

# **Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan**

## **PROJECT NARRATIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The U.S. Department of Education’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program offers the opportunity and the means for Colorado to continue and expand its efforts to improve literacy for all Colorado students. The Colorado Department of Education proposes to develop and administer a rigorous and comprehensive competitive grant program in which all 178 school districts and Local Education Agencies in the state will be invited to participate. A key outcome of the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program is to improve learning outcomes by improving literacy for all Colorado children from birth through grade 12, with particular attention paid to disadvantaged students or “striving readers” (i.e., students with disabilities and English language learners). To achieve this outcome, our project entails multiple strategies and activities with four areas of focus.

The first focus area – formative assessment and feedback methodology – is essential to improving student learning outcomes. Our efforts – and those of the subgrantees – will only be as good as our knowledge of each student as an individual reader, writer and learner. Thus, we must strengthen our formative assessment rituals and routines in order to have the data and information necessary to make constructive decisions about instructional practices. Our second focus area, the five components of reading – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension – reflects Colorado’s ongoing efforts to strengthen students’ reading achievement with the essential building blocks of literacy. The Colorado Reading First Program demonstrated the worth of investing more of our professional energy to cultivating these vital skills within our students. Nonfiction literacy, our third focus area, reflects an urgent need to strengthen explicit instruction of reading and writing information texts. Focusing on nonfiction literacy aligns to the reading, writing, and content area learning skills articulated in the new Common Core State Standards which Colorado adopted. Helping the children of Colorado to become stronger comprehenders and composers of nonfiction is paramount in improving our children’s school readiness and success through grade 12, and pivotal to their success in all academic pursuits. The fourth focus area, oral and written language and academic vocabulary

development, is especially critical for early learners to establish a strong foundation for literacy and learning and vital for all of our English language learners in realizing school success.

State-level activities of the Colorado SRLC program will concentrate on five key objectives: (1) completion of the state literacy plan; (2) coordination and alignment of resources and strategies for improving literacy; (3) comprehensive build-out of resources by grade level and the focus areas; (4) provision of resources to subgrantees to pilot instructional strategies and build capacity; and (5) provision of technical assistance, i.e., professional development to include coaching and mentoring, regional conferences, on-site workshops) and web-based resources (such as a dedicated website, webinars, and networks).

Additionally, to strengthen all of the above goals in improving children's learning and achievement, Colorado will champion the effective use of technology through our Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program. The intentions of this focus include providing students with interactive texts and resources to help strengthen their acquisition of the five components reading (coupled with systematic and explicit instruction); giving students greater access to and practice of nonfiction literacy; supporting the literacy learning of our English-language-learning children and families and our disadvantaged students; deepening children's motivation to engage in reading and writing during and outside of school; and strengthening our capacity to evaluate and communicate student growth over time. Our 21st century students need the 21st century learning tools of technology. Through our state literacy plan and Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy professional development, we will model how to effectively utilize technology to foster children's acquisition of the five components of reading and writing skills as well as demonstrate how technology can be used to complement and integrate students' content area studies. The Colorado Department of Education will support and evaluate Local Education Agencies' implementation of this goal through onsite coaching, professional development webinars, and biannual data collection.

## **BACKGROUND: COLORADO'S LITERACY LEGACY**

From early childhood to higher education, the preparation, progress and success of each student is at the center of the Colorado Department of Education's work. The work is defined by our responsibilities to help close achievement gaps and to support all children from birth to grade

12 in meeting and exceeding academic standards and becoming postsecondary and workforce ready. We approach these responsibilities with a sense of urgency.

Literacy is the backbone of a democratic society and the gateway to opportunity: it is key to academic achievement across all disciplines. As a focus for the 2009-2010 academic year, the department sought to create a coherent system of support from preschool through postsecondary literacy initiatives. Thus, the Colorado Department of Education leaders and staff collaborated to develop the Colorado Literacy Framework to inform the department's work in literacy and provide foundational support for literacy achievement. Its purpose is to assist the Colorado Department of Education in providing leadership, consultation and professional development to Colorado's 178 local school districts and to support and assist all Colorado students in reaching proficiency in the academic standards.

The Colorado Literacy Framework is the foundation for the development of the Colorado State Literacy Plan. The plan, being developed by the Literacy Leadership Team in alignment with the Governor's state literacy action plan, will serve as the framework in literacy for the work of the Colorado Department of Education, districts, and community members, which is to provide:

- Clear guidance for professional development in best practices,
- Strategies to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all students,
- A seamless, collaborative leadership system with intentional intensity, and urgency,
- Efficient and effective use of federal, state and private funds,
- A reliable source for research, data and analysis, and
- A model for building expanded leadership capacity.

The Colorado State Literacy Plan will be the roadmap for the literacy work of the Colorado Department of Education and will guide the organization's support to its constituents. The literacy plan supports the charge of the Colorado Department of Education to create a purpose-driven and dynamic system of educational leadership, service and support that relentlessly focuses on the learning of all students. With aligned policies and focused priorities, the Colorado Department of Education is committed to providing guidance and research-based support to parents and school professionals in their concerted efforts to increase literacy

achievement for every learner. (The Colorado State Literacy Plan is described in more detail on page 9.)

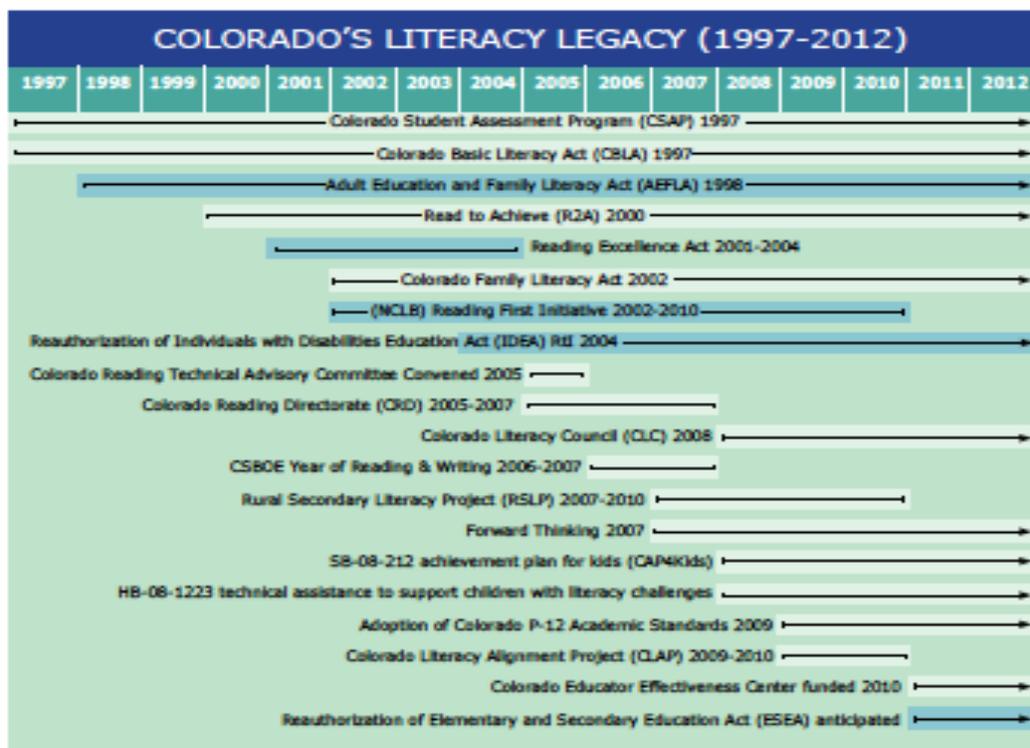
The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program provides the opportunity for Colorado to implement its state literacy plan. Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy subgrantees will pilot the profiled scientifically based, instructional strategies in classrooms and schools – focusing particularly on English language learners and students with disabilities and provide not only instruction and scientifically based strategies for improving literacy, but also valuable feedback and data on program effectiveness for data-based decision-making. The diagram on the next page illustrates Colorado’s literacy legacy over the past 15 years.

## **COLLABORATION IN COLORADO**

The environment in Colorado for collaboration and synergy around education reform is ideal to launch the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program. Over the past several years, there has been confluence of collaborative efforts across the state to strengthen policies, streamline processes, capitalize on best practices, and most importantly to galvanize citizens around the importance of all Colorado children receiving a high-quality education, both for their future as well as the economic development of the state. In 2008, the Colorado General Assembly passed the Colorado Achievement Plan for Kids (Senate Bill 212) which directed the Colorado Departments of Education and Higher Education to collaborate in creating a new seamless system of public education standards, expectations and assessments – from preschool through postsecondary education – designed and aligned to prepare high school students to enter postsecondary education or the workforce without the need for further remediation. Colorado now has 21st century academic standards that articulate the skills students must master to be successful. The state will soon have a new assessment system inclusive of focus on formative assessment practice, interim assessment, and a new summative assessment that measure how much students learn over time, and how ready they are to enter college or the workforce, and a state-of-the-art accountability system that reports how well schools help students master the standards. As mentioned earlier, Colorado is also one of 42 states to adopt the National Common Core Standards.

# Colorado's Literacy Legacy

As evidenced in the timeline of literacy initiatives below, Colorado has a history of valuing and supporting literacy.



