literacy. At an unprecedented time in history, when students require development of complex 21st century skills to succeed, a robust school library program is a requirement for students' success.*

Early literacy development is based on the understanding that literacy is a continuum of abilities that children develop as they gain skills in using symbols to represent aspects of reality (Bardige & Segal, 2005). Literacy activities for children whose ages range from **birth to age 5** include first the “dance” of communication. As babies glance or stare at adult care givers, they are communicating. This exchange is essential to early language and literacy development.

For most children cooing, babbling, and crying gradually evolve into more purposeful ways of communicating. Toddlers steadily begin to point and babble words when picture books are read to them. As children progress into the preschool years and are given opportunities to engage in interactive language activities throughout the day, they become increasingly aware of print concepts. For young children with disabilities, the path of early literacy development is similar to typically developing children, but children with disabilities may require attention to specific learning styles and needs for specialized intervention, aids, and/or equipment. Parents and early childhood intervention personnel must work together to ensure that very young children identified with disabilities have full access to literacy experiences, including specialized methods of instruction. Furthermore, it is equally important for adults working with children from **birth to age 5** to be aware of characteristics of precocious readers, writers, and communicators. Talented readers often teach themselves to read prior to any instruction at home or in school (Stainthorp & Hughes, 2004). Characteristics of advanced readers include spending more time reading and looking at books than peers, using language for humor and understanding its subtleties, and writing words and sentences early (Halsted, 1994). Indicators of early literacy development for all children **birth to age 5** should be recognized and used to guide educational programming and family engagement strategies.

Family engagement, which involves communicating with families, valuing and involving families, and meeting families where they are in both their physical and cultural contexts, remains vital for children’s future academic success. Families are the first teachers in children’s lives. Through interactions with the family in a rich language environment, the young child begins the process of building the oral language skills that form the foundation for reading and writing development.

Oral language skills play an important role in learning to read (Scull & Bianco, 2008). Catts, Fey, Tomblin, and Zhang (2002) found that kindergarteners with speech or language impairments were six times more likely than children without speech or language impairments to have reading disabilities by 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Byrnes and Wasik (2009) note that children who enter school with high levels of phonological, semantic and grammatical knowledge will be more successful with reading. Similarly, Richgels (2004) found vocabulary development as one of the most important aspects of language acquisition in children, with numerous studies determining it among the best predictors of success for children in the process of learning to read.

A language-rich environment has an essential impact on the development of a child's brain during the first years of life. When adults speak and/or sign with children in a timely, responsive manner, children understand the construction of speech, learn new words, and become capable conversationalists. The years from **birth to age 5** represent a period of rapid development of language in young children. Gambrell, Morrow, and Pressley (2007) describe this period as particularly important to later school achievement and go so far as to contend that children who do not have the appropriate language development by three years of age will not be likely to succeed in school. In the young child, oral vocabulary development begins when the one-year-old child utters his or her first word. By 18 months to 2 years of age, the child uses approximately 50 words. Around 2-3 years of age, the vocabulary development of children increases at an unparalleled rate and continues to develop through the preschool and kindergarten years, with a child entering first grade with as many as 10,000 words. However, it is important to recognize that children vary in their oral language development and abilities (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009); therefore, a strong oral language program aids in the prevention of future reading difficulties (Rubin & Opitz, 2007).

From babbling and making eye-contact to learning letter-sound correspondences, children should be provided with an established curriculum that offers guidance for teachers, caregivers, and parents to support the strong acquisition of language and literacy skills. Early literacy is too important to leave to chance, especially for at-risk students, particularly those for whom English is not their first language and/or those with language or learning difficulties. Young children who suffer from hearing impairments also need timely and responsive language and literacy support, rich language exposure, and interactive linguistic experiences, whether spoken or in sign. In addition, children who are developmentally advanced compared to their same-age peers need appropriate guidance and support. It is important for all children to have many opportunities to further develop language and literacy skills, no matter their current level of development, in order to obtain information and express themselves in a variety of ways and settings.

### ***Cradling Literacy***

*This evidence-based training curriculum, developed at ZERO TO THREE, builds the capacity of early childhood educators to improve language and literacy outcomes of children birth to five years. In 2010, five Colorado communities developed cross-agency teams comprised of EQ instructors, Early Head Start teachers, literacy specialists, and early childhood librarians. The teams completed the training-of-trainers course and are now able to offer the Cradling Literacy curriculum in their local communities to those*

***The CDE Adult Education and Family Literacy Program. The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)*** is a state-administered federal grant that provides funding on a competitive basis to local providers for educational services to adults in need of basic literacy skills. Instruction takes place in a variety of contexts including workplace literacy, family literacy, corrections education, and GED Preparation.

In addition to building oral and/or sign language, fostering positive social-emotional relationships is also at the heart of language and literacy development in young children. Literacy and language/communication skills are not isolated in early childhood education; they evolve in a holistic manner across the learning domains. It is important to recognize the need for young children to experience their worlds through play and intentional experiences in order to create a solid knowledge base upon which to build literacy content skills. Steve Barnett and Ellen Frede of the National Institute for Early Education Research (2009) highlight the interdependency by stating:

*Early childhood education is a matter of both/and and not either/or. Children need: explicit instruction and dramatic play; an understanding of letter sound correspondence and a rich vocabulary; teacher directed and child initiated activities; early literacy instruction and enrichment across content domains, social skills, and the arts. (p. 2)*

Children from **birth to age 5** must be provided experiences through many different methods for encouraging emergent language and literacy. Knowledge of basic child development, including brain development, and developmentally-appropriate practice in language and literacy is vital for understanding how children learn in the earliest years and how to strategically target services across the community. Infants, toddlers, three year-olds, four year-olds and five year-olds are in very different places, all with suitable approaches to enhance their early and emerging literacy skills. Each stage of typical development requires a distinct approach to enhancing early literacy to match the child's skills and needs.

For example, language and literacy activities for infants may include exploring picture books, singing songs, and chanting nursery rhymes within a secure adult-child relationship. Language and literacy development for a three-year-old may include similar activities in addition to providing experiences to form concept development, enhanced exposures to books, and other strategies for fostering the love of reading. Four-year-old children develop language and literacy skills when adults provide abundant language experiences, offer print in the environment, and introduce new words in context and with direct meaning to the child. Supporting language and literacy development for older four- and five-year-olds may include fostering specific early literacy skills such as phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, and text related skills such as concepts of print.

Support and training for families as well as early care and education providers and educators must be in place to promote intentional language and literacy acquisition in young children. Access to high quality early care and education services is of vital importance.

In an effort to support early childhood providers and educators in determining best practices, the National Early Literacy Panel (National Institute for Literacy, 2008) was convened in 2002 to synthesize scientific research on the development of early literacy skills in children from **birth to age 5**. The panel identified interventions, parenting activities, and instructional practices that promote the development of early literacy in children. In the report of the panel's findings, "Developing Early Literacy," the panel concluded that, "conventional reading and writing skills that are developed in the years from **birth to age 5** have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional



literacy skills” (p. vii). Six variables were found to have medium to large predictive relationships with later measures of literacy skills: alphabet knowledge, phonological awareness, rapid automatic naming of letters and digits, rapid automatic naming of objects or colors, writing or writing name, and phonological memory. Five additional variables were found to have moderate relationships with later measures of literacy skills, specifically, concepts about print, print knowledge, reading readiness, oral language, and visual processing.

In a response to the panel’s report, David Dickinson et al. (2009) further emphasizes the importance of language experiences in early learning, stating that “language is an entrenched competency that develops over the course of early childhood rather than in a single year and few longitudinal studies have been conducted” (p. 3) He also makes the point that “background knowledge forms the basis of children’s developing understanding of the world and represents a key building block for reading comprehension. Without content, the words children read cannot map on to anything meaningful. The development of knowledge, early on, must be a central feature of literacy instruction.” (Dickenson et al., 2009, p. 4).

Implementing best practices in early childhood settings is essential for the development of early language and literacy skills in children from **birth to age 5**. The Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education provide Colorado early childhood teachers with the “steps for getting there” or the “how” of early childhood teaching. As described previously, young children require a much different environment than their elementary school counterparts. For each standard and its evidence outcome, the document outlines what should be in place to ensure children have access to the objectives and goals of the standards in enriching, developmentally appropriate ways. Examples are also provided of children and adults in various settings showing the standards in action so that connections can be made from the small and large moments of early childhood experiences that build towards more formal learning.

### **Kindergarten to Grade 5**

During the **kindergarten to grade 5** years, children transition from learning to read (initial reading and decoding) to reading to learn. As children become aware of the relationship between sounds and letters and begin applying the knowledge to text, they are able to read words accurately using knowledge of the alphabetic principle. At this stage in reading development, proficiency depends on a combination of skills including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, decoding, automatic word recognition, knowing the meaning of most words, constructing meaning through connections and background knowledge, and monitoring comprehension (Chall, 1996b; Ehri, 2004; Moats, 2005, National Institute for Literacy, 2008; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Strategic reading from **kindergarten to grade 5** depends on the coordinated use of four processing systems; the phonological processor, the orthographic processor, the meaning processor, and the context processor. The phonological processor identifies and retrieves the sounds

#### **Colorado LETRS**

*Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) provides educators with deep knowledge of reading instruction, focusing on the structures of the English language and the foundational concepts that link the components of reading together including phonemic awareness, phonics, oral language development, vocabulary, reading fluency, comprehension, and writing. Currently, there are 72 LETRS trainers representing all regions, 15 school districts, 3 BOCES, and 3 universities.*

of language. The orthographic processor determines, stores, and retrieves the graphemes (symbol, letter, or combination of letters) in print. It also processes letters, letter patterns, and words and allows for fluent recognition of whole words as the child reads. The meaning processor communicates with the phonological and orthographic processor to support the reader in retrieving known words and constructing the meanings of unknown words. The context processor supports the meaning processor in interpreting words based on language, experience, and concept knowledge. Children with reading difficulties may have problems in any one or combination of the four processing systems (Brady, 1997; Moats, 2005; Scarborough & Brady, 2002).

Jeanne Chall's (1996a) stage theory of reading suggests that children develop reading proficiency on a continuum, moving through a series of stages. Each stage is dependent upon the development of skills at prior stages although the stages are not necessarily dependent on age or grade level. Skills introduced in one stage may continue to develop during subsequent stages. Understanding the developmental continuum through which children move is essential for literacy success.

Stage zero, the pre-reading stage, is the stage at which a child begins to acquire knowledge of oral language, typically developing from birth to age 5. Stage one builds on the knowledge gained in stage zero as children begin to connect letters and sounds. This stage focuses on the alphabetic principle and decoding. Children who are at this stage of reading development will begin to recognize differences in printed words. During stage two of Chall's reading model, children become proficient in their decoding abilities, thus gaining fluency with basic words. Stage two readers also begin to make connections to previous knowledge and build a sight word base that contributes to their speed of reading text (Chall, 1996b).

