



The Vermont Literacy Playbook

An Implementation Guide for System Leaders to Improve Student Literacy Learning

December 22, 2023

State of Vermont
Agency of Education

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Introduction to the Playbook..... | 6 |
| Purpose and Audience | 6 |
| Structure of the Playbook | 7 |
| About Local Literacy Plans | 7 |
| Supporting Coherence and Making Connections | 7 |
| Stage 1: Conducting a Literacy Self-Assessment | 9 |
| Conduct a Literacy Needs Assessment..... | 9 |
| Develop an Asset Map..... | 13 |
| Stage 2: Local Literacy Planning..... | 16 |
| Create a Literacy Vision Statement | 16 |
| Develop SMART Goals..... | 17 |
| Select Evidence-Based Practices | 20 |
| Develop an Implementation Plan | 22 |
| Setting the Conditions for Success..... | 23 |
| Stage 3: Implementation and Continuous Improvement of Your LLP..... | 25 |
| Providing Professional Development..... | 25 |
| Assessing and Monitoring Progress | 25 |
| Making Adjustments | 26 |
| Acknowledgments | 27 |
| Resources | 28 |
| Appendix A..... | 30 |
| Appendix B..... | 31 |
| Appendix C..... | 32 |

Executive Summary

Learning to read is critical for success in school and beyond. The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) recognizes the diversity of culture, language, geography, values, beliefs, and circumstances of our students, families, and caregivers. To support individual growth, development, and continuous learning for a lifetime, AOE is committed to including every Vermont learner in continuous, high-quality, evidence-based learning experiences, from cradle to career.

In support of this vision and commitment to improve the literacy learning of all Vermont learners, AOE collaborated with the [Region 1 Comprehensive Center](#) to develop the Vermont Literacy Playbook: *An Implementation Guide for System Leaders to Improve Literacy Learning* (referred to as the Playbook). The purpose of the Playbook is to bridge the gap between almost a decade of policy and practice and act as both an implementation guide and a toolkit to support local supervisory unions/districts (referred to as “Districts” in the Playbook) and District leaders in meeting Vermont’s literacy goals for all students. The Playbook serves to guide and support the implementation of Vermont’s state literacy plan, the [Vermont Blueprint for Early Literacy Comprehensive System of Services](#) (referred to as the Blueprint). As with the Blueprint, the Playbook is informed by and aligns with existing regulations and frameworks, such as the [VTmtss Field Guide](#), the [Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework](#), and many others. The efforts and commitment of many led to the development of this Playbook and the resources included within.

A Brief Legislative Overview

Following the AOE’s recommendations, the Vermont Legislature commissioned a study in 2016 “to improve the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to students who struggle both with and without IEPs [individualized education programs]” to develop a statewide roadmap to more effectively serve students who struggle. At the conclusion of this study, AOE published a legislative report in 2017, [Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports for Students Who Struggle](#), with explicit recommendations for the state. In 2018, this “roadmap” to “enhance the effectiveness, availability, and equity of services provided to students who require additional support” was codified in Act 173 (2018, p. 4).

Informed by the recommendations set forth in Act 173, AOE and a group of diverse stakeholders and subject matter experts convened in 2019 to develop the state’s Early Literacy Plan ([16 V.S.A. §2903](#)), called the [Blueprint for Early Literacy Comprehensive System of Services, PreK Through Third Grade](#) (i.e., Blueprint). The Blueprint used national research, evidence-based practices, and landmark legislation and resources such as Act 173 and the VTmtss Field Guide to outline a “comprehensive system of services for early education in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and Grades 1–3 to ensure that all students learn to read by the end of the third grade” (16 V.S. §2903).

In 2021, Vermont passed into law [Act 28](#) to continue the state’s focus on improving literacy outcomes for all students in the state, appropriating federal funds to advance the development of technical assistance and professional learning (statewide supports) and to convene a Literacy Council tasked with reviewing and making recommendations to improve and implement the Blueprint. The Blueprint and efforts undertaken as a result of Act 28 became the foundation for this Playbook.

Introduction to the Playbook

Purpose and Audience

The purpose of the Playbook is to act as a companion to Vermont’s state literacy plan, [Blueprint for Early Literacy Comprehensive System of Services, PreK Through Third Grade](#) (i.e., the Blueprint). It supports the pivotal role that “local policymakers and education leaders” (e.g., curriculum leaders, superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and other District leaders) play in “overseeing the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan” for literacy (Blueprint, p. 6) and guide decision making and planning efforts to improve literacy learning and outcomes at the local level. The resources, strategies, and tools in this Playbook provide action steps, templates, and guidelines that District leaders can adapt based on local needs when developing, implementing, and continuously improving their local literacy plans (LLPs).

Although the primary audience of the Playbook is District leaders, the voices of and input from a variety of stakeholders are critical throughout the stages of developing and implementing an LLP.