In 2010, Colorado's landmark principal and teacher evaluation law called "educator effectiveness" (Senate Bill 191) was passed. The law shifts the focus of career advancement qualifications to demonstrated effectiveness based on student academic growth. With this shift, educators' effectiveness drives hiring, promotion, professional development, earning and retaining probationary status, dismissal, and contract renewal.

Colorado's newly elected Governor John Hickenlooper and Lieutenant Governor Joe Garcia are leading a statewide campaign to increase awareness of the importance of early literacy and to enlist students, parents, and communities to take action. A number of government agencies, non-profit organizations, early learning councils, community organizations and businesses are collaborating statewide and regionally to implement this robust literacy initiative.

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program proposal creates a unique opportunity to leverage multiple initiatives for greater impact toward increasing literacy proficiency across the state. As one example, the Mile High United Way has submitted a \$1.8 million proposal to the Corporation for National and Community Service for the Early Literacy Social Innovation Fund project. The focus of the proposal is youth development throughout the state of Colorado: to increase the number of third graders reading at proficiency in Colorado's 47 rural counties and 17 urban counties. Over the next five years the Early Literacy Social Innovation Fund intends to showcase a systematic change in Colorado early literacy initiatives. Mile High United Way will coordinate early childhood education programs and service providers around a shared vision of early literacy proficiency and a standardized set of outcomes, mobilize volunteers in organizations using evidence-based programs to improve early literacy proficiency rates, and demonstrate an increase of 25 percent in third grade reading proficiency levels with increasing levels of evidence.

Also, the Colorado Legacy Foundation, in partnership with Colorado Department of Education, is seeking support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for an Integration Grant, which will integrate the implementation of the new academic standards, professional development in formative practices to inform instruction, and regular performance evaluations that hold educators accountable for student growth. The grant proposal includes provision for two literacy specialists at Colorado Department of Education for three years to help carry out these activities.

In addition, as part of the Governor's literacy action plan, Colorado's Early Learning Leadership Commission just released a Request For Proposal to help craft early learning and developmental guidelines for children aged zero to eight years. The pre-kindergarten to third grade section will encompass the new Colorado standards, allowing the Commission to work downward to ensure the established guidelines will provide a seamless continuum of guidance, including for pre-literacy.

As described earlier, the Colorado State Literacy Plan will be conceived and developed through the collaborative efforts of the Colorado Department of Education Literacy Leadership Team, comprised of Colorado Department of Education staff and school district personnel from across the state with expertise in literacy, early learning, gifted and talented education, special education, language acquisition, instructional leadership, and federal programs. The Striving

Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program will continue and expand Colorado's previous successful and collaborative literacy efforts, such as Read to Achieve, Colorado Literacy Alignment Project (which created the Colorado Literacy Framework), Reading First, Colorado Basic Literacy Act, Colorado Preschool Program, Response to Intervention, state library efforts, English language learner programs, and culturally responsive teaching efforts.

Colorado's Read to Achieve project provides state funding to eligible elementary schools, including charters and consortia, for scientifically research-based intensive reading programs. The program is designed specifically for kindergarten through third grade students whose readiness or literacy and reading comprehension skills are below the levels established the State Board of Education (pursuant to the Colorado Basic Literacy Act). The Colorado Department of Education provides resources, technical assistance, and professional development through the website, webinars, and workshops.

The Colorado Preschool Program (CPP), also created and funded by the Colorado General Assembly, serves young children in Colorado who are most vulnerable to starting grade school unprepared. The legislature recognized that providing quality early childhood education would ultimately curb dropout rates, help children achieve their potential, reduce dependence on public assistance, and decrease susceptibility to criminal activities. An especially powerful part of the program are the Early Childhood Councils, located throughout the state, that bring together dedicated partners in each service area to coordinate, increase and improve the education, health, social/emotional and parenting opportunities available to all young children and their families.

Connected to the Colorado Preschool Program is the Results Matter program, which seeks to positively influence the lives of children and families by using child, family, program and system outcomes data to inform early childhood practices and policy. The rich evidence gleaned through ongoing child assessment, family outcomes surveys and program quality evaluation, supports results driven program and policy decisions, and provides the means to demonstrate the efficacy of services available to Colorado's children and families. The data obtained through Results Matter are used to describe child progress across specific developmental and educational domains as well as through global outcomes developed by the national Early Childhood Outcomes Center and the U.S. Department of Education. These outcomes illustrate the integrated nature of early childhood development and allow the comparison of information from programs using different assessment

tools.

All of these projects and efforts will be aligned with and complementary to the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program. More importantly, these projects demonstrate Colorado’s statewide commitment to education as well as the political will to make reform happen.

## **ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

### **State Literacy Plan**

The Colorado Department of Education, through the Literacy Leadership Team made up of diverse stakeholders from across the state, is currently developing the Colorado State Literacy Plan based on the Colorado Literacy Framework. The development of this plan is being developed concurrently with the Governor’s literary action plan. In addition, as noted earlier, the Colorado Department of Education is coordinating with the United Way statewide literacy campaign. This comprehensive, collaborative and aligned approach to developing the literacy plan will ensure high quality implementation of this plan, through partnerships, government entities, non-profit organizations, and through the coordination and technical assistance capacity at the Colorado Department of Education afforded by the Striving Readers grant. Colorado’s comprehensive birth through grade 12 literacy plan will support the Colorado Department of Education, districts, organizations, and community members to create a purpose-driven and dynamic education system with a focus on literacy for *all* learners.

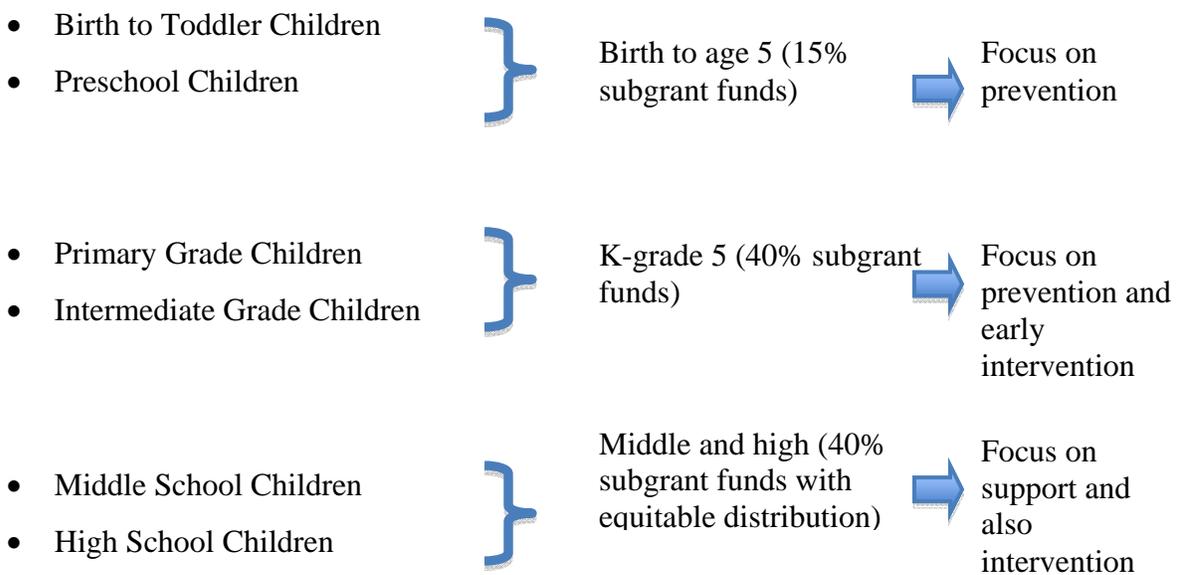
### **The Architecture of the Colorado State Literacy Plan**

Colorado has a strong basis for our literacy plan as defined in our literacy framework created in 2009-2010 ([www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/coloradoliteracy/clf)). This framework outlines our state’s guiding principles, content elements and guidelines for aligning literacy efforts with other state and district policies and initiatives, and provides a strong foundation and structure for moving forward with our action-oriented literacy plan. In our initial development of the State Literacy Plan, Colorado profiled the “*who*” of our plan with age or grade bands to address specific and unique developmental considerations for each group of children as well as an “*all*”

framework to address the common literacy needs or considerations of all children from birth through 12th grade.

### Children Served by the Colorado State Literacy Plan

All Colorado students will be served via the state literacy plan strategies and activities, and the following age bands of students will be targeted – with a special focus on English language learners (a demographic that is expected to grow in Colorado), children with disabilities, and students with other risk factors associated with lower achievement.



Additional organizing structures for the State Literacy Plan include components for “*what*” and “*how*” to articulate specific insights for each developmental/grade band as well as risk factors for children in need of additional interventions. The “*what*” includes: what we know (*research*), what we want (*goals*), what we recommend (*best practices*), and what CDE and other partners will do to support the literacy growth of all children in Colorado. The “*how*” includes: how will the Colorado Department of Education and other partners (parents, educators, community organizations, foundations and non-profits, professional groups/organizations, and state agencies) implement our recommendations and accomplish our goals? Our state literacy plan will be used to detail prioritized considerations in our statewide plan for all children and to shape our efforts in supporting adult and family literacy.

The Colorado State Literacy Plan is the roadmap for guiding the Colorado Department of Education, districts and partners to take aligned actions to support students at all three age bands (birth to age 5, kindergarten to grade 5, and middle and high school) across Colorado. The plan is on schedule to be completed by September 30, 2011 and will be informed by our Striving Readers grant, the Colorado Literacy Framework, and the partnerships therein.