*The State Library provides libraries and caregivers across the state a brochure, "Reading Tips for Parents" and a companion brochure, "Getting Ready for Kindergarten...Ready? Set? Go!" Each offers tips and ideas on what children should know in order to function well from the beginning of kindergarten, along with ideas for parents and caregiver for activities that help, most useful for children from about age four to five. It is available in both English and Spanish.*

The final three stages of reading development differ from the first three stages in that children begin to read for a new purpose, reading to learn versus learning to read. Stage three readers will use their own experiences to gain a clear understanding of what they read. In addition, a foundation of vocabulary and an understanding of text structure are important if children are to be successful at this stage in the reading process. The next stage in the model is directly connected to the abilities developed in stage three. During stage four, readers will encounter complex text that includes different points of view. Readers at this stage will begin to construct new knowledge as they move into the final stage of the reading process. Once at stage five, readers are able to discriminate among the pieces of text, selecting only that which is pertinent to the reader's purpose. Higher levels of thinking are involved at this stage, including the ability to analyze, synthesize, and make judgments.

The research of Scarborough (2001) confirms and extends upon Chall's reading stage theory and demonstrates the process of learning to read through a rope model. The two main strands of the rope; word recognition and language comprehension, are interwoven, and each of these two main strands contains many smaller strands. These strands are interwoven to demonstrate that word recognition and language comprehension take place at the same time. The

smaller strands of the language comprehension section of the rope include background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge. The smaller strands of the word recognition section of the rope include phonological awareness, decoding, and sight recognition. Becoming a skilled reader, according to Scarborough, involves increased automaticity of the word recognition strands and increasingly strategic use of the language comprehension strands within the rope model.

In contrast to the skills of listening and speaking, learning to read from **kindergarten to grade 5** involves learning the intricacies of written language. These skills must be explicitly taught. Direct, explicit, and systematic instruction has been recognized as an important element for this purpose. “Explicit instruction in reading makes a difference in student outcomes, especially for those who are low achieving” (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003, p. 202). Explicit instruction of strategies and skills consistently has greater effects on reading outcomes than implicit or embedded instruction involving the natural development of strategies and skills for reading (Coyne, Kame’enui, & Simmons, 2001). Explicit teaching means nothing is left to chance. Students are not made to infer what is being taught, which confuses struggling readers (Denton, Vaughn, & Fletcher, 2003). Instead, students are given a direct explanation of what they are learning. Teachers include a model so that students can see, hear, and/or touch the task that they are being asked to complete. Often the model comes in the form of a think aloud, demonstrating the teacher’s thinking for students (Pressley et al., 2006).

For students with disabilities, explicit instruction will involve general and special educators working together to ensure that all students have full access to literacy instruction. For gifted students who already read with understanding upon kindergarten entrance or who learn to read at a fast pace, direct and explicit reading instruction needs to be differentiated by content, process and pace. The focus of instruction for advanced readers needs to be on their individual growth as readers, writers and communicators. Literacy instruction should be a continuum of learning and mastery of standards at the level of performance. Educators working with this age group should be aware of a pattern exhibited by some talented readers (Halsted, 1994). “They teach themselves how to read before they start school, are independent readers by second grade, know their favorite authors by third grade, and have well-established reading patterns by fifth grade. Unfortunately, current research also demonstrates that the reading levels of these students may decline by the time they reach upper elementary as a result of an absence of challenge in reading in school” (Reis & Boeve, 2007 in Reis, 2008).

The integration of the five components of reading is also essential for successful literacy outcomes from **kindergarten to grade 5**. At the request of the U.S. Congress, the National Reading Panel was convened in 1997 to assess the effectiveness of different instructional approaches for teaching reading in the early grades. The panel’s findings, described in the panel’s report “Teaching Children to Read,” were released in 2000. The report identified five essential (though not exhaustive) components of reading instruction – the importance of which has been validated by subsequent research (August & Shanahan, 2008; McCardle & Chhabra, 2004). The components are: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. For adolescent learners, these same five components are equally relevant (Torgesen et al., 2007).

## Grades 6 to 12

The years between **grades 6 to 12** represent a change in the reading process from the early years of learning to read to the important process of reading to learn. Adolescent literacy involves higher levels of comprehension and constructing meaning from content area texts and literature. Chall (1996b) notes that the demands of reading increase dramatically for students as their learning begins to rely more on textbooks. The vocabulary adolescent students encounter is less conversational and less familiar, with more specialized, technical terms and abstract ideas. Furthermore, the syntax of texts becomes more complex and demanding. The reasoning about information in texts also shifts, with a greater emphasis on inferential thinking and prior knowledge.

Moore, Bean, Birdyshaw, and Rycik (1999) from the International Reading Association Commission on Adolescent Literacy emphasize the relevance of literacy in the adolescent years (p. 3):

Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens (vote), and conduct their personal lives (driver's test). In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read will be crucial.

Ensuring the continued development of literacy skills for students from **grades 6 to 12** is more challenging than in the early years. Literacy development at this stage involves more complex skills that are embedded in all content areas in addition to motivating students to read. McGill-Franzen and Allington (2003) emphasize the relevance of extensive, successful reading experiences for students as they continue to develop reading proficiency. Students need opportunities to listen to, discuss, and read books on topics that interest them in order to develop background knowledge which will become the foundation for engaging in independent reading. In their studies, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) determined that less-successful reading experiences over an extensive period of time results in children who are less interested in voluntary reading. Similarly, Cunningham and Stanovich (1998), emphasize the most important predictors of positive reading development, including a successful experience learning to read and numerous opportunities to read. Children who read well will enjoy reading and therefore, they will also read more and become more proficient readers.

*The **Rural Secondary Literacy Project (RSLP)** was a collaborative initiative among the Exceptional Student Leadership Unit, Literacy Grants and Initiative Unit, and Regional Services. Funded from 2007 to 2010, its intent was to develop an effective, replicable secondary literacy framework, increase the capacity of the rural secondary schools to deliver appropriate literacy instruction and intervention, and support use of student achievement data to analyze effectiveness of systems. Nineteen middle and high schools from all four corners of Colorado participated in*

It is important for content area teachers from **grades 6 to 12** to know the early stages of reading development described above as well as strategies for supporting the continued development of higher level reading skills during content related classes. The skills adolescent readers need include an awareness and ability to manipulate sounds, letter/sound correspondences for decoding, advanced word analysis, fluency in decoding, sight word memory of irregular words, strong oral language background, vocabulary knowledge and word consciousness, accurate and rich

background knowledge to construct meaning, and metacognitive strategies to adjust comprehension while reading (Curtis and Longo, 1999).

In a report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, Biancarosa and Snow (2006) suggest nine instructional elements of effective adolescent literacy programs. The elements include:

- Direct and explicit comprehension instruction
- Effective instructional principles embedded in content
- Motivation and self-directed learning
- Text-based collaborative learning
- Strategic tutoring
- Diverse texts
- Intensive writing
- Technology component
- Ongoing formative assessment of students

Research demonstrates that the middle school years are critical for setting the course for students toward college and career readiness, and recent NAEP results demonstrate that just over a third (34%) of the nation's 8<sup>th</sup> graders scored proficient or higher in reading (Balfanz, Bridgeland, Bruce, & Fox, 2012). Reading difficulty undermines every other academic subject. Research shows that many classrooms use textbooks written two or more years above the average grade level of their students (Chall & Conard, 1991; Budiansky, 2001). To expect independent reading, students should be at least 94 percent accurate in reading the text. In fact, students will often misbehave when they fall behind in class. In cases such as this, intervention in reading and writing skills may be more beneficial than disciplinary actions in the long run (Taylor, Hasselbring, & Williams, 2001).

Although many students may have made satisfactory progress in developing reading proficiency in the early years, some of these students will begin to struggle with reading, especially content-area reading, and many of them will never recover (Allington, 2002). In addition to the aforementioned group of struggling students, many students in **grades 6 to 12** arrive at this level of schooling having already struggled to acquire basic early literacy skills. What usually begins as a core phonological and word recognition deficit, often associated with other language weaknesses, becomes a diffuse, debilitating problem with language – spoken and written (Moats, 2001 p. 37). Secondary teachers usually assume that their students learned to decode in elementary school (Zipperer et. al., 2002). Often, this is not the case. Some students may have memorized many words, so their word-recognition skills may be average, masking decoding problems. “Despite the typical belief that the problems of adolescent literacy are all about comprehension, there remains a group of middle and high school students who have reading problems that result from not having mastered the alphabetic principle.” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006 p. 10). The older the student, the less he or she has practiced reading

*Research findings on the role of the school library in fostering literacy development and academic achievement for adolescent readers can be found in the publication “**School Libraries Work!**” This document summarizes studies in more than 19 states that show the connection between school libraries, librarians, and collaborative instruction at all grade levels.*

because reading is taxing, slow, and frustrating (Ackerman & Dyckman, 1996; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997). Over time, comprehension skills decline because they do not read, and they also become poor spellers and poor writers.

Students with extreme deficits in basic skills cannot be remediated in a traditional core English class, through silent reading or via content area reading. The evidence indicates that there are no quick fixes, but it is possible to significantly boost the literacy of struggling readers in middle school, high school, and beyond if time, training, and resources are allocated. It is never too late, only more difficult with older students for whom the benefits of literacy are not yet a reality.

For students in **grades 6 to 12** who struggle with reading, research (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006; Curtis & Longo, 1999) indicates five variables that should be included in practice:

- Additional instructional time
- Intensive teaching provided by a well-trained teacher
- Research-based and validated curricula materials
- Increased amounts of practice with correctly matched leveled text
- Student's self advocacy and motivation to learn

Interventions for the most severely struggling reader should be delivered by teachers who specialize in reading; but all content-area teachers need to promote literacy skills. The intervention must match the student's level of reading development, because each stage of growth requires a special focus (Curtis & Longo, 1999). Students cannot and should not bypass any critical skills necessary for fluent and meaningful reading just because of their chronological age (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

Many gifted students in grades 6 to 12 have mastered grade level expectations and will need differentiated content, process and pace. For students in grades 6-12 who demonstrate high-ability in literacy interventions and programming must extend basic practice to add depth and complexity, be based on the student's ability, verbal developmental and instructional/achievement level, as an extension of grade-level outcomes. Reading programs should include research skills, exposure to a variety of genres, independent research projects, opportunities to pursue areas of interest in depth over time and guidance in critical reading and literary analysis at an earlier stage than age peers (Halsted, 2002).

*The CDE Guidebook on Designing, Delivering, and Evaluating Services for English Learners is a resource created to support districts in establishing quality programming and services for English learners. The state guidance within the document assists in the areas of legal requirements, identification, assessment, placement, programming, accountability, evaluation, parent engagement, and schools of choice. Districts find the needs assessment that is aligned with the Office for Civil Rights requirements especially helpful to assess their current state and identify areas for improvement. The intention of the guidebook is to increase the capacity of districts to deliver appropriate programming, interventions, and supports for English learners as well as understand obligations under current law.*

Research findings suggest that curriculum and instruction include an appropriate selection of reading materials, guided critical discussions, advanced organizers for processing, connections to broad-based themes and issues, incorporation



of writing models, language and oral communication, language studies, independent research and interdisciplinary connections – again at the appropriate cognitive development and achievement level (Van Tassel-Basko, 2006).