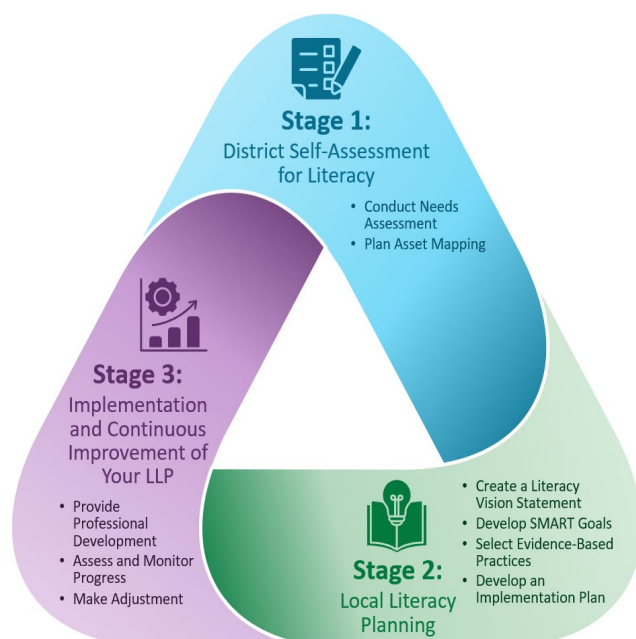


Exhibit 1. The Three Stages of Developing Local Literacy Plans

As a “living document,” the Playbook will be updated as needed, and more resources will be added to support local literacy planning. We hope that you will find the Playbook useful in supporting your literacy goals, and we welcome any feedback or questions at aoe.literacy@vermont.gov.

Structure of the Playbook

The Playbook describes three stages when developing an LLP. This reflects Section 3 of the Blueprint and includes multiple processes and activities to support District teams in assessing, developing, implementing, and monitoring your LLP to meet your District’s literacy goals. Exhibit 1 will help you envision the stages. Each stage has its own section in the Playbook with similar components described to support understanding and implementation:

- **Introduction** describes the stage and its importance.
- **Critical Actions** offer specific actions to take to ensure that your planned steps result in a high-quality output.
- **Considerations and Guiding Questions** provide prompts and/or questions that you can use to support and extend your thinking about achieving a high-quality output.
- **Implementation Tools** can be used by Districts to support the implementation of each stage.
- **Connection Spotlights** highlight opportunities of alignment with existing Vermont initiatives or other existing resources to support integration and coherence.

The **resources** section at the end of the Playbook offers you a list of resources referenced within the Playbook plus additional resources that you may find helpful.

About Local Literacy Plans

An LLP provides a framework for Districts to address and improve literacy outcomes for **all student populations**. An LLP could be a part of an existing plan or process (e.g., continuous and systemic improvement planning) that focuses on student learning outcomes across a District and/or school. Whether an LLP is embedded within an existing process or not, LLPs provide a roadmap that

- clearly presents the District’s goals for literacy;
- describes how the District will identify, target, and address local literacy needs; and
- leverages resources and investments to support evidence-based literacy practices.

A District’s LLP is to be reviewed regularly to assess progress in achieving the stated goals in the plan.

LLPs can inform and support District continuous improvement plans (CIPs) and vice versa. CIPs provide an organizing framework for connecting LLPs to Districtwide strategic plans, structures, and initiatives.

Supporting Coherence and Making Connections

Throughout this Playbook are suggestions for integrating, leveraging, and connecting existing efforts, policies, and processes already required or in practice. We want to draw

your attention to a few here before you get started: team-based leadership and integrated strategic planning.

Team-Based Leadership

We recommend building on or leveraging existing District team structures or bodies (e.g., Continuous Improvement Plan [CIP] team, VTmtss team, District educational support team [EST], data teams) to act as or provide support to the LLP leadership team. This team's role will be to oversee and facilitate the development, implementation, and evaluation of an LLP. The LLP leadership team should include one or more skilled facilitators and data managers to support stakeholders' understanding throughout the process. Stakeholders can be brought in to support your team at various stages of development and feedback.

As you develop an LLP, consider who needs to be included in key decisions when developing, implementing, and monitoring the plan. Be sure to have diversity of roles, responsibilities, perspectives, and experiences represented across teams. Stakeholders representing multiple viewpoints could include the following:

- Community members and leaders
- Parents and caregivers
- Higher education institutions
- Classroom teachers
- Literacy coaches and District literacy leaders
- Reading specialists
- School and District leaders
- School board members

Integrated Strategic Planning

If your District's literacy goals and activities are currently part of established District or school strategic plans (e.g., a CIP), how might the development of the LLP be informed by those existing plans and the teams that contributed to their development? Consider whether those teams or individuals might act as or sit on the LLP leadership team and/or how development of the LLP may become part of a team's regularly scheduled meetings. If the LLP is a component of a larger strategic or improvement plan, it also may become part of your regularly scheduled meetings.

The next sections of the Playbook describes the three stages, including information and tools on how to support District teams in assessing, developing, implementing, and monitoring LLPs.

Stage 1: Conducting a Literacy Self-Assessment

A literacy self-assessment is the foundation for developing and implementing your LLP. Conducting a self-assessment includes completing a **literacy needs assessment and asset map**. The self-assessment of local literacy needs, and the inventory of local assets will inform the development of an LLP. This stage includes the information you will need to (a) conduct a literacy needs assessment and (b) develop an asset map.

Your District LLP leadership team should oversee and facilitate the self-assessment process. You can leverage or repurpose an already existing team—such as a CIP team, the VTmtss team, the District EST, data teams, or another team already in place—to support literacy needs assessment and asset mapping.