The goals of the State Literacy Plan were generated by the Colorado Literacy Framework, which are for the state to: (1) provide guidance and support to meet district and school needs; (2) provide professional development in best practices; (3) provide tools to eliminate gaps and increase achievement for all students; (4) provide a seamless, collaborative leadership system with intentional intensity, urgency, and impatience; (5) support efficient and effective use of federal, state, and private funds; (6) provide a reliable source for research, data, and analysis envied by all professionals; and (7) create a model for building expanded leadership capacity.

The goals are seen through the lens of the content elements of the Colorado Literacy Framework:

- The integration of the five components of reading must inform the Colorado Department of Education's literacy initiatives.
- Early learning experiences support literacy development in young children.
- Scientifically research-based instructional approaches fostering communication skills, including oral and written language promote access, opportunity, and academic achievement.
- Purposeful, direct, explicit, systematic instruction is valuable for continuous literacy achievement.
- Student learning and motivation are enhanced by connection to cultural experience and personal relevance.
- Valid and reliable student literacy achievement data support grantees and constituents in measuring success of initiatives.
- Collaboration among education professionals, family, and community is essential to improved student literacy achievement.
- Students performing below level in literacy benefit from instructional interventions that are needs based, intensive and of sufficient duration to accelerate learning –

implemented within a Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

The state will implement the State Literacy Plan by completing the following activities through the Colorado Department of Education:

- Coordinate and align all state initiatives relating to literacy including, the Governor’s literacy action plan and the Mile High United Way literacy campaign. Align resources, best practice instruction, and professional development activities to ensure a comprehensive set of supports to all schools and families across Colorado. Create a clearinghouse and “one-stop-shop” for all interested parties and partners in implementing literacy initiatives.
- Provide scientifically based research and best practices from in-state and out-of-state experts and make available the best scientifically based reading research related to planning and implementing literacy strategies aligned to the Colorado Literacy plan and the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program.
- Clearly define the expectations that eligible Local Education Agencies and schools must meet when they participate in Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program and other state initiatives, including the very clear reliance on evidence-based reading research, and fund only those applications that meet a rigorous definition.
- Develop, identify and provide high-quality, embedded and ongoing professional development – through literacy coaches that each subgrantee will be required to appoint or hire – to enable K-12 and early literacy educators to teach reading, writing and oral language skills effectively through face-to face meetings, webinars and web-based networks and collaboration sites.
- Provide training, technical assistance and advocacy to build the capacity of eligible Local Education Agencies/schools and literacy coaches to implement scientifically research-based literacy instruction and assessment.
- Apply accountability through (1) the state's policy infrastructure; (2) monitoring the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program (and other state programs) and activities and impact (e.g., implementation tool, body of evidence); (3) requirements for adequate yearly progress in reading to secure continuation funding; and (4) the external evaluation of the initiative.

- Make effective use of electronically based supports for learning over the three-to-five-year duration of the grant to assure statewide access to the most current information on implementing evidence-based literacy strategies in Colorado K-12 classrooms and early literacy centers.
- Disseminate what works – both to help the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program sites succeed and also to share the work of the subgrantee sites with other LEAs and schools in the state.

### **Alignment of State and Federal Funds, Programs and Initiatives**

The Request for Proposal for Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy subgrant funds will direct and support school districts to develop their literacy project plan and budget in alignment with funds they receive from the state and federal government, including Title I, Title II-A, and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, and, as appropriate, under the Head Start Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. Technical assistance will be offered to districts that receive Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy funds will to help conduct a “resource asset audit” that will help districts identify funding streams and other initiatives with which their program should leverage and align. The Request For Proposal clearly states that Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy funds should complement, not supplant, existing school and district efforts to increase student achievement (See Appendix A, RFP page 6). The Department of Education will help districts to identify different programs at each grade band that can be used to complement and support the literacy goals of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant.

The Colorado Department of Education will employ an existing process to review and judge the evidence base and alignment with state standards for the curricula and materials that Local Education Agencies propose to use in implementing their subgrants. Colorado’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy reviews will analyze the research base provided by the Local Education Agency to ensure that it meets the needs of the population described within the application. In particular, reviewers will evaluate each proposal for the Local Education Agency’s plans to engage children in scientifically based instruction, interventions, and assessments to ensure that all children and youth reach the Colorado State Standards, including

children and youth who have mastered the material ahead of their peers and children and children who are struggling with the learning material.

The Colorado Department of Education will make the funded grant proposals and list of grantees available on the Colorado Department of Education website. Feedback for the application will be given to the contacts listed on the proposal and, once the awards are announced, all the feedback will become publicly available upon request.

### **Transparency of Process and Results of Subgrant Applications**

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Request for Proposal details the purpose, eligibility, available funds, duration of the grant, number of grants the Colorado Department of Education is expected to award, allowable use of funds, the evaluation and reporting process and the review process. The review process is described in the Request For Proposal: “Applications will be reviewed by Colorado Department of Education staff and experts in the fields of literacy, early childhood, and diverse learners to ensure they contain all required components. Scoring is done in a blind review process. Note: This is a competitive process – applicants must score at least 108 points out of the 156 points possible to be approved for funding. There is no guarantee that submitting a proposal will result in funding or funding at the requested level. All application decisions are final (See Appendix A, RFP page 6). The Request For Proposal also includes a detailed rubric and point scale for each element of the grant proposal that guide judgment of the evidence provided by applicants (see Appendix A, RFP page 24). Each application will be judged using a point system that considers applicant’s (1) alignment of plan to state standards and (2) population needs assessment and how the allocation of requested funds will support the subpopulations, (3) efficacy of proposed activities and materials to accomplish goals, and (4) an evaluation and articulation of how the subgrantee will collect, analyze and use data to inform their program development and delivery.

All school districts will be notified of the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Request For Proposal through visible posting on the Colorado Department of Education website, the Colorado Department of Education’s weekly newsletter *The Scoop*, and outreach to partners’ listserves and websites (such as the Governor’s office, Mile High United Way, Colorado Department of Education listserves and the Colorado Association for School Executives). In

addition, the Colorado Department of Education will target specific regions and districts based on demographics and student needs associated with literacy improvements. Those districts will be given personal invitations and encouragement to apply for the grant funds.

### **Comprehensive Literacy Program Expectations at Teacher, School and State Levels**

A grant implementation tool is being developed by the Colorado Department of Education's Literacy Leadership Team and will be used to hold schools accountable for grant expectations and offer them feedback throughout the duration of the grant and ensure that Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy subgrant funds are used to execute a comprehensive and coherent literacy program that serves students from birth through grade 12, or at any specific period in the birth through grade 12 continuum as determined by a needs assessment, and includes each of the components of effective literacy instruction. The following summary of commitments of Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program participants is intended to articulate the expectations for the grant project at each level of the system. This list of expectations will guide the creation of the implementation tool described above.

***Reading teachers*** (teachers at all levels as well as ELA teachers, Title I teachers, reading specialists and early learning providers) in Striving Readers Comprehensive Grant (SRCL) Program schools will:

- Be willing to rethink current practices and modify those that are ineffective based on examination of student data, evidence-based research, and mentoring from a literacy coach.
- Have both a theoretical and practical knowledge of the five components of comprehensive reading instruction and their relationship to one another.
- Administer screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic (as appropriate) and outcome assessments to identify students experiencing reading difficulty and design appropriate instructional interventions.
- Use the school's evidence-based literacy materials (i.e., core reading program, supplemental materials, intervention programs) with fidelity.
- Use curriculum and instructional materials that are aligned with state standards, incorporate the components of effective literacy instruction, and, as appropriate,

- incorporate technology and principles of universal design for learning to support children and youth with diverse learning needs, including disadvantaged students.
- Participate in SRCL Program professional development activities.
  - Provide language- and text-rich classroom, school, and early learning program environments that engage and motivate children and youth in speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

***Leadership*** in Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program **schools** (including the principal and the building leadership team\*) will:

- Meet at least once a month to maintain focus on their SRCL Program plan and to ensure necessary supports are in place to meet their goals.
- Budget sufficient funds and time to participate in all SRCL Program-related professional development. For example:
  - State-level teacher trainings, coach training, and leadership training.
  - State-level led webinars.
  - Monthly grade-level meetings (teachers, principal, support staff, coach).
  - In-class coaching of teachers.
  - In-house professional development based upon the unique needs of the school.
- Ensure that staff have the necessary time, professional development, and resources to administer assessments and scientifically research-based reading program (e.g., 90-minute literacy blocks, Response to Intervention, increased instructional time for special education students, School Wide Assessment Team, additional staff to provide literacy interventions, etc.). Assessments must be the state determined assessments to ensure that they are aligned with state standards and assessments and are; valid and reliable screening measures or strategies; valid and reliable diagnostic

*\*A building leadership team (BLT) includes the building principal, coach, P-12 teacher leaders, as well as specialist representatives (e.g., SPED, ELL, Title I).*

and progress-monitoring measures; and include appropriate accommodations necessary to ensure that all children and youth, including disadvantaged students, are reliably and accurately assessed.