In summary, the high-ability students in language arts must be able to access challenging curriculum and instruction that may be above grade level expectations from the beginning of school through high school.

## **LITERACY OBJECTIVES AND ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR IMPROVING ACHIEVEMENT**

In order to impact literacy achievement for Colorado's children, the state must take a systematic approach. Elements that are essential to a system-wide approach to improving literacy outcomes for Colorado's children include (1) a standards-based curriculum, (2) aligned assessments, (3) instruction and intervention, (4) leadership, (5) family and community partnerships, and (6) educator preparation and professional development.

This section is organized according to the process the CDE underwent to develop the department's Strategic Literacy Plan. First, the CDE identified essential elements drawing on the components of Response to Intervention (RtI). Next, the CDE conducted an environmental scan of the current state of departmental capacity related to each of the elements (found in Appendix C). Finally, the CDE determined next steps for the department to take in order to progress toward its literacy goals. From this section, a detailed action plan was developed, prioritizing the elements according to analysis of potential impact, resource allocation, and the department's strategic priorities.

### **Essential Element #1: Standards-Based Curriculum**

The CDE remains committed to ensuring all Colorado students demonstrate mastery of Colorado's reading, writing, and communicating standards. The Colorado Academic and English Language Proficiency Standards play a critical role in defining the learning path from preschool through postsecondary workforce readiness and serve as the foundation for locally developed, standards-based curricula. Standards serve as the framework for curriculum and instruction to support literacy growth from preschool through grade 12.

The CDE defines a standards-based curriculum as an organized plan of instruction to engage students in mastering state standards. A high-quality curriculum is infused with the necessary supports for all students to obtain mastery of these expectations and: (a) embodies 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, (b) is comprehensive, ensuring, at a minimum, access to all areas specified in state legislation, (c) is connected within and across content areas, (d) is culturally relevant, meaningful, and applicable, (e) is equitable and accessible to all students, and (f) is guaranteed, viable, and appropriate for the instructional level of each student.

An effective literacy curriculum is developed based on mastery of skills and concepts that incorporate specific components of literacy. The CDE identifies six specific components that should be present. These components include:

- Reading informational text and literature within and across content areas fluently and purposefully to gain understanding and appreciation;
- Writing informational, persuasive, and narrative or literary texts within and across content areas for a variety of audiences;

- Speaking, listening and viewing with purpose and attention within and across content areas in order to transfer knowledge and respond critically and creatively;
- Developing language within and across content areas that transfers to real world situations;
- Infusing 21<sup>st</sup> century skills intentionally in the teaching and learning cycle (critical thinking and reasoning, information literacy, collaboration, self direction, and invention); and
- Employing technology (where appropriate) to access, manage, integrate, evaluate, and create information.

When connecting curriculum to instruction and assessment, it is important to keep in mind the strengths of a student. This is an important component to consider for special populations (English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and talented, etc.). This could mean for English learners (ELs) using their native language to assist in their English literacy. Research shows that students who are able to use their native language during instruction experience greater transfer to their new language.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of standards-based curriculum relate to the department's role in defining coherent birth through grade 12 expectations in literacy, supporting local development of a standards-based literacy curriculum, and disseminating information across agencies and systems to support district and school literacy programs.

#### ***Standards-Based Curriculum Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Provide standards implementation guidance and tools to ensure coherence between birth-12 curricula, instruction, and assessments
- Provide relevant information and supports related to early childhood and P-12 literacy standards for birth-12 educators, librarians, community members, and higher education leaders

## **Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention**

The focal points for instruction and intervention include: (1) foundational language and literacy skills, (2) disciplinary literacy, and, (3) literacy interventions for struggling readers and writers. While there are no easy answers or quick solutions for instruction in reading, writing and communicating, an extensive amount of research now exists to show us the skills students must learn in order to be literate. Knowledge of this growing body of research provides a basis for curricular decisions and instructional approaches. A convergence of research over the past 30 years indicates that the following five components are essential to reading acquisition for early readers (typically Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade):

- Phonemic awareness,
- Phonics and word recognition,
- Fluency,
- Vocabulary, and
- Text comprehension.

Systematic and explicit instruction in all five of these components supports the acquisition of reading skills and reduce the risk of reading difficulties (National Reading Panel, 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). While much research exists on learning to read, there is more limited body of research regarding the shift that occurs around 4<sup>th</sup> grade when students must begin reading to learn (Snow & Biancarosa, 2003). Even so, research findings (Kamil, 2003) to date indicate the following important elements of instruction for the development of adolescent literacy:

- Motivation,
- Word analysis and decoding,
- Fluency,
- Vocabulary, and
- Comprehension.

While research in the area of writing instruction is still emerging, researchers have determined that written language requires a complex set of processes to learn and teach. These processes can be broken down into two major categories: writing mechanics and writing process. Writing mechanics includes the physical act of writing, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, syntax, semantics, punctuation and capitalization. Writing processes include background knowledge, retrieval of knowledge, planning, constructing and editing text, and regulation of the entire process (IDEAS that Work). In their meta-analysis, *Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools*, Graham and Perin (2007) the most effective writing instructional strategies educators can utilize to improve writing outcomes for students. These include:

- Teaching writing strategies for planning, revising and editing compositions,
- Teaching students how to summarize texts explicitly and systematically,
- Arranging instruction so that adolescents work together on collaborative writing,
- Assigning students specific, reachable goals for writing,
- Using computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments, and
- Teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences.

Content area teachers play a vital role in the developing disciplinary literacy skills for secondary students. In order to support students in disciplinary literacy, content area teachers must know the literacy skills and strategies relevant to particular content area and intentionally support students in the development of academic language.

For students who require interventions to catch up with their peers, several attributes must be considered and addressed. First, interventions should be determined based on student need. This may require the use of diagnostic assessments or student work analysis to determine where breakdowns occur. Next, all interventions should be delivered with sufficient intensity, frequency, and duration to effectively close achievement gaps. Third, all decisions regarding the use of interventions should be data-based and guided by progress monitoring of the student's progress in deficit areas. Last, all interventions must be directed by teacher and be both systematic and explicit.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of instruction and intervention relate to the department's role in ensuring school readiness with respect to literacy, providing guidance to educators about effective literacy

instruction and intervention, disseminating information across agencies and systems to support district and school literacy programs, and framing literacy instruction and intervention within a multi-tiered system of support.

#### ***Instruction and Intervention Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Identify and communicate information and provide ongoing implementation support for building foundational language and literacy skills to ensure school readiness for all Colorado children
- Provide guidelines to promote research-based practices at all levels of instruction and intervention for birth through grade 12 literacy
- Support and monitor implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI)

### **Essential Element #3: Comprehensive Assessment**

Assessment is the ongoing process of gathering information to make educational decisions for children related to academics and behavior. A comprehensive assessment system provides a framework that defines purposes and uses of assessments within a standards-based teaching and learning cycle and a response to intervention framework. A comprehensive assessment system is fluid, allowing for ongoing evaluation of children's growth, as well as the quality or effectiveness of the instructional program. Such an assessment system enables educators to (1) screen students to identify those at risk, (2) use diagnostic assessments to determine factors contributing to at-risk status, (3) use formative assessments and progress monitoring tools to adjust instruction and monitor the effects of instruction, and (4) use interim and summative assessments to make outcome-based decisions about individual mastery of academic standards and English language development, as well as evaluation of literacy program(s).

Effective assessment systems meet reliability and validity best practice guidelines and are essential for identifying children's learning needs, making instructional decisions, monitoring progress toward goals, measuring the overall impact of the literacy instruction, and reporting results to stakeholders. There are several types of assessments: screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, interim and summative testing. Some assessments are more useful as a part of an intervention (screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring), while others are more likely to be a part of a larger state or district assessment system (interim and summative). A comprehensive assessment system identifies which assessments should be administered, when they should be administered, to whom they should be administered, and how the assessment results will be used.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of comprehensive assessment relate to the department's role in implementing a statewide assessment system, providing leadership related to assessment literacy, and providing resources to educators to support effective use of assessment to inform instruction.

***Comprehensive Assessment Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Expand and deepen Colorado’s system of assessment and data usage from birth-grade 12 to inform instructional decision-making that will ensure all students achieve in literacy
- Identify assessments (formative, progress monitoring, and summative) to support the state assessment system and educator effectiveness initiative
- Provide resources and support to the field in effective use of data to inform programmatic and student level decisions through a Response to Intervention framework

**Essential Element #4: Leadership**

It is essential for a clear vision and commitment to literacy achievement for birth through twelfth grade students to be in place, from the state level to the local level. Critical to effective leadership are ensuring positive school culture and building strong partnerships with families and communities. Regardless of where students receive literacy support, a positive learning climate is essential. A positive learning climate is an environment that is proactive, safe, and culturally responsive. It is built upon a caring school and/or learning community that welcomes, honors, supports, and builds relationships with diverse learners and families to increase academic and social emotional outcomes for all. To better impact changes locally, community partnerships from entities such as libraries, service groups, early care and education centers, and others must be enlisted and maintained.

District and building leaders need to have knowledge of effective, research-based literacy instruction, the role of standards in curriculum and instruction, effective use of assessment to inform instruction, the design and implementation of standards-based literacy curriculum, the selection of appropriate instructional materials, and how to provide ongoing professional development and coaching. Leadership in the context of literacy refers to the activities of district, school, and classroom leaders and includes:

- Creating a clear vision and commitment to literacy efforts,
- Inspiring, facilitating, and monitoring growth and improvement, along with holding high standards for all,
- Promoting the essential components of literacy and the significant systematic changes needed to implement literacy curriculum and instruction with fidelity,
- Committing resources, time, and energy to build capacity and sustaining the momentum needed for change, and
- Supporting collaborative problem-solving approaches with colleagues, families, learners, and community members to build partnerships for change.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of leadership relate to the department's leadership role in literacy achievement for the state informed by the needs of district, school, and classroom leaders to achieve Colorado's literacy goals.

#### ***Leadership Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Take a leadership role in literacy achievement for the state
- Support the development of local level leadership for improving literacy achievement

### **Essential Element #5: Family and Community Partnerships**

For Colorado to reach its literacy goals, policy makers, educators, institutions of higher education, business and community organizations, state agencies, families must coalesce around the common objective of ensuring all students are school ready and stay on-track for reading proficiency.

Family, school, and community partnering is effective in supporting students' school success, according to 40 years of evidence from multiple sources. Both *academic achievement*, including literacy, and *motivation to learn*, including interest and passion, are correlated with the "curriculum of the home" and community focus. Key partnering findings from the research, applied to creating literacy best practices, include the following: (1) generalization and sustainability of learning occurs when families are involved, (2) programs and interventions that explicitly engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher achievement, (3) students benefit in multiple ways from partnering, beginning in the early years and extending through secondary levels; this includes those who experience differences in culture, language, learning, and economic resources, (4) families want their children to succeed in school and desire information on their role.

Three partnering principles are the focus in applying the research to Colorado's multi-faceted literacy plan. *Sharing responsibility* creates a unified, teaming process with co-constructed and complementary roles for students, educators, family members, and community resources - using mutually understood data. *Developmental continuity* coordinates seamless transitions in literacy learning, both in and out of school, from birth through secondary school. *Community collaboration* applies the power of multiple contexts to supporting every family's participation and links the infant/early childhood and postsecondary worlds to school literacy development, both for students and in educator preparation.