Conduct a Literacy Needs Assessment

A **literacy needs assessment** is a systematic process that supports District teams in identifying, understanding, and prioritizing local literacy needs. It serves as a foundation for data-driven decision making that explores the unique context in which teaching and learning occur and clearly shows where the district will prioritize growth. You can begin by gathering information and data to understand literacy needs across your District and within each school. This enables District teams to identify gaps in literacy outcomes and clearly present a plan for filling those gaps.

Connection Spotlight

- [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit](#)
- [Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework](#)

Critical Actions

It is important to activate the LLP leadership team (or your equivalent existing team structure) to guide stakeholder engagement and conduct the needs assessment process. The three-step process for conducting a local literacy needs assessment will enable LLP leadership teams to (a) identify and collect data, (b) organize and analyze data, and (c) prioritize needs.

Step 1: Identify and Collect Data

Your first step is to identify and collect data (from both qualitative and quantitative sources) that will best support your District and schools in understanding the local literacy needs. You likely already have some types of data from your CIP or Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA). The [Vermont Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit](#) guides Districts in collecting data that fall into four categories: demographic data, student academic outcome data, school process data, and perception data. The data in each category are important to understand literacy needs and opportunities as described.

Demographic Data. Evidence related to student ethnicity, race, gender, grade level, attendance, and home language plus teacher retention and teacher experience.

Tools to collect these data include, for example, surveys, interviews, and applications.

Demographic data can help you understand (a) trends in the student population; (b) trends in educator retention, experience, and expertise that can inform professional development offerings; and (c) the quantity and quality of professional learning that staff have engaged in about evidence-based literacy practices.

Student Academic Outcome Data. Evidence related to students' learning that shows the standards-based knowledge, skills, and understandings that students have achieved in the areas of alphabetic knowledge, concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, speaking, and listening.

Tools to collect these data include student work products, curriculum-embedded tasks, universal assessments (screeners, interim assessments, benchmark assessments), formative assessments, summative assessments, diagnostic assessments, and progress monitoring. For additional guidance, use these guiding documents from AOE: [*Strengthening and Streamlining Vermont Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Defining Essential Components*](#) and [*LCAS Appendix B—English Language Arts and Literacy Assessment Summaries, Strengths, and Limitations*](#).

Student academic outcome data can help you understand (a) specific standards-based knowledge and skills that need improvement: alphabetic knowledge, concepts of print, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, writing, speaking, and listening; (b) achievement gaps between student groups; and (c) overall trends among the student body, grade bands, or classrooms.

School Process Data. Evidence that describes and assesses the quality of school processes and programs, including the use of evidence-based instructional practices; curriculum alignment to standards and research; vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment across grade bands; professional learning and participation; processes for evaluating staff, resource distribution, evaluating literacy program effectiveness, continuous improvement, and VTmtss implementation.

Tools and instruments to collect these data may include observations, checklists, process maps, team records, curriculum maps, scope and sequence documents and alignment to literacy research, professional learning plans, employee evaluation records, and other implementation tools that relate to the process data.

School process data can help you understand (a) opportunities to build the school walkthrough and observation routine and culture; (b) curriculum alignment to standards and research; (c) vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment across grades; (d) quality, relevance, and alignment of professional learning with research and curriculum; (e) how

needs-based professional development aligns with staff, student, and educator needs; and (f) integration of the evidence base and research into classroom practices.

Perception Data. Evidence that demonstrates educator, student, family, and community perceptions (beliefs, values, observations, attitudes) of the learning environment.

Tools and instruments to collect perception data include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations.

Perception data can help you understand (a) how members of the school community feel about the school community generally and literacy opportunities, (b) engagement of the community and families in literacy activities, (c) opportunities for the school community to engage in literacy programs, and (d) partnerships with regional employers focused on the skills of graduates.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What additional data do you need about current literacy practices across your District?
- What data exist already and what data need to be collected?
- How will you access data?
- Can you triangulate the different data types (demographic, student academic outcome, school process, and perception) to strategize and create a more nuanced understanding of local literacy needs?

Step 2: Organize and Analyze Data

You want to be sure that data are organized¹ and presented in a way that is easy to access, understand, and analyze. Furthermore, your data should be robust enough to offer data points on student outcomes, student demographics, and school context across time. Next, you will need a facilitator from the LLP leadership team. The facilitator should have a deep understanding of the data to facilitate a collaborative data analysis process to identify literacy improvement needs. Having a facilitator at this point is a requirement. The facilitator can help processes related to data organization and analysis actions:

- Review the raw data, determine the quality of the data, and organize the data.
- Conduct a high-level review of data, disaggregating by student groups and grade levels, and identify additional data to bring to the LLP leadership team. By reviewing academic outcome data, you may see a trend in literacy gaps for specific students, grades, or schools. Look for additional data that might help in understanding the context or conduct a root-cause analysis of these findings.

¹ Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). [Needs assessment guidebook](#). U.S. Department of Education.

- Cross-reference or triangulate multiple sources across a given topic to ensure reliable interpretation of your data.
- Organize your data by developing common file naming conventions. Use headers on the document. Label charts and graphs.
- Create visuals, such as charts, tables, and graphs.
- Explore collaborative data inquiry, interpretation, and analysis facilitation protocols.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- Is core (Tier I) reading instruction meeting the needs of most students?
- Are students performing at the expected levels in specific areas of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, oral language development, writing, speaking, and listening)?
- In what general area(s) are your outcomes not meeting the leadership team's shared expectations?
- How familiar are leadership team participants with the data presented? Would the discussion benefit from more information or context?
- How does data analysis reflect the five opportunities of the goals of Act 173 for improving services for students who need additional support ([Using AOE Tools and Resources to Support Local-level Responses to Act 173](#)).
- Does data analysis consider data at the classroom or school level?