- Address P-12 content standards and grade level expectations in reading aligned with K-3 Colorado Basic Literacy Act proficiencies (revised May 2004). Use curriculum and instructional materials that are aligned with state standards, incorporate the components of effective literacy instruction, and, as appropriate, incorporate technology and principles of universal design for learning to support children and youth with diverse learning needs, including disadvantaged students.
- Evaluate the impact of SRCL activities on student achievement and participate in the external evaluation of the SRCL Program.
- Maintain a SRCL Program Body of Evidence (BOE) that provides evidence of the school's progress in meeting the requirements of the grant (e.g., student data, meeting minutes).
- Provide professional development to teachers and educators administering SRCL Program strategies, including in scientifically research-based instructional strategies to meet the literacy needs of disadvantaged students such as limited-English-proficient students and students with disabilities, to teachers of reading, English, and language arts. If a literacy coach is in place, ensure each building literacy coach receives ongoing training and support in these same areas.
- Ensure that Local Education Agency and building leadership for SRCL Program activities have the qualifications, resources, and time necessary to accelerate student achievement.
- Assure that the reading instruction programs, strategies and interventions to be implemented by participating schools are aligned with district accreditation and literacy plans and clearly based on State Board Rules and Regulations. Support schools in using data to monitor student progress and accelerate performance, including providing technical assistance when necessary.
- Implement interventions to ensure that all children and youth, including both children and youth who have mastered the material ahead of their peers and children and youth struggling with the material, are served appropriately.

- Inform continuous improvement by monitoring program implementation and outcomes, including the effectiveness of professional development, and tracking implementation and outcomes of the Local Education Agency or early childhood education provider, school, classroom, and student levels.

*State leadership* for the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program, including the Colorado Department of Education, will:

- Work with in-state and external experts to make the best use of evidence-based reading research related to planning and implementing professional development and technical assistance opportunities for Colorado P-12 teachers and early literacy providers.
- Clearly define the expectations that eligible Local Education Agencies and schools must meet when they participate in the SRCL Program, including the very clear reliance on scientifically based reading research, and fund only those applications that meet a rigorous definition.
- Develop, identify, and provide high-quality, embedded professional development (through bi-yearly convenings, web-based mechanisms, and ongoing assistance from Colorado Department of Education experts) to enable preschool through 12th grade and early literacy educators to teach reading, writing and oral language skills effectively.
- Provide training, technical assistance and advocacy to build the capacity of eligible Local Education Agencies/schools to implement evidence-based literacy instruction and assessment.
- Make sure the expertise and time available for technical assistance is sufficient to support the work of the Local Education Agency and building leadership teams and allows intervention in a timely manner where necessary.
- Apply accountability through (1) the state's policy infrastructure, (2) monitoring SRCL Program activities and impact (e.g., implementation tool, Body of Evidence), (3) requirements for adequate yearly progress in reading to secure continuation funding and (4) the external evaluation of the initiative.

- Make effective use of electronically-based supports for professional learning over the duration of the grant to assure statewide access to the most current information on implementing evidence based literacy strategies in Colorado P-12 classrooms and early literacy centers.
- Disseminate what works – both to help the SRCL Program sites succeed and to share the work of the subgrantee sites with other Local Education Agencies and schools in the state.
- Coordinate and align the activities and outcomes of the SRCL Program with other literacy-related reform initiatives to deepen understanding of evidence-based literacy in all state literacy activities and to promote the cross-fertilization of ideas.
- Evaluate and inform continuous improvement by monitoring program implementation and outcomes, including the effectiveness of professional development, and tracking implementation and outcomes at the Local Education Agency or early childhood education provider, school, classroom, and student levels.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

### **GOALS OF THE COLORADO SRCL PROGRAM**

The overall goal of Colorado’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program is to increase oral language skills and reading and writing achievement among the participating students, with particular attention paid to disadvantaged students. We want the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program to have a significant impact on participating students, and we want to accurately measure that impact. The Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP) results from 2010 will serve as the baseline for the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program. Student achievement in reading among Colorado students has not increased significantly during the past several years. Over 30 percent of students continue to score as only “unsatisfactory” or “partially proficient. Figure 1 below best illustrates the stagnancy of scores of all students over a five-year period, 2004-2009.

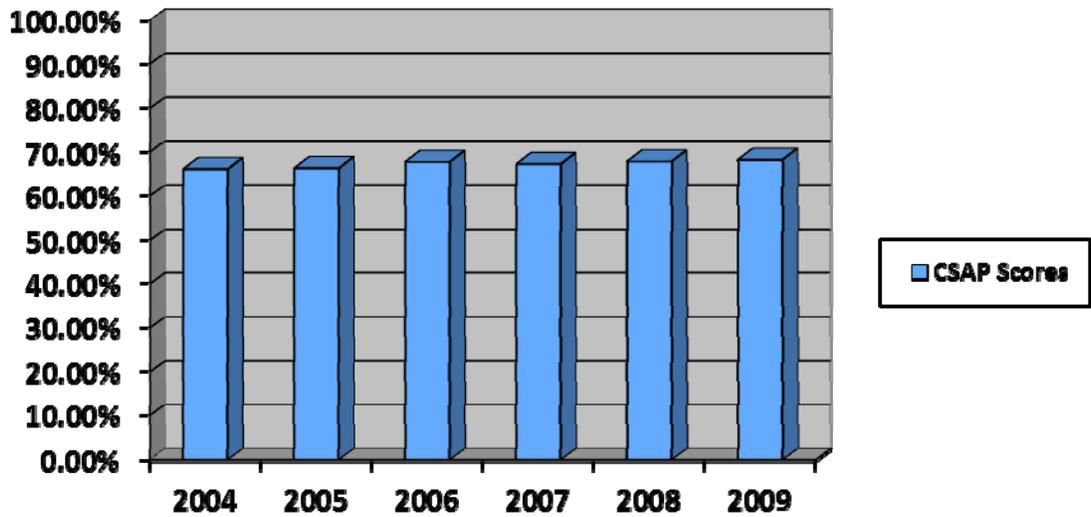


Figure 1: CSAP Reading Percent Proficient and Advanced 2004-2009 for All Grades

Table 1 below shows third grade reading scores for 2009 and 2010 on the Colorado State Assessment Program (CSAP), with little if any change between the two years by all groups; the gaps shown among different subpopulations are persistent as well. Among disadvantaged student groups, a much higher percentage score at partially proficient and unsatisfactory than at advanced or proficient.

**TABLE 1**  
**COLORADO STATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM RESULTS ~ READING ~ GRADE 3**  
**2009 and 2010, by ethnic group**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>% Advanced</b>	<b>% Proficient</b>	<b>% Partially Proficient</b>	<b>% Unsatisfactory</b>
2009	All	7	66	18	9
2010	All	6	64	18	11
2009	American Indian/Alaska Native	3	59	24	13
2010	American Indian/Alaska Native	3	55	28	14
2009	Asian/Pacific Islander	11	68	15	6
2010	Asian/Pacific Islander	10	67	14	9
2009	Black (not Hispanic)	3	58	23	15
2010	Black (not Hispanic)	2	53	25	19
2009	Hispanic	2	52	29	17
2010	Hispanic	2	49	28	21
2009	White (not Hispanic)	10	73	13	4
2010	White (not Hispanic)	9	72	13	6
<b>Disadvantaged Students</b>					
<b>Year</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>% Advanced</b>	<b>% Proficient</b>	<b>% Partially Proficient</b>	<b>% Unsat.</b>
2009	Economically Disadvantaged	2	54	28	16
2010	Economically Disadvantaged	2	51	27	19
2009	English Language Learners	1	43	32	23
2010	English Language Learners	1	42	31	25
2009	Migrant	1	36	36	27
2010	Migrant	0	33	36	30
2009	Students with Disabilities	1	30	30	37
2010	Students with Disabilities	1	27	26	45

## Outcome Objectives

In order to measure progress toward our goals we have set outcome objectives that are aligned with both the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) performance indicators as well as the specific age groups designated in the SRCL Program (Table 2):

<b>TABLE 2</b>	
<b>STRIVING READERS COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY AND GRPA AGE GROUPS</b>	
<b>Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Age Groups</b>	<b>Government Performance and Results Act Performance Indicators</b>
<i>Children from birth through age five</i>	Improve/increase oral language skills among participating 4-year-old children
<i>Students in kindergarten through grade five</i>	Increase reading and writing achievement among participating 5th-grade students.
<i>Students in middle and high school, through grade 12</i>	Increase reading and writing achievement among participating 8th-grade and participating high school students.

We have set specific outcome objectives for each age group/GRPA performance indicator:

- The percentage of participating 4-year-old children who achieve significant gains in oral language skills will increase by **10 percent** over the term of the grant program.
- The percentage of participating 5th-grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on the state English language arts assessments will increase by **10 percent** over the term of the grant period.
- The percentage of participating 8th-grade students who meet or exceed proficiency on the state English language arts assessments will increase by **10 percent** over the term of the grant period.
- The percentage of participating high school students who meet or exceed proficiency on the state English language arts assessments will increase by **6 percent** over the term of the grant period.

To ensure that subgrantees are able to achieve these outcomes, an overarching goal and purpose of the state role is to *support local efforts* in subgrantee communities to strengthen early literacy and ongoing literacy growth of children from birth through 12th grade. The state intends to:

1. Support local efforts to expand, monitor, and evaluate children’s language and

- academic vocabulary development.
2. Support local nonfiction literacy education efforts and initiatives for children in Colorado.
  3. Support local efforts to increase the skills of teachers and administrators in using formative assessments to inform instructional decisions, to provide children with descriptive feedback, and to broaden accountability efforts.
  4. Support local efforts to increase adult understanding about why and how to support children's literacy development.