Differentiation of family, school, and community partnering practices is important in actualizing optimal literacy achievement for every student. Families differ in their familiarity with school culture and expectations, as well as in literacy skills and confidence. Educators differ in their knowledge of partnering with families. Students differ in their learning pace and literacy exposure. Community resources differ in their literacy focus and opportunities. In aligning



with Colorado's Response-to-Intervention (RtI) model, it is helpful to think of a Multi-Tier System of Supports for all, in order to effectively allocate resources to data-identified needs. An ongoing evaluation process, allows for fluid adjustment of tiered literacy partnering interventions and supports in the school, home, and community.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of family and community partnerships relate to the department's role with other state agencies and community organizations and support of districts and schools to establish effective and impactful partnerships.

***Family and Community Partnership Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Leverage literacy efforts aimed at improving Colorado literacy achievement undertaken by community-based partnerships and coalitions committed to working together to address the barriers to literacy and improving literacy achievement for all
- Promote coordination between schools, early and family literacy efforts, and libraries
- Integrate birth through grade 12 literacy initiatives with adult and family literacy initiatives

**Essential Element #6: Educator Preparation and Professional Development**

Effective educators and leaders are essential to meeting the literacy needs of Colorado's children. Ensuring that there are effective educators for all of Colorado's students and effective leaders for all of Colorado's schools and districts goes beyond traditional notions of professional development consisting of teacher in-service or summer workshops. The key is a systematic approach addressing each component of the educator pipeline: recruitment, preparation, licensure and qualifications, induction, evaluation, and ongoing, job-embedded, professional development. Great teachers and leaders are an essential component of Colorado's Education Vision 2020, based on the premise that all of Colorado's students are entitled to effective teachers and leaders.

The recruitment and preparation of new educators provides a key lever for affecting long-term, systematic change in literacy instruction and intervention. Ensuring educator and principal preparation programs align with Colorado's new standards and incorporate training in research-based literacy practices is critical for Colorado to reach its literacy goals. Boosting the effectiveness of all educators to improve literacy outcomes for students involves ensuring all educators understand and can effectively implement Colorado's new reading, writing, and communicating standards, including how the standards relate to disciplinary literacy. State standards implementation supports combined with district coordination of professional development and evaluation systems work together to build educator effectiveness in literacy instruction and intervention.

The actions for the CDE in support of the essential element of educator preparation relate to the department's role in educator preparation programs and professional development for the state.

### ***Educator Preparation and Professional Development Actions***

The Colorado Department of Education will:

- Leverage its role with educator preparation programs to ensure principals and teachers have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality literacy instruction aligned with the Colorado's standards
- Build the knowledge base of in-service educators regarding research-based literacy practices
- Ensure that all professional development sponsored by the CDE is supportive of the department's Strategic Literacy Plan

## **LITERACY IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

The CDE Literacy Leadership Team identified a number of strategies related to each of the objectives articulated within the Essential Elements. The process of prioritizing the potential strategies involved organization according to whether a strategy related to leveraging current CDE strategic priorities or a strategy related to expanding or initiating departmental initiatives to provide new resources in support of literacy achievement. Strategies that relate to leverage the strategic priorities of the department will be imbedded into project plans outside of the SLP. Strategies that involve expanding or initiating new supports will be included a SLP project plan. The next sections contextualize and delineate these strategies.

### **Strategies for Leveraging the CDE Strategic Priorities in Support of Literacy**

Colorado is in the process of implementing the most significant educational improvement efforts in its history, driven by three major legislative mandates: SB 08-212, SB 09-163, and SB 10-191. The CDE strategic priorities of high expectations, effective educators, and accountability and improvement must be leveraged to improve literacy achievement. This education *transformation* agenda exemplifies a continuous improvement model at all levels of the educational system: classroom, school, district, and state department of education. Continuous improvement for student learning, which is the central focus of the SLP, revolves around four primary questions:

- What do students need to know, understand, and be able to do? (Plan)
- How do we teach effectively to ensure students are learning? (Do)
- How do we know students are learning? (Reflect)
- How do we use evidence of student learning to adjust instruction? (Revise)

An analogous cycle of improvement occurs for Colorado teachers as outlined in Senate Bill 10-191, Colorado's Educator Effectiveness Bill. This cycle considers what educators must know and be able to do, what supports facilitate effective educational practices, what evidence demonstrates teaching effectiveness, and what steps can be taken to continuously

improve and build upon effective classroom instruction. Likewise, Senate Bill 09-163, Colorado’s Education Accountability Act, embodies this cycle for schools/districts, asking administrators to consider what they need to know and be able to do, how their work supports an effective educational system, how they identify and develop effective systemic approaches, and how they work to build an agile and responsive system. Thus, from micro to a macro levels, Colorado’s multifaceted educational agenda establishes a process for continually revisiting the learning we seek for children and the adults who serve them.

The SLP seeks to leverage these strategic priorities of the department to positively impact student achievement, gaining from a state and departmental focus on transformative drivers of education improvement for Colorado’s children. Strategies related to the strategic priorities are delineated below. These strategies will be imbedded in the project plans for the related initiative.

**Table 2: Strategies for Leveraging the CDE Strategic Priorities in Support of Literacy Achievement**

High Expectations
<b>Objective 1: Support early literacy instruction and assessment through school readiness initiatives</b>
<i>Strategies:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Support effective implementation of school readiness assessments pursuant to SB 08-212</li> <li>b. Collaborate in the development of Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines (ELDG) to ensure clear progression of literacy expectations for children birth through age 5</li> <li>c. Collaborate with relevant state agencies to foster early childhood provider understanding of the ELDG and reading, writing, and communicating standards</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2: Support effective implementation of literacy standards</b>
<i>Strategies:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Set expectations for implementation of standards for stakeholders</li> <li>b. Support district curriculum development to articulate an organized plan of instruction from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade to engage students in achieving Colorado’s literacy standards</li> <li>c. Provide resources and training for integration of literacy within all discipline areas through intentional focus on developing academic language and disciplinary literacy</li> <li>d. Develop and disseminate critical consumer tools for evaluating instructional materials and resources with respect to alignment with the Colorado Academic Standards and adherence to research-based literacy practices</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3: Expand and deepen use of assessment and data to improve literacy achievement</b>
<i>Strategies:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Strengthen rules of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act to ensure children in grades K-3 read at grade-level</li> <li>b. Develop a statewide assessment professional development plan to articulate the effective use of assessment practices to improve literacy achievement</li> <li>c. Identify and/or develop measures of student growth in literacy to inform instruction, intervention, and evaluation of educator effectiveness</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 4: Utilize a Response to Intervention framework to improve systems from the classroom to state</b>
<i>Strategies:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Utilize and communicate RtI as the framework for instruction and intervention</li> <li>b. Develop state-level RtI fidelity of implementation rubrics</li> <li>c. Develop common language for Response to Intervention (RtI) across state agencies</li> </ul>

## Effective Educators

### Objective 5: Leverage educator preparation program changes related to SB 10-191 to enhance training for educators and administrators

#### Strategies:

- a. Integrate the ELDG within all early learning system elements (i.e., workforce competencies, comprehensive assessment systems, Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System)
- b. Collaborate with the Colorado Department of Higher Education to inform improvements in educator preparation programs for all educators and school leaders to support student achievement in literacy
- c. Align educator preparation program content review process with SB 10-191 rules regarding literacy practices

### Objective 6: Enhance the literacy instructional capacity of practicing educators

#### Strategies:

- a. Coordinate professional development related to literacy teachers, literacy specialists, content area teachers, and school leaders
- b. Leverage work of the content collaborative in literacy to enhance statewide capacity in literacy instruction for all age groups
- c. Ensure the teacher and principal rubrics include practices to support quality literacy instruction
- d. Encourage school districts throughout the state to increase the number of licensed school librarians in schools

### Objective 7: Enhance partnerships within and across departmental programs and state agencies

#### Strategies:

- a. Support family partnerships and community partnerships across departmental units
- b. Infuse literacy achievement within all interagency collaborative efforts (i.e., common school readiness goals of CDE and the Colorado Department of Human Services)

## Strategies for Initiating New Literacy Supports

The review of current departmental capacity and resources available to support literacy revealed the potential to improve literacy achievement through concentrated attention on supporting quality instruction and effective instructional leadership. The strategies articulated below reflect a laser-like focus on improving literacy instruction through the development of additional resources for districts, schools, and teachers.

**Table 3: Strategies for Initiating New Literacy Supports**

High Expectations
<b>Objective 1: Support improvements in core literacy instruction for all children</b>
<i>Strategies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Develop and communicate guidelines regarding foundational literacy skills and research-based strategies for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers</li><li>b. Identify and disseminate resources specific to English learners within early childhood programs</li><li>c. Develop and communicate guidelines about standards-based, explicit instruction and interventions needed to close achievement gaps</li><li>d. Identify and disseminate resources for teaching secondary reading and writing within content area classes to support disciplinary literacy</li><li>e. Identify district, school, and classroom level indicators for high quality literacy instruction and intervention for inclusion in a Literacy Leadership Toolkit</li></ul>
<b>Objective 2: Support the accelerated growth of students with literacy gaps</b>
<i>Strategies:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Provide guidance for effective Individual Literacy Plan (ILP) development within a Response to Intervention framework</li><li>b. Identify and disseminate exemplars of ILPs</li><li>c. Monitor the effective use of CBLA data to close the literacy gap for students on ILPs</li><li>d. Provide state level guidance for use of Expanded Learning Opportunities to increase literacy achievement</li><li>e. Identify models of literacy instruction and intervention specific to the secondary level</li></ul>

Effective Educators	
Objective 4: Build capacity for literacy instruction within P-12 <sup>th</sup> grade educators	
<i>Strategies:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Define and implement guiding principles for all literacy grants and initiatives for the Colorado Department of Education</li> <li>b. Create a Literacy Leadership Toolkit for district and school leaders for use in strategic planning in support of increasing literacy achievement</li> <li>c. Establish common department wide criteria and community of practice related to high-quality, research-based professional development in literacy</li> <li>d. Provide professional development in literacy for early childhood providers</li> <li>e. Develop web-based resources and community of practice for literacy instruction</li> </ul>	
Objective 5: Support the connection of school- and community-based literacy programs	
<i>Strategies:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Coordinate existing state programs related to literacy for family and community partnerships</li> <li>b. Leverage community and library activities for implementing coordinated, systematic early literacy plans</li> <li>c. Support community-based literacy volunteer efforts in partnership with CDE</li> </ul>	
Objective 6: Contribute to statewide literacy achievement initiatives	
<i>Strategies:</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Actively partner with Governor's office and nonprofits in public awareness campaigns related to literacy in support of the Colorado Early Literacy Blueprint</li> <li>b. Integrate educational components about early literacy into adult education and family literacy programming</li> </ul>	

## Conclusion

Positively impacting student achievement in literacy is not simply a noble cause; it is an imperative for the future of Colorado's children and the economic well-being of the state. Accomplishing the goals set forth in this Strategic Literacy Plan will involve the leadership of the Colorado Department of Education, the commitment of every member of the Colorado Department of Education, the guidance of the State Board of Education, and the ongoing partnership with the Governor's office. Colorado's children deserve nothing less.