Step 3: Prioritize Needs

You may find that multiple needs emerge after analyzing the data. The team will narrow the list of needs to select key priorities.

- a. Identify priorities that are supported by quality data across multiple data sources or data points that can be triangulated, bringing these priorities together.
- b. Consider findings or themes based on a single source of data or a data point.
- c. Consider how needs you have identified affect one another. Determine which needs represent either short- or long-term goals.
- d. Prioritize needs that provide you with a “quick win” (involving small actions so that you can tackle more challenging needs).
- e. Gather input from internal District or school stakeholders to consider a reasonable number of priorities for the LLP. Internal District stakeholders should provide their input on what priorities are realistic and achievable.
- f. Conduct a root-cause analysis of the prioritized needs; you can connect the prioritized needs to the development of your literacy goals and the selection of appropriate evidence-based practices. You can review the [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit](#), which provides guidance on root-cause analysis.
- g. Use your prioritized needs and root causes to develop and implement your LLP, which includes goal setting and selecting evidence-based practices, how they will be implemented, and how improvement will be monitored and evaluated.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What unmet student needs have you uncovered, and which are the most important to address?
- Have all teachers received training and coaching in assessment and instruction practices?
- Are instruction and intervention being implemented as intended?
- Are assessments accurately identifying students who need additional supports or acceleration?
- What priority needs from implementing Act 173 system levers have emerged?
- What findings or themes have emerged that, if addressed, will have the greatest potential for impact on student outcomes?
- How many priorities will a given school or District address simultaneously?

Develop an Asset Map

As part of the self-assessment process, an **asset map** identifies local (school and community) resources and investments (old and new) and partners (individuals or organizations) required to inform the development and implementation of the LLP.

Asset mapping becomes the basis for strong literacy program planning and will help you identify what strengths, knowledge, skills, and resources people bring; discover key assets in the community that can support your work; expand resources available for implementing your LLP; and build broad support for your LLP.

As a tool, asset mapping will help you plan for how best to use resources and explore community assets. It provides a starting point for building comprehensive and effective partnerships and creating sustainable implementation of your LLP.² Asset mapping promotes community collaboration by better aligning programs and services for students and families.³

Critical Actions

Asset mapping will enable LLP leadership teams to (a) identify local and statewide assets, (b) involve partners, (c) organize assets, (d) create an asset map, and (e) connect and apply the knowledge.

Step 1. Identify Local and Statewide Assets

Consider access to local and statewide assets or resources that can contribute to your literacy priorities. This process is important because some assets are not tied to a specific locality. Teacher preparation programs often are not highly geographically defined, and some assets are more directly controlled by state-level policies and decisions than others.

² [Building from strength: Asset-based approaches. \(n.d.\)](#). Minnesota Literacy Council & AmeriCorps VISTA.

³ Minnesota Department of Education. (n.d.). [Asset mapping](#). (Search for Asset Mapping to download a PDF.)

Step 2. Involve Partners

Asset mapping requires bringing various partners together. You are encouraged to bring together a group of stakeholders, in addition to the LLP leadership team, to conduct the process. Stakeholders could include District and school staff, community members and organizations, family members, and program providers. This group can be one larger group or several smaller groups of stakeholders. Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to reflect all constituents in your District.

Step 3. Organize the Assets

An asset or resource is anything that improves the implementation of your LLP. Each District has distinct assets that can be adapted and built on. Determine which assets you can use to support the implementation of your LLP. Begin by organizing internal assets, such as personnel and existing programs and services in your District. Then include external community and statewide resources, such as the following: (a) the capacities and abilities of community members; (b) a physical structure or place, including, for example, libraries, museums, and centers that support afterschool and summer learning; (c) a business that could support your LLP; (d) local, private, public, and nonprofit institutions or organizations; (e) teacher preparation programs; and (f) professional learning organizations, which also may be outside the state.

Organize the assets by identifying the types of services, resources, skills provided, and the location of the asset. Color coding the different types of assets will make understanding your assets much easier.

Step 4. Create an Asset Map

The asset map will serve as an important visual aid that highlights all the available resources within your community. It also will help you explore these assets in detail and share this information with other community members. Summarize key points about what the asset map reveals. Assets can be displayed in a variety of ways, such as a visual map, a graphic organizer, a comprehensive list, and photography. After completing the asset map, you can use it to plan and support the implementation of your LLP. Display your asset map where it can be easily accessed and modified.

Step 5. Connect and Apply the Knowledge

Creating an asset map is about building relationships while sharing knowledge. Use the knowledge you have obtained to enhance both relationships and your LLP.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What assets are underused?
- What resources could be included in your literacy activities that are not currently included?
- Where are the most obvious assets or resource gaps, and how might they be filled?
- How will you apply this knowledge to your shared vision?
- How will you apply this knowledge to build and strengthen literacy in your district and community?
- What will you do with the information you have discovered?