Recipients of Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program funds through the Colorado Department of Education will be expected to craft outcome objectives that are specific to each community's needs, challenges, population, and proposed program.

#### **DATA SOURCES AND USE**

The state will consider multiple sources of data to both evaluate the needs assessment of subgrantees and to evaluate progress toward achieving goals and outcomes, and will disaggregate data for disadvantaged students including English-language learners, students with disabilities and those who are economically disadvantaged. Data instruments and sources will include the Colorado Student Assessment Program (which includes early childhood assessments), the Colorado Growth Model (described below), Results Matter (Colorado Preschool Project), Colorado Basic Literacy Act Assessment System (for Individual Literacy Plans), and the Colorado Student Assessment Program Alternate (CSAPA).

The Colorado Student Growth Model (CGM) provides a common understanding of how individual students and groups of students progress from year to year toward state standards based on where each individual student begins. The model focuses attention on maximizing student progress over time and reveals where, and among which students, the strongest growth is happening and where it is not. Colorado developed the model to answer three essential questions about student, school and district performance:

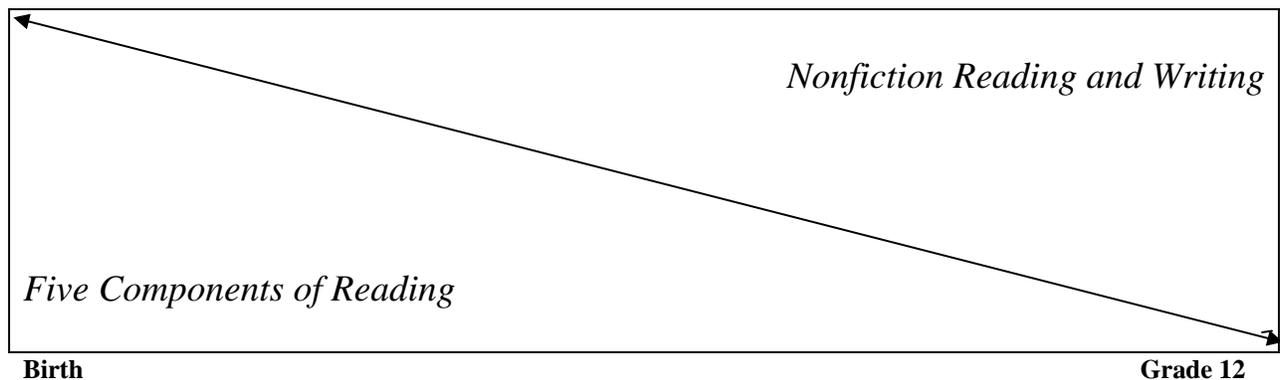
- What is the growth rate of a student, a school and a district?
- What should be the growth rate for a student to reach a desired level of achievement within a period of time?

- What are the highest sustained growth rates that exist today and under what conditions could they improve?

Formative or interim assessments, which are a key focus area of our proposal (see below), will be used by subgrantees to determine student progress and the impact of grant activities.

## **FOCUS AREAS**

The technical assistance to be provided by the Colorado Department of Education to subgrantees will include information, scientifically based research, and instruction models on the focus areas of the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program: (1) formative assessment feedback methodology for data-based decision-making; (2) the five components of reading; (3) nonfiction reading and writing; (4) and oral and written language and academic vocabulary development. The newly revised Colorado Academic Content Standards emphasize nonfiction reading and writing for all grade levels. Standard 2 of the Reading, Writing and Communicating Standards states: “Engage in a wide range of nonfiction and real-life reading experiences to solve problems, judge the quality of ideas, or complete daily tasks.” The National Common Core State Standards emphasizes nonfiction reading and writing as well, especially for adolescents in both their English courses and content area studies.



**Figure 2:** Illustrating Colorado’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy goals from birth through grade 12

The field of literacy has a wealth of resources and models on the most effective practices and strategies for improving reading comprehension, writing and vocabulary development, including solutions for English language learners and other disadvantaged students. As part of the technical assistance component subgrantees will receive information, instruction, and

coaching from Colorado Department of Education specialists about how to improve students' acquisition of the five components of reading and their nonfiction literacy based specifically and responsively on the strengths and needs of the students. The rationale for these focus areas is presented below.

### **Formative Assessment for Data-based Decision-making**

Perhaps the most important area of focus of the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program is formative assessment and feedback methodology. All subgrantees will be required to implement high-quality, state-determined interim assessments as part of their grant projects in order to assess the progress and achievement of participating students at regular intervals. The interim assessments will be designed to collect and analyze data in order to provide timely information to teachers and school leaders about how students are performing as well as the impact of the grant activities. Interim assessments are expected to become a routine step in each grant project, encouraging a culture of data-based decision making within each classroom. Ideally teachers will know exactly where each student is in his or her progress toward the standards and curriculum, what each student knows and, most importantly, what adjustments to instruction or other interventions are needed to keep students on the pathway to increased achievement.

All of the evidence collected and reported by subgrantees (as well as the program evaluator) will be used to inform subgrantees of effective instructional strategies in the program, to instruct workshop participants on effective strategies and best models and practices to achieve results, and eventually to inform all other school districts in the state of the successes and challenges of the program. The intent of this focus area is to foster continuous improvement to the design and implementation of program activities.

### **The Five Components of Reading**

Through the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy grant funding and partnership, Colorado will continue to deepen its commitment to ensure that all children gain the essential five components for reading as outlined by the Report of the National Reading Panel and *Teaching Children to Read* (2000): phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. For adolescent learners, these same five components are equally

relevant (Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, Decker, Roberts, Vaughn, Wexler, Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, 2007). The importance of these five critical literacy building blocks has been validated by subsequent research (McCardle and Chhabra, 2004; August and Shanahan, 2008; Honig, Diamond, and Gutlohn, 2008). Research is informing us that when reading is effectively taught with a solid foundation of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction, all but 2-5% of children can learn to read (Colorado Reading First, 2004; Torgeson, 2002; Juel, 2000). The research of Lieberman, Shankweiler, and Lieberman (1989) demonstrated that the most common barrier to learning word reading skills is the inability to process language phonologically or weak phonemic awareness skills. Thus, Colorado's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program will provide teachers with numerous professional development opportunities to deepen their capacities to cultivate the five essential components of reading. Local Education Agencies will be required to have a comprehensive reading program and comprehensive assessment plan to monitor the development of each component in a manner appropriate to each grade level.

Colorado's Literacy Framework paints a rich portrait of the instructional strategies that are needed to achieve this goal. As profiled in *Reading First: A Closer Look at the Five Essential Components of Effective Reading Instruction – A Review of Scientifically Based Reading Research for Teachers* (2004), there are many approaches to teaching these five components. These approaches differ in how much guidance or direction teachers provide as their students are learning new skills, how clearly and directly teachers explain new skills, whether they demonstrate exactly how to use a specific skill, and whether the skills are taught in a thoughtful sequence. Scientific research reviewed by the National Reading Panel revealed that these different approaches or methods of teaching the five essential components are *not* equally effective. The most reliably effective approach is direct, systematic, and explicit. These practices will be at the heart of our Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy professional development and coaching efforts:

- **Direct Instruction:** In direct instruction, the teacher defines and teaches a concept, models the learning process, guides students through its application and arranges for extended guided practice until mastery is achieved (Florida Center for Reading Research).

- **Systematic Instruction:** A carefully planned sequence, similar to a builder's blueprint for a house, is characteristic of systematic instruction. Systematic instruction is carefully thought out, strategic and designed before activities and lessons are planned. Instruction is clearly linked within and across the five components (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension). For systematic instruction, lessons build on previously taught information, from the simple to the complex (Florida Center for Reading Research).
- **Explicit Instruction:** Explicit instruction involves direct explanation. Concepts are clearly explained and skills are clearly modeled, without ambiguity (Carnine, 2006). The teacher's language is concise, specific and related to the objective modeled, without ambiguity (Carnine, 2006).

Colorado's Literacy Framework 2010 provides additional information to detail our earnest and rigorous focus on the five components of reading.

### **Nonfiction Literacy**

Nonfiction, or informational text, plays a critical role in both academic and professional endeavors. Nearly every profession and lifestyle requires skill at using some or many types of informational text. Just as nonfiction reading encompasses all spheres of life, it also bridges every academic field (Neufeld, 2005), making it an integral component of any educational program. The impact of this genre on current society cannot be overemphasized. As stated by educational scholars Moss, Leone, and Dipillo (1997), "if today's students are to survive in the 'Information Age,' it is imperative that they develop greater familiarity with and understanding of expository text."

Children learn by taking in bits of information and storing them. They do this all through their adolescent years. When they reach puberty, they begin to take this information, sort it, and think critically with it. They take what they know, add more information to it to draw conclusions, problem solve or create new ideas. One can think of this informational base as a "ball of clay." As the child grows, he or she is adding to the ball of clay. The unfortunate fact is that most high school and college students have not taken in enough information bits in their early years to give them a large enough ball of clay or informational base to do the work required

of them in high school and college. Most college professors assume they are teaching to students with large informational balls of clay, but too often they are not. Children should be given a steady diet of non-fiction reading material to help them build up their informational base (Harris, 2011). Additionally, nonfiction materials incorporate information from an array of subject areas, including math, science, social studies, technology, art, music, and writing (Duke, Bennett-Armistead, and Roberts, 2003; Pike and Mumper, 2004), thus nonfiction promotes learning across the curriculum (another fundamental ambition of the new Common Core State Standards).