## **Appendix A**

### **Colorado External Literacy Advisory Committee**

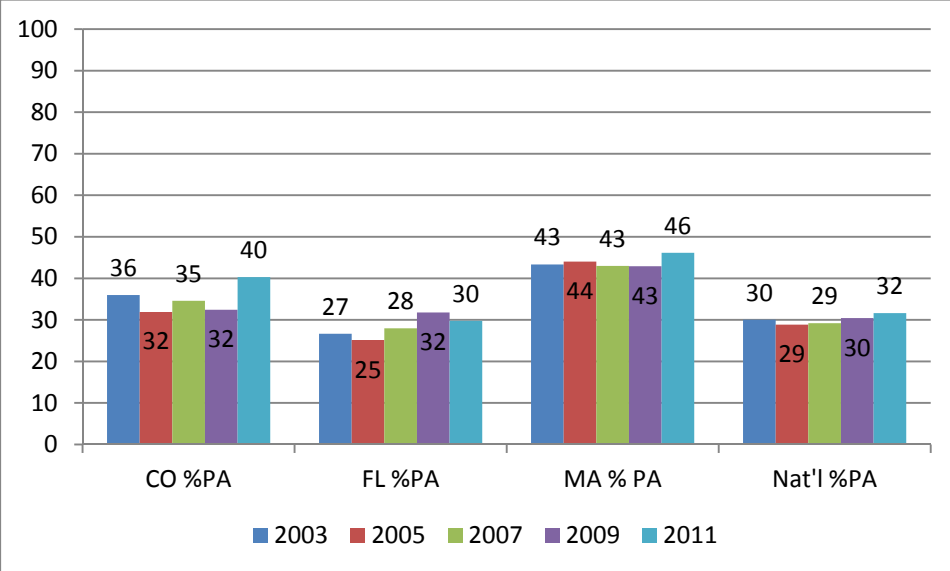
Linda Abeyta	Denver, Literacy Support Team
Molly Bachelor	Aurora, English Language Acquisition
Kate Bishop	Aspen, Reading Teacher Grades 5-8
Kevin Brooks	Littleton, High School
Lu Benke	La Porte, Library
Christy Bloomquist	Durango, Director of Federal Programs and Assessment
Jeanine Coleman	Denver, Child Find, Denver Public Schools
Chris Colias	Littleton, High School English Language Acquisition
Vicki S. Collet	Poudre, Literacy Director
Charlene Crandall	Colorado Springs, Professional Development
Libby Culver	Durango, Early Childhood Education
Andrea Duran	Elizabeth, Gifted and Talented Coordinator
Daryl Gagliano	Pueblo, Director of Early Childhood Education
Jayne Gill	Harrison, Literacy Coordinator
Maureen Gurrini	Aurora, Literacy Coach
Susan Herll	Brighton, Literacy Coordinator
Caroline Hughes	Denver, Library
Erika Lee	Aurora, English Language Acquisition
Michele Miller	Steamboat Springs, Assistant Principal
Heather O'Brien	Mesa County, Gifted and Talented
Vincent Puzick	Colorado Springs, District Literacy Coordinator
Priscilla Queen	Douglas, Library
Regina Renaldi	Longmont, Title I and III
Lori Romero	Arapahoe Library District Supervisor
Nancy Shanklin	Denver, Higher Education
Rebecca Soden	Denver, Clayton Early Learning
Kristin Steed	Monte Vista, Principal/Preschool Director
Angel Stobaugh	Boulder, Director of Literacy
Arlene Vigil-Olech	Commerce City, Instructional Coach
Holly Voorhees-Carmical	Douglas, Secondary Literacy Coach
Lori Woodring	Aspen, Special Education Teacher
Donna Ward	Aspen, Early Childhood Education
Tammy Yetter	Fort Morgan, Literacy Coach

## Appendix B

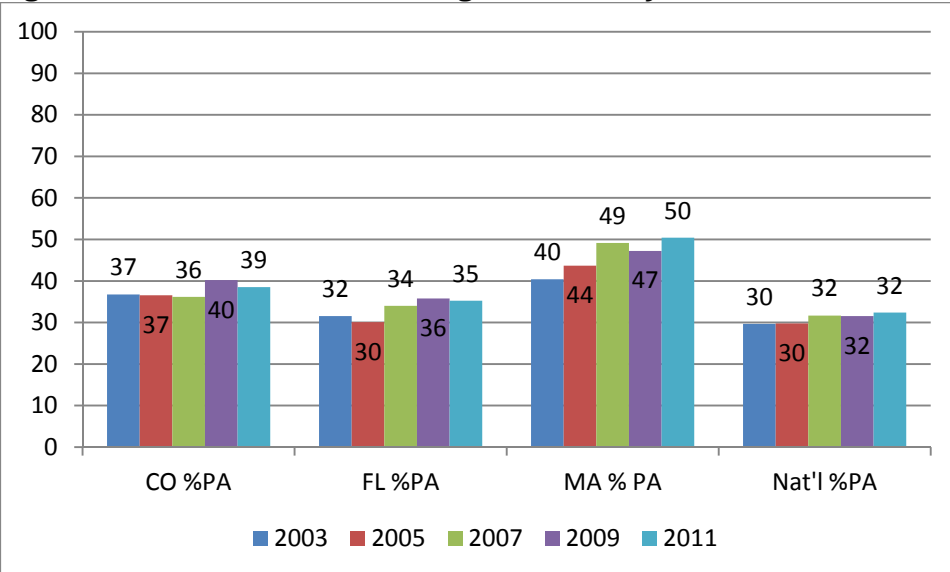
### Additional Colorado Literacy Data

Figures 8 and 9 contain the proficiency data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) from 2003-2011 for Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts and the Nation. It is important to remember that the proficiency expectations for the NAEP are very high; consequently, the percent proficient or higher are very different from most state test results.

**Figure 8: NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading 2003-2011 for Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts and the Nation**

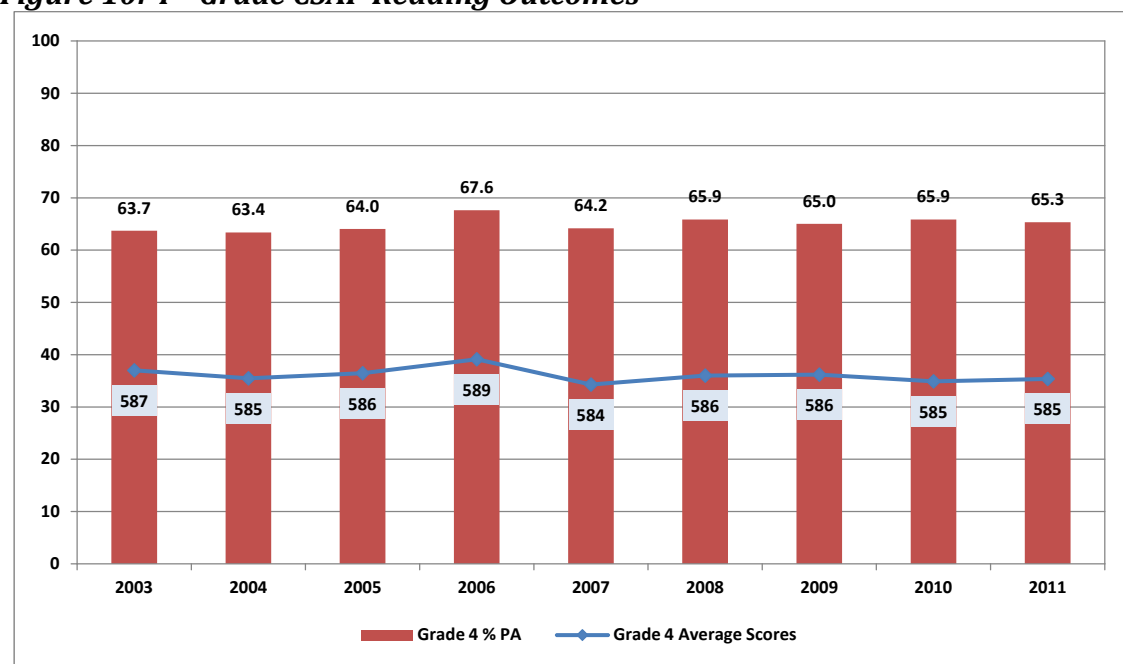


**Figure 9: NAEP 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading 2003-2011 for Colorado, Florida, Massachusetts and the Nation**

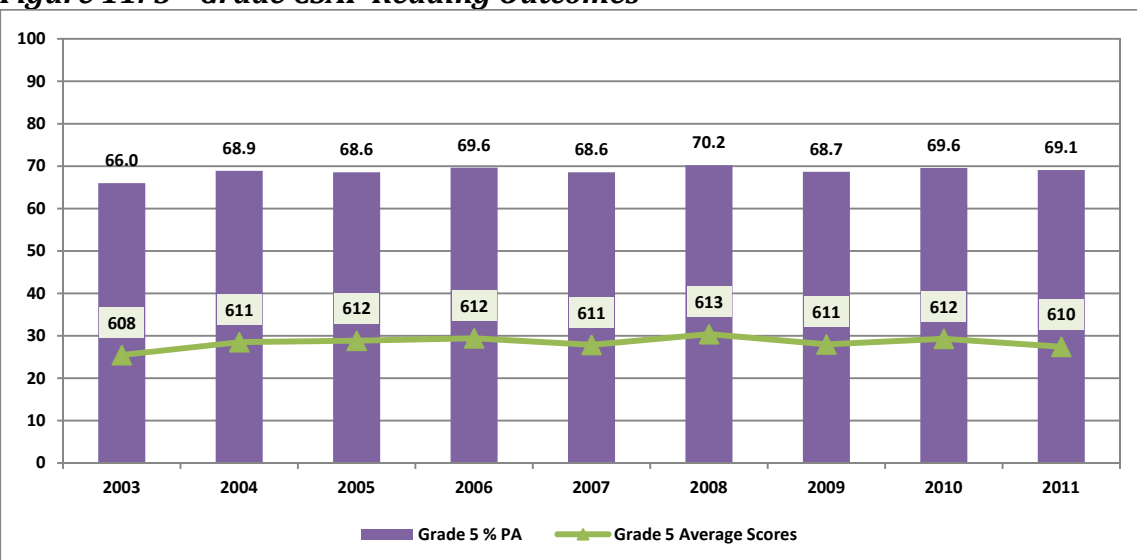


As shown in Figures 10 and 11, reading performance in grades four and five shows slight improvement over time. However, as shown in Figures 12 and 13, the performance in grades six and seven has shown marked improvement over time. While eighth grade performance shows unsteady improvement, the improvement in grades six and seven may be reflected in the NAEP scores for 2011 eighth grade results. The results for grades 9 and 10 are unremarkable.