Implementation Tools

- [A Practical Framework for Building a Data-Driven District or School](#) and [Data Wise](#) will support teams with developing data literacy.
- [Looking at Data Sets: A Collaborative Inquiry and Problem Solving Protocol](#) guides teams in interpreting and reviewing data.
- [School Community Assets Map, Connecting School Communities, and Student Capacities—Implementation Tools for Educators and School Leaders](#) illustrate the asset mapping process.
- [Connecting the Dots: Expanding Your Reach With Asset Mapping](#) [Slide 6] provides an example of an asset map for family literacy.

Stage 2: Local Literacy Planning

This stage includes using or applying the information from your literacy needs assessment and asset mapping to (a) create a literacy vision statement, (b) develop SMART goals, (c) select evidence-based practices, and (d) develop an implementation plan.

After completing this planning process, you will have completed the development of your LLP. Please find a template for completing your LLP in Appendix C.

Create a Literacy Vision Statement

A compelling vision statement helps stakeholders such as District leaders, school leaders, and teams—including teachers, community members, parents, and caregivers—to understand what you are trying to achieve in literacy teaching and learning. This common understanding sets learning expectations, puts everyone on the same page, gives the team a vision to work toward, and serves as a compass to guide the implementation of your LLP.

Critical Actions

1. Identify connections between your CIP and literacy improvement to support the development of a shared vision statement that connects to other improvement initiatives.
2. Brainstorm what students, teachers, and administrators would be doing if your literacy improvement efforts were successful.
3. Identify PreK–3 literacy practices and consider practices beyond Grade 3.
4. Write your shared vision statement based on inputs from the first three actions on the LLP template. The following are sample vision statements. More examples are in the resources in the Implementation Tools section.

Sample Early Literacy Sample Vision Statements

- At Cloud Elementary School, we provide an integrated early literacy experience in which students can see themselves (mirrors) and learn about the world (windows) through literacy. Teachers provide the necessary tools using a science-based approach to ensure that students will be proficient in foundational skills by the time they leave second grade to become successful global citizens in the 21st century.
- At Button County Schools, we believe that highly effective instruction that incorporates professional learning based on foundational skills prepares all students to succeed in reading and writing. This instructional approach, along with our commitment to fostering a positive learning environment, will enable students to be excited, confident, and on grade level when they leave second grade so that they can continue on the trajectory of being successful in school.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What are your district's common beliefs and goals on literacy teaching and learning?
- Are all leaders, teachers, students, and families included in your vision?
- How does your vision connect to your priorities and other improvement plans?
- How does it connect to your District's vision on evidence-based literacy instruction?



Implementation Tools

The [Vermont Shared Vision Worksheet](#) is a worksheet for developing or revising a shared vision that represents the common beliefs, values, and goals of all stakeholders.

[Early Literacy Sample Visions](#) provide sample visions for early literacy along with a sample roles and responsibilities chart to implement the essential elements of effective vision setting.

[Three Ways a Vision Statement Can Transform Early Elementary Reading](#) discusses how vision setting as a leadership practice can improve K–2 reading.

[Sample Instructional Vision Statements](#) provide real-life examples of how some districts clearly present their vision for instruction in specific content areas, including English language arts.

Develop SMART Goals

During the literacy needs assessment process, you identified and prioritized needs. Now use your prioritized needs to develop SMART goals that will help you achieve your vision.

Critical Actions

1. Write your SMART goals based on your prioritized needs from your literacy needs assessment (see Stage 1), being sure to make them SMART goals. Your goals should be free from jargon and limit acronym use. Use simple, clear language.

SMART goals are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound and answer the following questions:

- ✓ *What are you trying to accomplish?*
- ✓ *For whom?*
- ✓ *By how much?*
- ✓ *By when?*

2. Develop SMART goals that correspond with the four system levers associated with Act 173: District [ESTs](#), [coordinated curriculum](#), [local comprehensive assessment system](#), and [needs-based professional learning](#) (see also [Using AOE Tools and Resources to Support Local-Level Responses to Act 173](#)).
3. Develop a limited number of goals to address your prioritized needs. Consider your local context and what you can accomplish.
4. Enter your completed SMART goal statements into the LLP template found in Appendix C.



Connection Spotlight

You are already familiar with writing SMART goals from your [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit](#) and the [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\) Toolkit](#).



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- Develop SMART goals based on your literacy needs assessment.
 - How do your goals focus on changes that alter the identified priority needs?
 - How do your goals support your vision for literacy teaching and learning?
- Develop goals that will make a positive difference for all student learning.
 - How do your goals align to your priority needs related to the Act 173 system levers?
 - How are your goals embedded into your continuous improvement plan?
 - How are your goals student centered and meaningful to your context?
 - How do your goals connect to Grades 4–12 and postsecondary college and career readiness?

Examples of SMART Goals

- The percentage of third-grade students who scored on grade level on the statewide summative assessment will increase from 42% in 2022–23 to 55% on the fourth-grade assessment in 2024–25.
- By the end of 2024, all K–2 teachers will implement differentiated small-group instruction based on data as measured by observation checklists.
- By the end of 2023, all schools will install systems and processes to support the implementation of a multitiered system of supports to provide opportunities for all students to improve literacy outcomes as monitored by the VTmtss screener survey.

Exhibit 2 is a sample you can follow in your SMART goal development.

Exhibit 2. Sample SMART Goal and Outline

This outline follows the LLP template.