### *The Value of Nonfiction for Our Youngest Children*

Nonfiction reading in general is rare in primary-grade classrooms (see Duke, Bennett-Armistead, and Roberts, 2002). However, research suggests many benefits of including nonfiction text in primary-grade classrooms. Nonfiction text can:

- Build background knowledge
- Increase vocabulary
- Build on children's interests
- Enrich use of text across the curriculum
- Better prepare children for later schooling, where they will encounter more nonfiction texts (Duke and Bennett-Armistead, 2003).

Dorfman, Cappelli, and Stead (and Duke and Armistead, 2003) advise teachers to expose students to a variety of texts because research suggests a reciprocal relationship between the kinds of texts children become familiar with and the kinds of texts they choose to write and are able to write well. Many reading researchers have acknowledged the importance of fostering a child's interest in reading nonfiction in the early grades (Duke, 2000, 2004; Routman, 2000, 2003; Stead, 2002; Young and Moss, 2006). Research also suggests that teaching students how to appropriately read and write nonfiction should be a primary goal of early educational learning experiences because of the cognitive benefits received by students who are exposed to these types of literacy experiences (Boynton and Blevins, 2004; Duke, 2000, 2004; Routman, 2000; Young and Moss, 2006). Researchers have also indicated that educators should consider teaching children how to read informational texts to ensure that by the time they reach the intermediate grades they will have the requisite skills to excel academically (Chall, 1983; Duke, Bennett-Armistead, Roberts, 2003; Fisher, 1996; Hadaway, Vardell, and Young, 2002). Trussell-Cullen

(1999) defines nonfiction as a way to “document and celebrate the real world – and that means everything about the real world that is actual, observable, recordable, demonstrable, and experienceable.” This definition of nonfiction is important for teachers who want to create a classroom environment where the real world is meaningful to children. Further, this focus on nonfiction may enable teachers, especially teachers in the early grades, to make learning more relevant for students.

### ***Non-fiction Literacy is Critical for Secondary Students***

As students start the middle school grades, not only are they reading to continue improving language and academic vocabulary skills and to improve comprehension, but also they must gain increasing capacity to read strategically in order to understand the texts they read. Students must be able to read complex informational texts in several fields with independence and confidence because the vast majority of reading in college and workforce training programs will be sophisticated nonfiction. Indeed, through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts (Common Core State Standards, 2011).

It is also important to note that appropriate remediation of adolescent literacy difficulties does not involve simply re-teaching elementary school-level material. Approaches that demonstrably work in elementary schools will not necessarily prove effective with older students, because they may not be developmentally appropriate or may fail to address the highly specific, diverse, and advanced needs of adolescents. A number and a variety of strategies can be effective tools for comprehension, strategies that “represent procedural rather than declarative knowledge, stressing ‘how’ as much or more than ‘what.’” (Pressley, 1999).

Common elements among instructional strategies include using a variety of methods to introduce words and concepts, i.e., asking students to read, reading aloud to students, asking what they already know about a subject – even videos and music lyrics have been suggested as a way to communicate. Engagement of students in the process is also essential, with lots of discussion and both soliciting and providing feedback. Similar to younger children, adolescents need to be interested in what they are reading, so making the material relevant is crucial.

### ***Nonfiction Writing***

Writing is a fundamental component of literacy. In fact, the processes of reading and writing develop simultaneously in students, and they are both acts of composing. Writing is a means of critical inquiry; it promotes problem solving and mastering new concepts. Adept writers can work through various ideas while producing informational, persuasive, and narrative or literary texts. In other words, writing can be used as a medium for reasoning and making intellectual connections. As students arrange ideas to persuade, describe, and inform, they engage in logical critique, and they are likely to gain new insights and a deeper understanding of concepts and content.

The ability to write well – to communicate ideas and to engage the reader – is fundamental to student growth and capacity to advance. Research indicates that weaker adolescent writers are less likely than their more skilled classmates to attend college (Graham and Perin, 2007). According to Achieve, Inc. (2005) half of students entering college are not ready for the writing demands there.

Because reading and writing are so intricately linked, instruction in writing should entail a great deal of reading as well. In fact, 30 percent of writing time is spent reading (Calkins, 1998). And to strengthen writing skills, moving back and forth between reading and writing enables children to monitor their work and anticipate the needs of their audience (Graves, 1997).

Subgrantees will be encouraged to develop lessons that incorporate nonfiction writing, with technical assistance on strategies, models and best practices to be provided by the Colorado Department of Education consultant. Research shows that nonfiction writing can be a powerful tool for raising achievement: A project in Norfolk Public Schools in Virginia focused on nonfiction writing increased test scores in all subjects, and poverty level did not influence the results negatively (Peery, 2009). In Waterloo, New York, students realized higher performance in math, science, and social studies after the cross-curricular focus on nonfiction writing after only one school year of increasing the focus on nonfiction writing in all subject areas (Peery, 2009; Reeves, 2004).

### ***Oral and Written Language and Academic Vocabulary Development***

Research findings in applied linguistics and reading research consistently show a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success at all ages, from the primary

school right through to university level: students who read a lot and who understand what they read usually attain good grades (Pretorius, 2000). Educational researchers have found that there is a strong correlation between reading and academic success.

To a great extent within classrooms, the language used by teachers and students determines what is learned and how learning takes place. Not surprisingly, oral language is not developed in silent classrooms (Moats, 2000; Routman, 2000). Most vocabulary learning, however, comes from books. Books are “where the words are” (Stahl, 2004).

Research also demonstrates that vocabulary deficits are a significant detriment to reading, and that learners’ varied levels of vocabulary knowledge significantly widens the literacy achievement gap. According to Biemiller (2005), while average students acquire an average of 2.4 root words a day, students at the bottom quartile acquire only an average of 1.6 root words per day. Without focused intervention, this problem compounds over time, as demonstrated below:

<b>TABLE 3</b>		
<b>Acquisition of Root Words</b>		
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Average Student</b> <i>2.4 root words per day</i>	<b>Bottom 25%</b> <i>1.6 root words per day</i>
End of Pre-K	3,440	2,440
End of K	4,300	3,016
End of Grade 1	5,160	3,592
End of Grade 2	6,020	4,168

Source: Diamond, Gutlohn, Honig, *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, 2008, p.413

An effective strategy to increase literacy achievement, and narrow the knowledge gap, is to focus vocabulary instruction on root word acquisition. Vocabulary researchers basically agree on the number of words that can be directly taught in a school year. Two words per day can be taught directly or 10 per week. And new words are learned more effectively in a rich context. Selecting words that students will encounter in a variety of texts allows multiple exposures and a higher probability of acquisition. Therefore, selecting words that students will come across in books inside and outside of school and that will be useful in reading (not just high frequency words) makes the task of learning the words more worthwhile and purposeful for students (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, and Pople, 1985).

## **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Professional development support will be led by the Colorado Department of Education Literacy Specialist and jointly offered by the Colorado Department of Education Literacy Specialists and subgrantee literacy coaches. We will provide envisioning webinars to help potential sub-grantees/Local Education Agencies develop their grant applications. In these webinars, we will clarify the goals of Colorado’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program, articulate the criteria and review process, profile the technical assistance the Colorado Department of Education will provide each Local Education Agency, and answer participants’ questions. One criterion, for example, might be to require the Local Education Agency (LEA) to partner with local key stakeholders (those listed under “what we can do”/constituents in our state literacy plan). The Colorado Department of Education will also provide leadership in linking LEAs with relevant organizations and agencies to encourage collaboration, mutual support, dissemination, and replication.

### **Statewide Scope of Technical Assistance**

Over time, Colorado's Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy leaders/program will also help to:

- Articulate and build connections with Read to Achieve, Response to Intervention (RtI), Colorado Preschool Project, Gifted and Talented programs, English language learner program, and other state-level initiatives such as the Mile High United Way Literacy Campaign, the Governor’s literacy action plan, School Counselor Corps, and school and district improvement grants.
- Identify demonstration sites to serve as models.
- Identify people in and out of the state with literacy expertise to partner with schools.
- Supply infrastructure for data collection, assessment, and dissemination of information.
- Offer systemic professional development (see details below).
- Provide easy access to reading research.
- Integrate literacy instruction in schools into core subject areas to promote learning of the subject and to increase motivation to read and write in the subject area (including

creating common planning times to make integration of content area teaching and learning more plausible and practical).

- Create a Colorado Center for Literacy Research in partnership with the Governor’s literacy initiatives and organizations such as the Colorado Council of Learning Disabilities, Colorado Council International Reading Association, Early Childhood Education Association of Colorado, University of Denver, University of Colorado, Adams State University, University of Northern Colorado, Colorado Education Association, Colorado Chapter of the International Dyslexia Society, Colorado Chapter of the National Council of Teachers of English, Learning Disabilities Association of Colorado, Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, and Colorado Association for the Education of Young Children.

In all of our Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program sites, teachers will work in partnership with their school Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy coach. Each coach will align his/her work to the school’s grant goals and meet with teachers regularly to:

- Analyze student work and data to identify patterns of student strengths and needs and evaluate each child’s progress toward the Colorado language arts standards
- Plan lessons to respond to students’ strengths and needs with scientifically research-based instructional strategies
- Create or gather together instructional resources to support students’ learning and motivation.