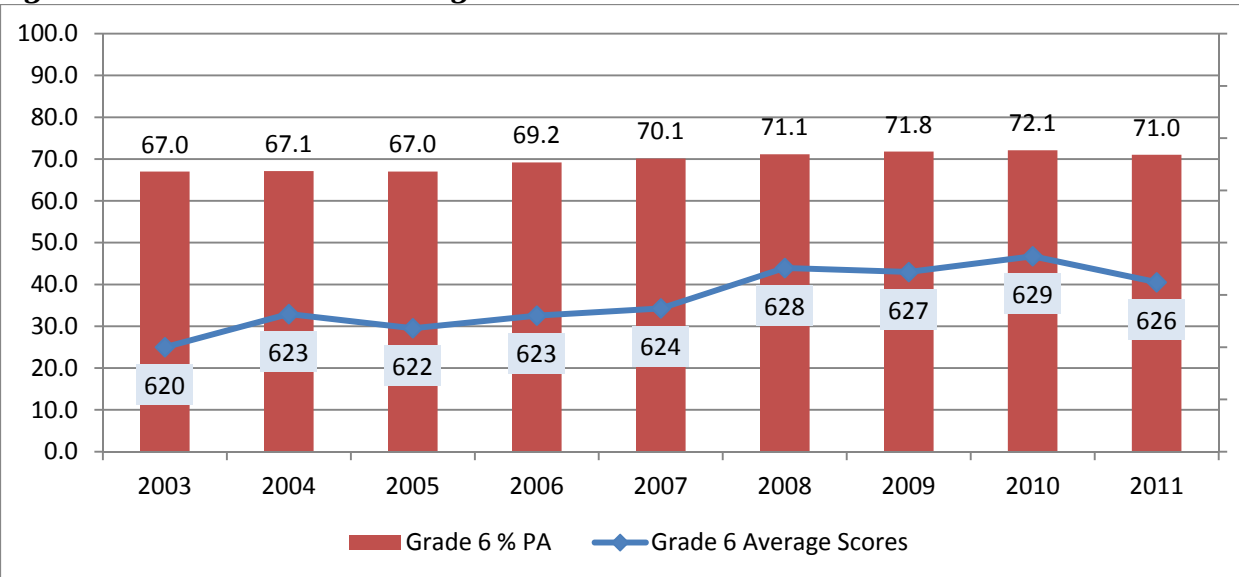
**Figure 10: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes**



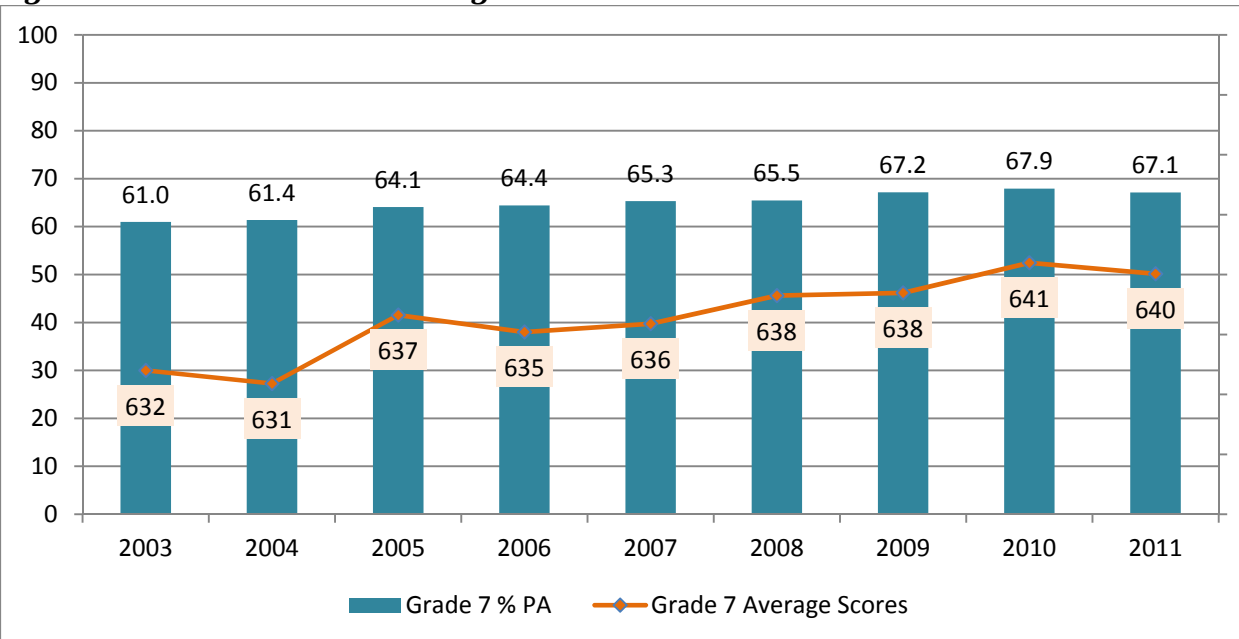
**Figure 11: 5<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes**



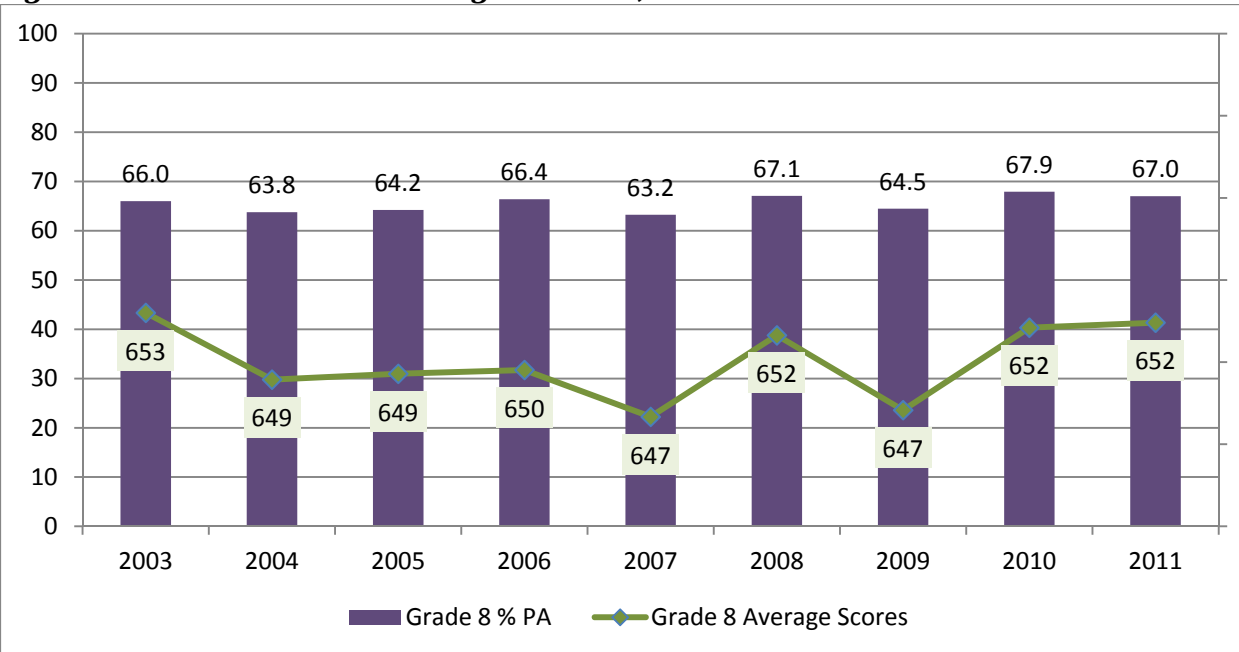
**Figure 12: Grade 6 CSAP Reading Outcomes**



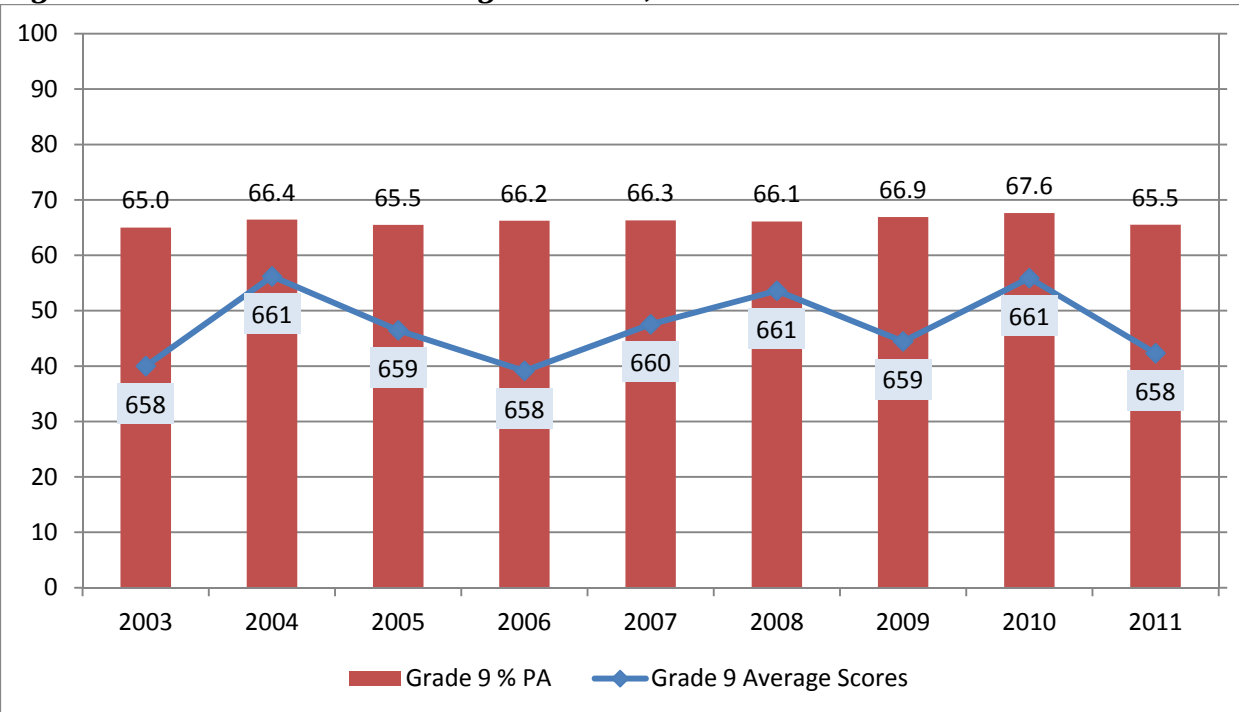
**Figure 13: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes**