SMART Goal 1

By the end of 2024, all K–2 teachers will implement evidence-based practices that include six components of reading instruction.

Evidence-Based Practices to Achieve the Goal

- Provide job-embedded professional development for school leaders on classroom observation and documentation of evidence-based literacy practices.
- Provide job-embedded professional learning on evidence-based literacy practices for classroom teachers.
- Analyze school-level data from monthly classroom observations of evidence-based practices to inform needs-based professional learning.
- Provide job-embedded professional development for school leadership teams on the use of formative assessments to inform literacy instruction.

Timeline to Accomplish the Tasks: Midterm 2024–25 school year

Measures of Success: Documentation of need-based professional development provided, on-site classroom observations and monitoring checklists, formative assessment data

Check-in/Review Date: Quarterly (every 9 weeks)

Course Correction Identified (if any/applicable)

- **Resources Required to Achieve the Goal (human, material, and fiscal resources):** District personnel, budgeted time for professional development, redirect of direct resources to meet goals
- **Lead Person(s) Responsible:** District superintendents and staff

**Implementation Tools**

- [Writing SMARTIE goals](#) provides an equity approach to writing productive SMART goals.
- [Objectives and Goals: Writing Meaningful Goals and SMART Objectives](#) provides guidance on considering equity while writing meaningful SMART goals.

Select Evidence-Based Practices

After completing your literacy SMART goals, you can plan evidence-based literacy practices for each goal. Evidence-based practices are informed and supported by rigorous research that demonstrates consistent, positive impacts on student outcomes.⁴

Your evidence-based practices should link directly to your SMART goals, which correspond to the four levers associated with effective Act 173 implementation: [ESTs](#), [coordinated curriculum](#), [local comprehensive assessment system](#), and [needs-based professional learning](#).



Implementation Tools

- ❑ [An LEA or School Guide for Identifying Evidence-Based Interventions for School Improvement](#) helps local education agencies (LEAs) or schools carefully consider the evidence supporting intervention options.
- ❑ [Evidence-Based Improvement: A Guide for States to Strengthen Their Frameworks and Supports Aligned to the Evidence Requirements of ESSA](#) provides tools to help states and school districts understand and plan for implementing evidence-based improvement practices.
- ❑ [Evidence for ESSA](#) identifies the level of evidence found for specific reading intervention programs for students in elementary, middle, and high school and English learners.
- ❑ The [What Works Clearinghouse](#) (WWC) guides users in identifying interventions, programs, policies, and practices that have been shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Critical Actions

1. Select and prioritize evidence-based practices that are explicit and describe the tasks and events to make them successful. You can refer to the *Connection Spotlight* on evidence-based practices for help with selecting these practices.
2. Prioritize by ranking your evidence-based practices in how effective they are likely to be (in terms of the number of students affected) and how difficult they will be to implement (in terms of skill needed and resource constraints).⁵

⁴ Garcia, A., & Davis, E. (2019). [ESSA action guide: Selecting evidence-based practices for low-performing schools](#). American Institutes for Research.

⁵ Kang, H. (n.d.). [School improvement planning guide](#). District of Columbia, Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

3. Focus on evidence-based practices that integrate explicit instruction of foundational reading skills, including phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, reading comprehension, and print concepts; spelling; writing development and skills; speaking and listening development and skills; and language development and skills.
4. Include professional development and coaching to support the implementation of evidence-based practices.
5. Focus on high-leverage changes that affect the standard work/processes within your context. For each evidence-based strategy, include a
6. realistic timeline with dates for implementation of each strategy; the lead person(s) responsible; and the human, material, and fiscal resources.
Enter your information along with the
7. evidence-based practices into the LLP template (Appendix C) when they are completed.



Connection Spotlight

The [National Center on Improving Literacy](#) provides evidence-based practices, tools, and resources for states, districts and schools, and parents and families.

The [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#) provides guidance on identifying intervention tools, resources, materials, example lessons, and evidence-based programs.

Considerations for inclusion and equity:

Keys to Literacy Resources

- [Literacy and Equity in Education](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction](#)

Vermont AOE

[English Language Arts: Spotlight on Equity Resources](#)

Examples of Practices to Ensure Implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in Classrooms

- Schedule and offer to all teachers across the district regular professional development on evidence-based practices in differentiated instruction and assessment to ensure a common, consistent teacher knowledge base on the five components of reading instruction.
- Analyze school-level data across the district from monthly classroom observations of use of evidence-based practices.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What is the relationship between your evidence-based practices and SMART goals?
- What research and/or data are you using to justify your decisions?
- How do your evidence-based practices promote culturally responsive practices, equitable opportunities, and access to learning?
- How do your practices align with Grades 4–12 and postsecondary college and career readiness?
- How do your practices support needs-based professional learning?
- What changes can you make that will result in achieving your literacy goals?
- Do your practices reflect systemic changes that could improve performance across classrooms and schools?
- How will families and the community be involved?
- Which evidence-based practices, assets, and resources will maximize your efforts to advance students' proficiency in literacy?



Implementation Tools

- [Implementing Evidence-Based Literacy Practices](#) was developed by Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast in collaboration with the Institute of Education Sciences to help state education agencies and LEAs implement evidence-based literacy practices.
- [Transforming Strategic Plans Into Results: A K-12 Action Planning Toolkit](#) (pp. 6–7) provides a resource for action planning and sample templates to guide planning.
- [VT AOE evidence-based practice resources](#) provide practice guides on evidence-based literacy practices that were developed and recommended by a panel of literacy experts.