Colorado’s Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy coaches will work closely with the Colorado Department of Education Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Specialists and consultants in ongoing professional development partnerships such as monthly phone conferences, webinars, regional conferences, and e-mail communications.

For Colorado’s five components of reading, nonfiction literacy, language and academic vocabulary foci and for our formative assessment focus, the Colorado Department of Education Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy leaders will offer the following professional development support:

- Networking and professional development at least twice a year (possibly beginning and mid-year)
- Webinars four to six times per year, including video streaming of scientifically research-based instruction of the five components of reading, nonfiction reading and writing demonstration lessons, and vignettes of effective formative assessment practices to offer explicit and rich modeling for adult learners
- Monthly communication with subgrantee schools (and more often for schools of high need, especially at the beginning of the school year) via telephone or teleconferences
- At least one site visit per year to every subgrantee site:
  - Colorado Department of Education Literacy Specialist and/or consultants will provide on-site follow up/implementation support by offering subgrantees demonstration lessons and co-teaching partnerships; collaborative assessment conferences modeling and facilitations (in established or newly formed Professional Learning Communities/Data Teams); ongoing contact by e-mail and phone conferences; and monthly reports to keep Colorado Department of Education leaders and school partners in communication with one another about students' literacy growth and progress and specific "cause data" research (i.e., instructional strategies which lead to student achievement).
  - The focus of the literacy coach's supports will be aligned to the focus of regional workshops and webinars.
- Online resources such as an online Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy toolkit (profiles of implementing scientifically research-based instruction; models of units of literacy study; lesson ideas; mentor texts; exemplars of proficient student writing; rubrics; conference record templates and prompts; etc.)
- Online office hours and/or a manned hotline once a week for phone or Skype conferences to address immediate questions, co-plan lessons, and problem-solve issues as they arise.

## MEASURING PROGRESS

To evaluate children’s literacy growth and progress in the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program, the Colorado Department of Education will employ three strategies. First, we will engage an outside evaluator with literacy and reading expertise whose role in the program will be limited solely to conducting the evaluation. The external evaluator will be asked to craft a thorough, feasible, and aligned evaluation plan for the SRCL project that measures progress and outcomes against the goals and objectives, and also considers participating student populations and specific subgrantee activities. The evaluator will submit annual performance reports as well as a comprehensive evaluation report at the end of the program that articulate the program outcomes for subgrantees as well as the state as a whole. Results will be compared to baseline data established at the outset of the program.

Second, subgrantees will be asked to utilize data from their current assessment practices *as well as* to implement and utilize the state-determined interim assessment products once the grant project is launched. We want to support Colorado children in becoming competent readers and writers. The intention of our efforts is to cultivate “choosing readers and writers” – in other words, we want the children of our state to *choose* to read and choose to write. Thus, we will encourage and collect qualitative as well as quantitative data to evaluate children’s growth as reader, writers, speakers, and listeners and their disposition to engage in literacy.

Subgrantees will be required to develop and communicate reports of both formative and summative data twice yearly.

- For our youngest children, from birth through age five, subgrantees will utilize the Colorado Department of Education Early Childhood assessments, Colorado Preschool Project assessment, and Results Matter/Colorado Basic Literacy Act Assessment System.
- For students in kindergarten through grade five, subgrantees will utilize data from the Colorado State Assessment Program, the Colorado Growth Model, and the state-determined interim assessment.
- For middle and high school children, through grade 12, subgrantees can utilize assessment data from CSAP, the Colorado Growth Model, the state-determined interim assessment, and also common writing rubrics and those assessments and

student data profiles which faculties use in Professional Learning Communities and Data Teams.

Subgrantees will also be encouraged to utilize:

- Data Portfolio/Body of Evidence which reflects the diversity and depth of children’s reading and writing.
- Survey data to capture voiced and observed changes in children’s literacy habits (For example, are children choosing to read outside of school/the instructional program?).
- Library checkout records.

The third component to evaluate the effectiveness of the Colorado Department of Education’s SRCL Program efforts and guide our work will be the creation and use of an Advisory Committee. Members, to be appointed by the Commissioner of Education, will meet two to three times a year to study and discuss SRCL Program implementation, data from the subgrantee sites, state assessment data, reports from program directors and consultants, and budget updates. Advisory Committee members will serve two-year terms, and will include representation and contributions from multiple constituents, including K-12 education, early childhood education (such as Head Start and the Early Childhood Leadership Commission), professional organizations (such as the Colorado Association of School Boards and the Colorado Education Association), institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and libraries. Representatives from collaborative projects, including the Mile High United Way Literacy Campaign and the Colorado Legacy Foundation Integration Grant, also will be invited to participate. Finally, the Committee will include representation from the office of the Governor and General Assembly (reflecting a balance of Republicans and Democrats). An important role for the Committee will be to coordinate literacy improvement efforts and programs throughout the state and to advocate for and articulate effective ways to support children’s transitions with alignment across birth through grade 12.

## **COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION**

The Colorado SRCL Program Advisory Committee and the Colorado Department of Education staff will have responsibility for disseminating information on program outcomes. As the program evaluator and subgrantees submit information and data on project outcomes, the

Colorado Department of Education will analyze and synthesize the data into a statewide snapshot of the program's progress and activities. Data to be collected and reported will be disaggregated by student subgroups. The Colorado Department of Education and the Advisory Committee will submit the synthesized reports on program outcomes to the Commissioner of Education, State Board of Education, Governor's office, Lieutenant Governor's office, Legislature, and to the superintendents of subgrantee districts. The reports and data will also be posted on the CDE website on a portal dedicated to the Colorado SRCL Program. A subgroup of the Advisory Committee, a working group, will be responsible for examining the data and outcomes and make recommendations on processes or practices. All of the evidence will be used to inform all subgrantees of activities and strategies in the program, to inform and instruct workshop participants on effective strategies and best models and practices to achieve results, and eventually to inform all other school districts in the state of the successes and challenges of the program. The intent of this evaluation process is to foster continuous improvement to the design and implementation of program activities.

Colorado Department of Education staff and experts in the fields of literacy, early childhood and diverse learners will review the LEA applications to ensure they contain all required components. The review process will be competitive with an evaluation employed to assess specific selection criteria. The review process will be competitive with an evaluation employed to assess specific selection criteria, as follows:

- Proposal Introduction (not scored)
- Cover Page
- Certification and Assurances Form
- District Assignment of Federal Grant Funds and Assurances Form
- Executive Summary
- Needs Assessment
- Services and Activities
- Evaluation
- Budget Narrative
- Electronic Budget

Applicants must score at least 108 points out of the 156 points possible to be approved for funding. There is no guarantee that applicants will receive funding or funding at the requested level.

Priority consideration will be given to:

- Geographic distribution
- Greater percentages of disadvantaged students
- Greater percentages of limited English proficient students
- Greater percentages of Free and Reduced Lunch rate.

Also, priority will be given to Local Education Agency applicants that partner with a public or private nonprofit organization or agency serving higher percentages of disadvantaged children.

### **LEA/SUBGRANTEE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL PROCESS**

The RFP Selection Criteria and Evaluation Rubric require applicants to provide evidence in their application of the following essential elements (see Appendix A, RFP page 25).

Applications will be scored according to the degree to which all of these elements are addressed, with the first three receiving the greatest weight.

- Clear identification of which students – particularly disadvantaged students and limited English proficient students/age levels – will be selected for the program
- Description of how technology will be used to address student learning challenges
- Description of how the applicant will collect, analyze and use high-quality and timely data in an on-going way to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes
- Identification of goals/objectives that are consistent with the desired outcomes and required activities of the SRCL Program
- Demonstration of capacity to successfully implement proposal
- An evidence-based rationale that the technology program, practice or strategy detailed in the application is comprehensive and high quality and will increase student engagement and achievement or increase teacher effectiveness
- Description of the research-based language and literacy interventions and/or strategies that will be implemented

- Description of the curriculum and instruction materials to be used and illustration of how they are aligned with state standards
- Clear and focused description of what methods will be used to collect information and how the strategies and activities will be evaluated for effectiveness
- Description of how the implemented program and outcomes will be monitored to provide for continuous improvement
- Description of how applicant will provide a coherent system of assessment that is aligned with state standards
- Plan for how other agencies, non-profit organizations, community-based organizations and families will be involved in activities that promote the implementation of effective literacy instruction for disadvantaged students.
- A description of how the program will integrate and/or with programs supported with other federal funds (i.e., Title I, Title II, etc.).
- That the costs of the proposed project are reasonable and the budget sufficient in relation to the objectives, design, scope and sustainability of project activities.

In reviewing the subgrantee applications, CDE reviewers will examine the research base provided to ensure it meets the needs of the population described within the application and that it is aligned with state standards. LEA applicants will be required to describe the research-based language and literacy interventions and/or strategies that will be implemented to ensure that all children and youth, including both children and youth who have mastered the material ahead of their peers and children and both struggling with the material are served appropriately. Applicants will also be required to describe the curriculum and instruction materials to be used and show how they are aligned with state standards. Applicants who fail to make the connection between these strategies and reasons for why students have not been successful will result in a grant that will not be funded.

## MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Colorado SRCL Program Management Plan is presented in Table 4 below. It includes all the tasks and activities, responsible parties, timeline, milestones/outcomes and the budget category for each task/activity.