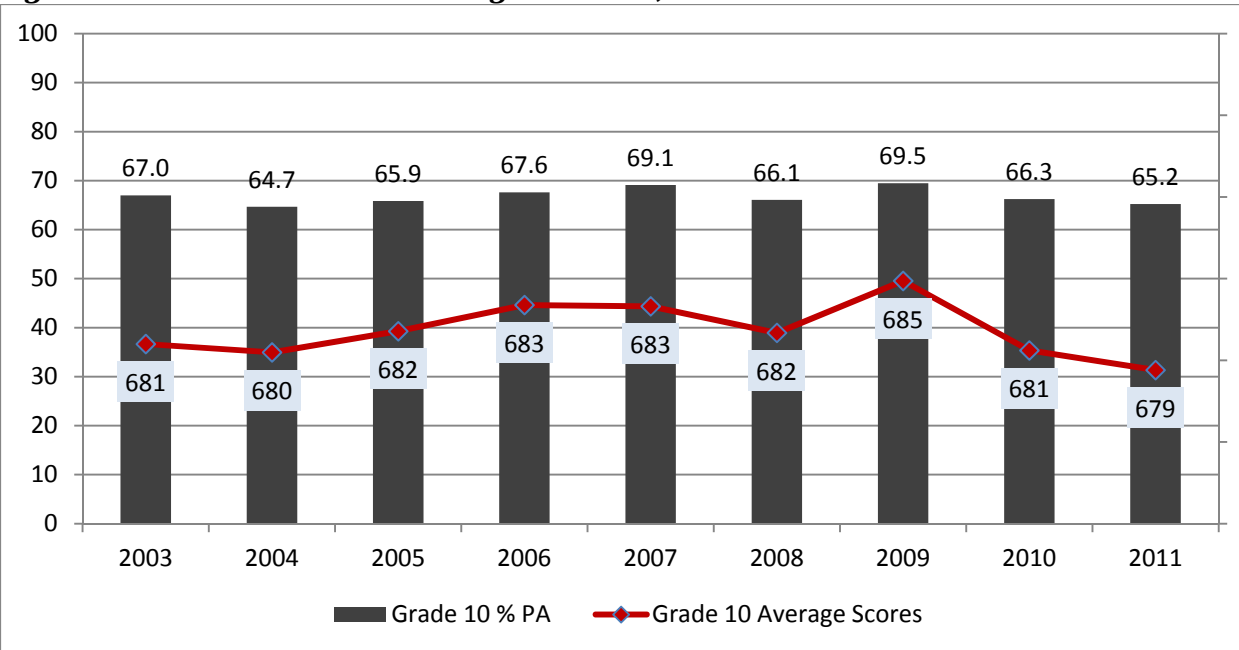
**Figure 14: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes, 2003-2011**



**Figure 15: 9<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes, 2003-2011**



**Figure 16: 10<sup>th</sup> Grade CSAP Reading Outcomes, 2003-2011**





**Appendix C**  
**Essential Elements for Literacy Achievement**  
**Environmental Scan**

<i>Essential Element #1: Standards-Based Curriculum</i>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
Collaboratively design and implement guidelines to align the Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education with the Colorado standards to ensure that each child is postsecondary and workforce ready	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education</li> <li>– Colorado Academic Standards, inclusive of preschool</li> <li>– Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Vertical progression resource delineating the learning path in literacy from preschool through 12<sup>th</sup> grade</li> </ul>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Participate in the development of Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines (ELDG)</li> <li>– Develop communication plan to ensure successful implementation of the ELDG</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Support district curriculum development to provide a scope and a sequence of learning from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade to engage students in achieving Colorado's literacy standards</li> </ul>
Provide standards implementation guidance and tools to ensure coherence between birth-12 curricula, instruction, and assessments	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Partnerships with early childhood programs across the state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Crosswalk documents for comparison of Colorado's old and new standards</li> <li>– Standards transition resources for district and school leaders</li> <li>– Standards Implementation Toolkit</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #1: Standards-Based Curriculum</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Include comprehensive outreach for early childhood providers in next phase standards implementation plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Finalize next phase standards implementation plan</li> <li>– Develop and disseminate critical consumer tool for evaluating instructional materials and resources with respect to alignment with standards and adherence to research-based literacy practices</li> <li>– Support district curriculum development to provide a scope and a sequence of learning from preschool to 12<sup>th</sup> grade to engage students in achieving Colorado's literacy standards</li> </ul>
Provide relevant information and supports related to early childhood and P-12 literacy standards for birth-12 educators, librarians, community members, and higher education leaders	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– EQIT Curriculum and Cradling Literacy</li> <li>– Children's Literacy Resources for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers</li> <li>– Colorado Virtual Library</li> <li>– Storyblocks.org</li> <li>– Read to the Children program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Colorado State Library summer reading programs in public libraries</li> <li>– Collaboration with the Colorado Department of Higher Education (CDHE) for outreach to institutions of higher education</li> </ul>

<b><i>Essential Element #1: Standards-Based Curriculum</i></b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Include comprehensive outreach for early childhood providers in next phase standards implementation plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Create tools for districts to use in support of planning literacy goals for the UIP., inclusion of adult education and family literacy indicators and goals</li> <li>– Develop and disseminate critical consumer tool for evaluating instructional materials and resources with respect to alignment with standards and adherence to research-based literacy practices</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Identify and communicate information and provide ongoing implementation support for building foundational language and literacy skills to ensure school readiness for all Colorado children	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family participation in Results Matter assessment through CPP, early childhood special education, Title 1, as well as from volunteer early childhood programs</li> <li>Colorado Preschool Program individual learning plan documenting language and literacy skills</li> <li>Results Matter resources</li> <li>Reading First resources</li> <li>Colorado Basic Literacy Act</li> </ul>	
	<b>Next Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect family literacy programs with early childhood literacy program within CDE, State Libraries, and across state agencies</li> <li>Identify and disseminate resources specific to English learners; early childhood programs</li> <li>Strengthen rules of the Colorado Basic Literacy Act to ensure children in grades K-3 read at grade level</li> </ul>	

<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Provide guidelines to promote research-based practices at all levels of instruction and intervention for birth through grade 12 literacy	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education</li> <li>Colorado Academic Standards for preschool</li> <li>Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework</li> <li>Colorado Literacy Framework</li> <li>Colorado Reading First resources</li> <li>Title I Program Quality indicators in development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Colorado Literacy Framework</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Language Learner toolkit</li> <li>Quality indicators for Learners with Autism Spectrum Disorders</li> <li>Quality Indicators for Learners with Significant Support Needs</li> <li>Colorado Learning Media Assessment for Learners who are Blind/Visually Impaired or Deaf-Blind</li> <li>Communication Plan for Learners who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing or Deaf-Blind</li> </ul>	
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and communicate guidelines regarding foundational literacy skills and research-based strategies for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify district, school, and classroom level indicators for high quality literacy instruction and intervention</li> <li>Develop and communicate guidelines on</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Coordinate the development of Colorado Early Learning and Developmental Guidelines to ensure clear progression of literacy expectations for children birth to age 5</li> <li>– Identify district, school, and classroom level indicators for high quality literacy instruction and intervention</li> <li>– Develop and communicate guidelines regarding foundational literacy skills and research-based strategies for young children</li> <li>– Develop and communicate guidelines about standards-based and research-based, explicit instruction and interventions needed to close achievement gaps occurring within and between student populations</li> <li>– Expand Reading First Revise rules of CBLA to include definition of research-based literacy intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– standards-based and research-based adolescent literacy practices</li> <li>– Define disciplinary literacy in order to meaningfully integrate literacy skills into content area instruction</li> <li>– Develop and communicate guidelines about standards-based and research-based interventions for struggling readers and writers</li> <li>– Identify exemplars of quality middle and high school literacy instruction</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Identify and disseminate resources to support educators and care-givers in delivering high-quality literacy instruction and intervention	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Expanding Quality in Infant and Toddler Care (EQIT) curriculum and coaching for those working with infants and toddlers</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy trainings for those working with infants and toddlers</li> <li>– Colorado Reading First resource bank</li> <li>– Colorado Literacy Framework</li> <li>– School Support Teams and 1003a Improvement grants to support improvements in literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Rural Secondary Literacy Project resources</li> <li>– School Support Teams and 1003a Improvement grants to support improvements in literacy</li> </ul>



<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish statewide cradling Literacy teams and trainings</li> <li>Provide additional literacy professional development for preschool providers</li> <li>In partnership with public and private initiatives, develop resources for community literacy outreach</li> <li>An comprehensive, environmental scan of resources available to support early literacy</li> <li>A birth to five library literacy project/program for precocious readers or those advanced in literacy skills, including a parental engagement component and education</li> <li>Identify and disseminate resources for research-based literacy instruction</li> <li>Expand Reading First instructional resources into an early literacy resource bank</li> <li>Identify exemplars of quality PK-5 literacy instruction</li> <li>In partnership with public and private initiatives, develop resources for literacy volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and disseminate resources for teaching secondary reading and writing within content area classes to support disciplinary literacy (i.e., Literacy Design Collaborative modules)</li> <li>Develop and/or disseminate supplementary documents to the CAS to support implementation of disciplinary literacy instruction</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #2: Instruction and Intervention</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 6-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Support and monitor implementation of Response to Intervention (RtI)	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Early childhood special education team interfaces with RTI team</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Fidelity of implementation rubrics at classroom</li> <li>– School and district levels</li> <li>– RtI guidebook</li> <li>– Problem solving consultation guide and video</li> </ul>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop common language for Response to Intervention across agencies and providers of early childhood services and learning</li> <li>– Develop state level RtI fidelity of implementation rubric</li> <li>– Utilize and communicate RtI as the framework for instruction and intervention</li> <li>– Provide guidance for effective individual literacy plan development within an RtI framework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop state level RtI fidelity of implementation rubric</li> <li>– Utilize and communicate RtI as the framework for instruction and intervention</li> <li>– Provide models of literacy instruction and intervention specific to the secondary level</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #3: Comprehensive Assessment</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Expand and deepen Colorado's system of assessment and data usage from birth-grade 12 to inform instructional decision-making that will ensure all students achieve in literacy	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results Matter assessments</li> <li>Required development of a school readiness assessment pursuant to SB 08-212</li> <li>K-3 literacy assessments required by CBLA rules (DIBELS, PALS, DRA2)</li> <li>Assessment system attributes include measurement of standards in grades 1 and 2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State summative assessments (grades 3-10): TCAP, CoALT, CELA</li> <li>Colorado ACT (grade 11)</li> <li>Colorado Basic Literacy Act (CBLA) to be updated to align with the new standards pursuant to State Board adopted assessment attributes</li> <li>Formative assessment practices and interim assessment usage adopted by the State Board for preschool through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade</li> </ul>

<b><i>Essential Element #3: Comprehensive Assessment</i></b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an Early Childhood Assessment Framework to bring coherence to P-3 assessment practices and requirements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine common department wide definition of formative assessment</li> <li>Create common department wide approaches to supporting formative practices</li> <li>Develop a state assessment framework to articulate the effective use of assessment practices to support literacy achievement from birth to grade 12</li> <li>Develop guidance for use of formative assessment practices to monitor student progress toward mastery and inform instruction and intervention</li> <li>Develop resources to support assessment literacy</li> <li>Implement Colorado's new assessment system</li> <li>For advanced learners consider (1) allowing out of level testing, and (2) promoting the use of alternative and curriculum-based assessments</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #3: Comprehensive Assessment</b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Identify assessments (formative, progress monitoring, and summative) to support the state assessment system and educator effectiveness initiative	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community wide early childhood screening</li> <li>Results Matter assessments</li> <li>New state assessment system design inclusive of new summative, school readiness, formative, and interim K-3 literacy assessments required by CBLA Rules (DIBELS, PALS, DRA2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New state assessment system design inclusive of new summative, school readiness, formative, and interim assessment</li> </ul>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Determine options for school readiness assessment pursuant to SB 08-212</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop measures of student growth in literacy to inform instruction and intervention and educator effectiveness</li> </ul>
Provide resources and support to the field in effective use of data to inform programmatic and student level decisions through RtI	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results Matter professional development tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MTISS problem solving/consultation online class and video</li> <li>Individual Literacy Plan</li> <li>Individualized Education Program</li> <li>Literacy Modality Plans</li> <li>Communication Plans</li> <li>Colorado Growth Model</li> <li>MTISS fidelity rubric</li> </ul>