Develop an Implementation Plan

After selecting your goals and evidence-based literacy practices, you are now ready to develop an implementation plan. This plan will help you determine how your changes resulted in literacy improvements. Knowing when a change is an improvement entails developing the measures and specific data that will be used to determine results. You can monitor the progress toward the expected goals using evidence to support your stated progress. The plan will help you reflect on successes and course-correct your LLP as needed.

Setting the Conditions for Success

Before developing your measures of success,⁶ you will need to consider a few steps. Progress toward each short- and long-term goal is monitored across time. A District team also engages in continuous reflection and improvement based on ongoing progress toward these goals. Teams should first agree on a process and timeline for monitoring progress.

- Define what success would look like. Be specific. Being specific increases the chance that you can assess results and make progress with your literacy improvements.
- Choose the types of measures of success; then decide how and when you will collect them and what tools you will use for collecting data.
- Develop a plan for analyzing and reviewing data to monitor progress toward goals.
- Consider how you will know that the change is an improvement.

Critical Actions

The following additional critical actions will help you develop your measures of success to determine if your evidence-based practices will result in improvements.

1. Identify measures of success for each evidence-based literacy practice.
2. Ensure that measures are valid (measuring what they intended to measure); include demographic, academic, process, and perception data; and specify measurement instruments and tools.
3. Determine what type(s) of measurement data you will use to determine if each change was an improvement and to monitor the progress of each evidence-based literacy practice. Depending on your evidence-based literacy practices, you can use
 - local/state student assessment data,
 - interviews,
 - observation checklists,
 - surveys, and
 - informal walk-through observations.



Connection Spotlight

You might be familiar with describing measures and data collection tools while conducting your continuous improvement process planning. These Vermont resources can help you build on their planning processes when determining measures of success.

- [Comprehensive Needs Assessment Toolkit](#) (p. 36)
- [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\) Toolkit](#)



Connection Spotlight

[Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework: Research, Resources, and Support for Continuous Improvement Planning](#)

⁶ Adapted from Meltzer, J., & Jackson, D. (2010). [Guidelines for developing an effective district literacy action plan](#). Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

4. Establish a monitoring plan by describing how progress toward each goal and evidence-based strategy will be monitored.
5. Determine how and how often you will communicate and report the progress and activities of the LLP to stakeholders. Enter your measures of success and plan for monitoring and reporting on the LLP template (Appendix C).



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- How often will your team monitor progress?
- What evidence will you collect of your progress?
- How will you know you are on or off track toward meeting your long-term goal?
- If you are off track, what will you do?
- What are your interim benchmarks?
- What might you do to course-correct if you are not on track to meet your long-term goals according to the benchmarks established?
- What are the implementation expectations of schools?
- To successfully communicate and monitor this literacy plan, what are some other school initiatives and plans to which you should be sure to connect? Consider your CIP, cross-curricular connections, community programs, and alignment across schools within the system.
- How will you communicate the plan to families and community members?



Implementation Tools

- The [School Planning Guide](#) provides practical resources and tools that Districts can use to develop an implementation plan.
- [Deep Dive Into Principle #8 of the CCSSO Principles of Effective School Improvement Systems](#) shows how to establish clear expectations and report progress on short- and long-term benchmarks that focus on equity and excellence.

Stage 3: Implementation and Continuous Improvement of Your LLP

You have developed an LLP. Now it is time to put your implementation plan into action. This stage provides guidance to support high-quality implementation of your LLP through ongoing progress monitoring and data-informed decision making. High-quality implementation and continuous improvement include (a) providing professional development, (b) assessing and monitoring progress, and (c) making adjustments.

Providing Professional Development

Building the knowledge and skills of educators and leaders is critical to ensuring successful implementation of your LLP. Providing professional development and coaching will help prepare educators and leaders with implementing evidence-based practices, including culturally responsive learning.

Critical Actions

1. Provide ongoing professional development and coaching to support the implementation of evidence-based practices in your District.
2. Implement evidence-based practices.

Assessing and Monitoring Progress

Teams should use data to assess and monitor progress toward goals. This process includes assessing the quality of implementation and identifying problems to inform decision making. Through continuous improvement, teams can focus on creating equitable outcomes for all students.

Critical Actions

LLPs (especially SMART goals) need to be reviewed regularly throughout the year in addition to annually. The continuous improvement process includes examining how your evidence-based practices are addressing your SMART goals in moving toward improvement. Amid multiple continuous improvement models, you are probably most familiar with the PDSA process. By applying a similar process to your LLP SMART goals, district leaders can do the following:

1. Identify and address gaps in student literacy achievement and ensure that all students have access to the supports and resources needed to acquire proficiency in literacy.⁷
2. Ensure that students receive high-quality literacy instruction.

⁷ Adapted from Courtney, M. B. (2023). [Striving for excellence: The importance of continuous improvement in education.](#)

3. Establish a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration.

Making Adjustments

Teams can use the data from progress monitoring to determine their progress toward meeting their literacy goals. In this way, teams can decide to course correct by making adjustments if needed.

Critical Actions

1. Make adjustments as needed based on progress monitoring data to improve implementation and ensure fidelity.
2. Repeat the continuous improvement process to improve implementation and ensure fidelity for monitoring and reporting on the LLP template.