<b>TABLE 4</b>				
<b>Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Management Plan</b>				
<b>Task/Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones/Outcomes</b>	<b>Budget Allocation</b>
Create advisory committee to review/oversee/recommend and align work of SRCL grant	Project Coordinator	Sept 2011	First advisory committee meeting in Oct 2011 with clearly defined roles and expectations	Operating (functions)
Put finishing touches on RFP and disseminate to all districts, especially the ones with at-risk populations	Director, Competitive Grants & Awards	Sept-Oct 2011, depending on grant notification	Complete RFP Post FAQs on website	Operating and general FTE
Conduct RFP application training seminar (web-based)	Director, Competitive Grants & Awards	Sept-Oct 2011, depending on grant notification	Application training completed	Operating, FTE and current CDE capacity
Send out Reader Review request and compete process for peer review for RFP	Director, Competitive Grants & Awards	Sept 2011	Secure expert readers to review and score grant submissions	FTE and Contracts
Complete RFP review and select and notify grantees	Project Coordinator and Director, Competitive Grants & Awards	October 2011 depending on federal grant notification	Grantees selected and notified	Operating, FTE and in-kind through current CDE capacity
Hire/appoint SRCL coordinator and SRCL state literacy specialist	Project Coordinator and Deputy Commissioner	Aug/Sept 2011, depending on federal grant notification	CDE SRCL grant staff hired	FTE
Work with subgrantees to set growth targets and goals for SRCL Literacy grant	Project Coordinator and other growth experts and necessary	October 2011	Subgrantee growth targets created by November 2011	Operating and FTE

<b>TABLE 4</b>				
<b>Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Management Plan</b>				
<b>Task/Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones/Outcomes</b>	<b>Budget Allocation</b>
Complete work on Colorado State Literacy Plan with partners	Project Coordinator and State Literacy Specialist	October-Sept 2011-	Multiple meetings with Advisory Committee and other partners for feedback, information and work on project alignment. Disseminate draft for expert comments and review.	Operating and FTE
Design and set up website for SRCL grant information. Design clearinghouse area and web-networking area for grantees	State Literacy Specialist with CDE communications office and Project Coordinator	Sept 2011-Nov 2011	Initially post all items related to the RFP process, then build out site to include clearinghouse and professional development aspects	Operating and FTE, in-kind through capacity currently at CDE
Hire CDE external evaluator and develop SRCL evaluation design	Project Coordinator and Deputy Commissioner	December 2011-February 2012	Create draft evaluation design and data collection processes by Feb 2012	Contracts
Set calendar and topics for regional workshops and professional development services; align with other state initiatives	Project Coordinator and State Literacy Specialist with Advisory Committee and partners	December 2011	Set and disseminate event calendar to grantees	Operating, FTE and in-kind through current CDE capacity
Post all research, tools and relevant SRCL information <i>and</i> the State Literacy Plan on designated SRCL website	State Literacy Specialist	October 2011-ongoing as resources continue to grow	Initial set of research, information, grant calendar, etc. posted to website by December 2011	Operating, FTE and in-kind through current CDE capacity
Conduct needs assessment of subgrantees around professional development needs and gaps in literacy instruction	Project Coordinator and State Literacy Specialist	November 2011	Design needs assessment questionnaire and send to grantees once they are notified of award	FTE
Develop and identify professional development activities that CDE will provide to districts and their literacy coaches	Project Coordinator, State Literacy Specialist with Advisory Committee input	December 2011	Create a menu of professional development options for grantee districts depending on their needs	FTE and general capacity

**TABLE 4**  
**Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Management Plan**

<b>Task/Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones/Outcomes</b>	<b>Budget Allocation</b>
Conduct first “face-to-face” meeting of all grantees to review requirements, expectations, and grant support opportunities	Project Coordinator with other initiative partners (to ensure alignment)	January 2012	Detailed list of supports, office hours, site visits, website and resources available to all grantees	Operating, workshops/conferences and FTE
Conduct webinar on relevant topic needed by subgrantees	Project Coordinator, State Literacy Specialist	March 2012	Webinar topic will be related to the grantee needs assessment results	Operating, functions and workshops
Provide information on site visits and professional development to literacy coaches in all districts	Project Coordinator, State Literacy Specialist with specific experts needed for professional development	February 2012 and ongoing through duration of grant	One-two times per year, focus on the professional development gaps noted in the needs assessment	Operating, travel, functions and FTE
Conduct second grantee workshop	State Literary Specialist and/or specific experts needed	Approx. July 2012 for next school year planning	Design agenda, professional development outcomes for the workshop and expected outcome for participants (May 2012)	Operating, workshops/conferences
Conduct second webinar	Project Coordinator and State Literacy Specialist	October 2012	Webinar topic will be related to the subgrantee needs assessment results and upcoming work plans for Year 2 of the SRCL Program	Operating, workshops and functions
Collect Year 1 data and lessons learned from subgrantees	Project Coordinator and external evaluator	August 2012	Compile Year 1 evaluation report by Oct 2012	External Consultants
Disseminate Year 1 results and lessons learned with any new research or tools to help subgrantees improve their program	Project Coordinator and Advisory Committee	October 2012	Post all information on website and clearinghouse	FTE, consultants, and internal CDE capacity
Review SRCL Program in combination with other state initiatives and plans; evaluate alignment and make mid-course corrections if necessary	Project Coordinator, CDE leadership, Advisory Committee, state initiative partners	November 2012	Revise State Literacy plan or initiative activities as necessary to continue improving alignment of state initiatives	FTE, Operating (functions)

<b>TABLE 4</b>				
<b>Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Management Plan</b>				
<b>Task/Activity</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Milestones/Outcomes</b>	<b>Budget Allocation</b>
Continue to cycle through key elements of this work plan each year for the remainder of the grant	Project Coordinator, CDE leadership, State Literacy Specialists, Advisory Committee, state initiative partners	Ongoing	Continue to support subgrantees, provide professional development, clearinghouse of information and evaluation information on SRCL grant	All

**Key Personnel**

The Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy program will be directed by Melissa Colman, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Laura Benson, Literacy Specialist (see resumes in Appendix B). Other Colorado Department of Education staff who will provide guidance and expertise to the project are as follows:

- Dian Prestwich, Read to Achieve
- Sharon Triolo-Moloney, Early Childhood Initiatives
- Patricia Boland, Federal Program Administration, Title 1
- Lynn Bamberry, Director, Competitive Grants and Awards
- David Lyon, Grants Fiscal Management

As described earlier, Colorado’s efforts to establish a comprehensive literacy framework for the state have involved numerous and diverse stakeholders from the start. The foundation for the Colorado Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program is the State Literacy Plan, which is currently being developed by the Literacy Leadership Team. That group includes several Colorado Department of Education staff members with expertise in literacy and reading, early childhood, gifted and talented, special education, English language learners, libraries, adult education and federal programs. The “external” component of the team consists of over 30 individuals from across the state with similar areas of expertise who work as principals, teachers, instructional coaches, literacy coaches, special education educators, English-language-learner providers, librarians, and professional development coordinators. Colorado’s SRCL Advisory

Committee will be additional reviewers of the State Literacy Plan to offer feedback and approval.

### **Colorado Department of Education Budget**

The Colorado SRCL Program proposal requests \$75 million over a five-year period, with 95 percent to be distributed to subgrantees. The remaining five percent, \$3,750,000, will support salary and benefits for 3.35 FTE (one project coordinator, two state literacy specialists, and grants management), evaluation, operating costs (rent, communications, supplies, etc.) as well as direct expenses for program functions (technical assistance networking and meetings, webinars, etc.) and travel (onsite technical assistance to subgrantees). CDE is confident this is a reasonable and functional budget to carry out the work of the program (see Budget Narrative).

### **Subgrantee Allocations**

The Colorado Department of Education anticipates that individual Local Education Agency applications will be designed to serve all age levels, or only one age level, or perhaps two age levels within each district. The Colorado Department of Education application review team will ensure that the required allocations will be achieved among all subgrantees awarded funds, as follows:

- At least 15 percent serving children from birth through age five.
- At least 40% serving students in kindergarten through grade five.
- At least 40 percent to serve students in middle and high school, through grade 12, including an equitable distribution of funds between middle and high schools.

### **INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

As part of the technical assistance component, Colorado Department of Education consultants will provide leadership to subgrantees in linking their projects with relevant organizations and agencies to encourage collaboration and mutual support and the potential for integrating funds with other local, state and federal efforts, including Response to Intervention and Title 1, as well as other collaborative efforts in the state (i.e., the Mile High United Way Literacy Campaign and the Governor’s literacy action plan).

Local Education Agency applicants are required to have and describe for the Evaluation Rubric a sustainability plan that shows how their efforts to improve literacy achievement will

continue after the end of the subgrant. Importantly, one requirement of the Colorado SRCL Program is designed to build capacity within the districts: LEAs will be required to appoint or hire a reading/literacy coach who will provide instruction and professional development to teachers that will equip them with the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality literacy instruction after the grant ends.

### **NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED**

The RFP Selection Criteria and Evaluation Rubric requires applicants to identify which students, particularly disadvantaged students and limited English proficient students/age levels, will be selected to be served by the district. Colorado hopes to be able to serve as many as 12,000-15,000 students through the Program. From among all the applications submitted, the Colorado Department of Education evaluation team will seek to make awards to the high-quality and comprehensive applications that will serve the most students and the most disadvantaged students.