<b><i>Essential Element #3: Comprehensive Assessment</i></b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop a model for RtI for multiple providers of early childhood care and services</li> <li>– Communication or align language and practices to connect universal and targeted supports for children birth-preschool</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop tools (video, pod casts, etc.) to interpret and use the Growth Model at the classroom level (i.e., data dialogue, measures of student growth)</li> <li>– Identify and disseminate Individual Literacy Plans exemplars</li> <li>– Develop guidance on the development of effective Individual Literacy Plans</li> <li>– Monitor CBLA data for effective use of data to close the literacy gap for students on ILPs</li> <li>– Align RtI resources to common state assessment definitions</li> <li>– Provide professional definitions</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #4: Leadership</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
Take a leadership role in literacy achievement for the state	<b>In Place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Early childhood collaborative and interagency work teams</li> <li>– <i>Early Childhood Framework</i> and <i>Framework in Action</i></li> <li>– EQIT Curriculum focused on infants and toddlers</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy curriculum focused on infants and toddlers</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy teams that are multidisciplinary (i.e., local libraries, EHS, EQ Instructors)</li> <li>– Read to Children programs in public libraries</li> <li>– Colorado LETRS trainer cadre</li> <li>– Annual Implementation Rubric (AIR) from Colorado Reading First</li> <li>– Read to Achieve program and literacy expertise</li> <li>– Grant funded state literacy specialist</li> <li>– Content collaborative in reading, writing, and communicating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Grant funded state literacy specialist</li> <li>– Content collaborative in reading, writing, and communicating</li> <li>– Grant funded state literacy specialist</li> <li>– Content collaborative in reading, writing, and communicating</li> <li>– 21<sup>st</sup> century community learning centers</li> <li>– Summer literacy programs through State Libraries</li> <li>– Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) report</li> </ul>



<b>Essential Element #4: Leadership</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next Steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Integrate Early Childhood Learning and Development Guidelines within all early learning system elements (i.e., workforce competencies, comprehensive assessments systems, TQRIS, and parent training and tools)</li> <li>– Infuse literacy expertise within all interagency collaborative efforts</li> <li>– Identify and establish strategic partnerships to identify and leverage resources in support of literacy development for all learners</li> <li>– Establish a statewide literacy leadership network, including points of contact within districts and regions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Leverage work of the content collaborative in literacy to build statewide capacity in literacy, including disciplinary literacy</li> <li>– Define and implement guiding principles for all literacy grants and initiative from the department</li> <li>– Design district and school-level literacy self-assessments</li> <li>– Provide state level guidance for use of expanded learning opportunities to increase literacy achievement</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #4: Leadership</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
Support the development of local level leadership for improving literacy achievement	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Leverage work of the content collaborative in literacy to build statewide capacity in early literacy</li> <li>– Define and implement guiding principles for all literacy grants and initiative from the department</li> <li>– Design district and school-level literacy self-assessments</li> <li>– Utilize Colorado LETRS training cadre to build regional literacy leadership capacity</li> <li>– Provide state level guidance for use of expanded learning opportunities to increase literacy achievement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Highly effective school library competencies</li> <li>– Power Library-based training and professional development support</li> <li>– Draft rules for SB 09-191 emphasizing literacy at all levels</li> <li>– Equity Toolkit</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #4: Leadership</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Identify resources for CDE staff to build capacity in best practices in literacy across levels and populations</li> <li>– Develop school and district level self-assessments for essential elements for literacy leadership</li> <li>– Design and disseminate a literacy leadership toolkit to support principals and teacher leaders using existing resources</li> <li>– Provide resources and training for integration of literacy within all disciplines areas through intentional focus on developing academic <i>language</i> and Literacy Design Collaborative modules</li> <li>– Set expectations for implementation of the Colorado standards by all stakeholders involved in literacy</li> <li>– Encourage school districts throughout the state to increase number of licensed school librarians in schools, especially elementary grades</li> </ul>	

<b>Essential Element #5: Family and Community Partnerships</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
Leverage literacy efforts aimed at improving Colorado literacy achievement undertaken by community-based partnerships and coalitions committed to working together to address the barriers to literacy and improving literacy achievement for all	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL)</li> <li>– State Library resources for caregivers related to reading and school readiness</li> <li>– Family and community partnership toolkit</li> <li>– Colorado Preschool Program family support and engagement</li> <li>– Governor’s literacy initiative</li> <li>– Head Start family engagement requirements</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy teams</li> <li>– Early Childhood Councils</li> <li>– Expanding Quality teams</li> <li>– Colorado Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education</li> <li>– Title I parent engagement requirements</li> <li>– State special education advisory committee parent involvement</li> <li>– RtI fidelity of implementation rubric</li> <li>– State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Title I parent engagement requirements</li> <li>– State special education advisory committee parent involvement</li> <li>– RtI fidelity of implementation rubric</li> <li>– State Advisory Council for Parent Involvement in Education (SACPIE)</li> </ul>

<b>Essential Element #5: Family and Community Partnerships</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Develop a strategic plan related to literacy for family and community engagement to coordinate multiple state programs</li> <li>– Build partnerships with libraries to impact learning and growth of advanced learners</li> <li>– Actively partner with Governor’s office and nonprofits in public awareness campaigns related to literacy</li> <li>– Support literacy volunteer efforts in partnership with CDE literacy programs</li> <li>– Establish a statewide network of school library supporters and spokespeople to address boards, superintendents, and principal groups</li> <li>– Connect with the Governor’s Early Literacy Blueprint actions:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing a framework for a Colorado Reading Corps</li> <li>○ Engaging the public, private, and non-profit sectors in awareness campaigns to showcase the state’s focus on literacy</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
Promote coordination between schools, early and family literacy efforts, and libraries	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Family Literacy Education Fund</li> <li>– partnership between Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy</li> <li>– OFPA (Title I (NCLB) Family Literacy</li> <li>– Even Start</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy teams</li> <li>– Colorado Libraries for Early Literacy (CLEL)</li> <li>– Library Services and Technology Act competitive grant program</li> <li>– Qualistar Colorado</li> </ul>	

<b>Essential Element #5: Family and Community Partnerships</b>			
<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish parent involvement partnership with Adult Education and Family Literacy</li> <li>Establish parent involvement partnership with Adult Education and Family Literacy</li> <li>Develop strategies for community engagement to support literacy specific to elementary schools for inclusion in literacy leadership toolkit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish parent involvement partnership with Adult Education and Family Literacy</li> <li>Develop strategies for community engagement to support literacy specific to secondary schools for inclusion in literacy leadership toolkit</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage business and educational leaders, and community social groups in dialogs about the systematic need for early literacy</li> <li>Increase the number of programs and activities offered in public libraries about early literacy</li> <li>Gain state funding to support community and library activities for implementing coordinated, systematic early literacy plans statewide</li> </ul>	
Integrate birth through grade 12 literacy initiatives with adult and family literacy initiatives	<b>In place</b>	EQIT Curriculum and Cradling Literacy focused on infants and toddlers	
	<b>Next steps</b>	Support primary language and home culture	

**Essential Element #6: Educator Preparation and Professional Development**

Actions		Pre-K to Grade 3	Grades 4-12
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Leverage its role with educator preparation programs to ensure principals and teachers have the knowledge and skills to deliver high quality literacy instruction aligned with the Colorado's standards	In place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Child Development Association certification</li> <li>– EQIT Curriculum</li> <li>– Cradling Literacy</li> <li>– Educator effectiveness initiative</li> <li>– National Board Certification</li> <li>– Colorado Educator Pipeline Task Force formed to redesign of educator licensure and induction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Educator effectiveness initiative</li> <li>– National Board Certification</li> <li>– Colorado Educator Pipeline Task Force formed to redesign of educator licensure and induction</li> <li>– Educator effectiveness initiative</li> <li>– National Board Certification</li> <li>– Colorado Educator Pipeline Task Force formed to redesign of educator licensure and induction</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Authorization in Literacy Instruction (administered by Colorado Educator Licensing and Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy)</li> </ul>	



**Essential Element #6: Educator Preparation and Professional Development**

<b>Actions</b> The Colorado Department of Education will:		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
	<b>Next steps</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Install educational components about early literacy in adult education and family literacy programming</li> <li>– Establish Higher Education Collaborative</li> <li>– Revise educator preparation program review process to align with SB 09-191 rules specific to literacy expertise including research-based literacy practices and needs of diverse populations</li> <li>– Inform improvements in educator preparation for classroom literacy teachers, literacy specialists, content area teachers, and school and district leadership</li> <li>– Encourage educator preparation programs to include family and community engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Revise educator preparation program review process to align with SB 09-191 rules specific to literacy knowledge related to research-based literacy practices, needs of diverse populations, and disciplinary literacy</li> <li>– Inform improvements in educator preparation for classroom literacy teachers, literacy specialists, content area teachers, and school and district leadership</li> <li>– Encourage educator preparation programs to include family and community engagement</li> </ul>

**Essential Element #6: Educator Preparation and Professional Development**

Actions		Pre-K to Grade 3	Grades 4-12
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Build the knowledge base of in-service educators regarding research-based literacy practices	In place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results Matter video library</li> <li>CDHS School Readiness Project</li> <li>EQIT Curriculum</li> <li>Cradling Literacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Javits online PD: Reading for the Gifted Learner</li> <li>What's Different for ELLs training through Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)</li> <li>PD MAP, produced monthly except July by the Office of Adult Education and Family Literacy containing research-based resources for best practices in teaching adults, Standards of Quality for Adult Education Programs in Colorado</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate professional development related to literacy with early childhood systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and/or obtain research-based professional development modules already in use in other states to create a professional development training model</li> <li>Develop web-based resources and community of practice for literacy instruction and a venue for literacy educators to address issues related to literacy instruction, intervention, and meeting the needs of advanced learners</li> </ul>

<b><i>Essential Element #6: Educator Preparation and Professional Development</i></b>			
<b>Actions</b>		<b>Pre-K to Grade 3</b>	<b>Grades 4-12</b>
The Colorado Department of Education will:			
Ensure that all professional development sponsored by the CDE is supportive of the department's Strategic Literacy Plan	<b>In place</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— CDE Office of Early Childhood Professional Development</li> <li>— Colorado State Library</li> <li>— COLETRS (cohort of trainers for Colorado trained to provide professional development using Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Next steps</b>	Establish common department wide criteria and community of practice related to high-quality, research-based professional development in literacy	

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