Considerations and Guiding Questions

- What professional learning needs to happen?
- Do you have a plan for professional learning and coaching support?
- Was the change an improvement?
- What is not working? Why not?
- What adjustments do you need to make?
- How will you allocate resources and provide professional development to ensure implementation fidelity?



Implementation Tools

- [Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework: Research, Resources, and Support for Continuous Improvement Planning](#) provides resources, information, and strategies for continuous improvement.
- [The Active Implementation Hub](#) provides free online tools for implementation and scaling up of programs and innovations.
- The [Plan-Do-Study-Act \(PDSA\) Toolkit](#) is part of the Education Quality and Continuous Improvement Framework and is a model for continuous improvement that involves planning and testing agreed-on changes.

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VT AOE Internal Act 28 Literacy Group and representatives from Districts and literacy coordinators

Resources

[Asset-Based Community Development \(ABCD\) Institute](#). This website features the work of ABCD in providing support for community asset mapping as well as resources and tools.

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- Shakman, K., Wogan, D., Rodriguez, S., Boyce, J., & Shaver, D. (2020). [Continuous improvement in education: A toolkit for schools and districts.](#) U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast & Islands.
- UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. (n.d.). [Section 1: Asset mapping.](#)
- Vermont Agency of Education. (2019). [A blueprint for early literacy comprehensive system of services, PK through third grade.](#)
- Vermont Agency of Education. (n.d.). [Comprehensive needs assessment toolkit: A resource for Vermont schools and school systems engaged in the first phase of continuous improvement planning.](#)
- Vermont Agency of Education. (2019). [Educational support teams in school district systems: Act 173 technical guidance.](#)
- Vermont Agency of Education. (n.d.). [Vermont multi-tiered system of supports framework tools.](#)

Appendix A

Education Acronyms

CNA = comprehensive needs assessment

CIP = continuous improvement plan

ELA = English language arts

EST = educational support team

LEA = local education agency

LLP = local literacy plan

PDSA = Plan-Do-Study-Act (cycle)

R1CC = Region 1 Comprehensive Center

SEA = state education agency

SMART = specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound

SU = supervisory union (referred to as District in the Playbook)

SD = supervisory district (referred to as District in the Playbook)

Vermont Agency of Education = VT AOE or AOE

Vermont Literacy Playbook = Playbook

VTmtss = Vermont Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

WWC = What Works Clearinghouse

Appendix B

Terms and definitions

Articulated = well formulated; clearly presented

Asset or resource = anyone or anything that improves the implementation of an LLP

Asset map = a tool that identifies local resources and investments

Blueprint = shortened reference to the Vermont state literacy plan titled *Blueprint for Early Literacy Comprehensive System of Services, PreK Through Third Grade*

District = shortened version to refer to supervisory unions/supervisory districts

External assets = community and statewide resources

Internal assets = personnel and existing programs and services

Leverage = Use something to maximum advantage

Self-assessment = a data-driven decision-making process

Stakeholders = individuals or groups of individuals who have an interest in literacy outcomes (e.g., administrators, teachers, parents and caregivers, community members and leaders, school and District leaders, school board members, District literacy leaders, reading specialists, and others)

Strategy = a plan to achieve intended outcomes

Strategize = to plan for

Triangulate = to use multiple methods to increase the credibility and reliability of research

Appendix C

Local Literacy Plan (LLP) Template

Please find a standalone LLP template to download on the [AOE website](#).

Directions for Using This Template for LLP Development

Please use this template to record the final LLP for your District. You can add more SMART goals to the template.

1. List the names of the contributors to the LLP plan.
2. Record your District’s literacy vision.
3. List your prioritized SMART goals.
4. Record the priority levers associated with ACT 173 implementation that your evidence-based practice is addressing: [educational support teams](#), [coordinated curriculum](#), [local comprehensive assessment system](#), and [needs-based professional learning](#).
5. Provide an evidence-based practice(s) to address each SMART goal.
6. Include a realistic timeline with dates for implementation of each evidence-based practice; the lead person(s) responsible; and human, material, and fiscal resources.
7. Record the specific measures/indicators for determining success and the date of completion.
8. Record interim benchmarks for progress monitoring and the date of completion.

District Name:

District LLP Contact Name:

SD/SU LLP Contact Email:

Created on:

Last revised on:

Contributors List the names and roles of all individuals involved in the development of the LLP.

| Name | Job title/organization or group represented |
|------|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

District Literacy Vision

SMART Goal 1:

Evidence-Based Practices to Achieve the Goal:

Timeline to Accomplish the Tasks:

Measures of Success/Key Indicators to Monitor Progress:

Check-in/Review Date:

Course Correction Identified (if any/applicable):

Resources Required to Achieve the Goal (human, material, and fiscal resources):

Lead Person(s) Responsible:

SMART Goal 2:

Evidence-Based Practices to Achieve the Goal:

Timeline to Accomplish the Tasks:

Measures of Success/Key Indicators to Monitor Progress:

Check-in/Review Date:

Course Correction Identified (if any/applicable):

Resources Required to Achieve the Goal (human, material, and fiscal resources):

Lead Person(s) Responsible:

The [standalone template](#) that you can download and complete includes space for up to 8 SMART goals.