

Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program

The Literacy Challenge

Literacy is one of the most critical components of academic success, but the majority of students are leaving high school without the reading and writing skills needed to succeed in college and a career. According to ACT, fewer than 40% of black and Latino students are ready for college level reading when they graduate high school.ⁱ

The Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program

To address the nation's literacy challenge, the Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) Program supports state-wide, research-based literacy instruction and interventions supporting students from early childhood through high school. In FY2010 states received modest formula funding to support state-wide planning, and the majority of SRCL funds have been distributed to states through a competitive process. States that received competitive funding will award sub-grants to local school districts to provide students with explicit, systematic, and developmentally appropriate instruction in reading and writing, including vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and the use of diverse texts.

A total of \$183 million in FY 2010 discretionary grants were awarded to Georgia, Louisiana, Montana, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Texas to implement their literacy plans. SRCL was eliminated in FY 2011 and was restored to \$160 million in FY 2012. In FY 2013 the SRCL program was level funded; however sequestration brings funding down to \$151,664.

State SRCL Implementation*

Georgia (\$27,000,000): The state of Georgia is implementing a Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy project consistent with the Georgia State Literacy Plan that concentrates funding and technical support in the neediest schools. Funding will allow Georgia to leverage the state infrastructure built during Reading First, enact lessons learned nationally through Early Reading First, provide comprehensive professional learning for teachers of adolescents for the first time, and equip classrooms of children living in poverty with extensive literacy resources. Project objectives include developing a system for providing evidence-based professional learning at all levels, ensuring that teachers use data to provide instruction targeted to the needs of students, and implementing technology applications that enhance instruction and support student engagement with text.

The project will entail three staggered cohorts, each consisting of one urban district, two suburban, and six rural—27 local education agencies (LEAs) in all. It is estimated that 8,850 teachers and 177,000 students will participate. Each LEA will receive full funding in year one, partial funding in year two, and minimal funding in year three. Year three funding will include costs associated with data collection and the evaluation of the project. Graduated funding will ensure their continuation with local funds.

Professional learning (PL) for administrators, teachers, early childhood providers, and parents will be vertically articulated and consistent with research. It will combine knowledge building and book studies with curriculum supports so that teachers can learn through scaffolded use of high-quality print and electronic texts provided through the project. PL for teachers will be collaborative and ongoing, building LEA structures for continuous teacher collaboration. A major focus of PL will be using data to inform instruction. LEAs will provide assurances and leadership for teachers to enact tiered instruction that will be supported through project curriculum resources. Introduction of computer-adaptive testing for English language learners and for adolescents will help teachers move from the requirements of existing state standards to the Common Core standards. Electronic test reporting will allow the state to build LEA capacity to interpret data and use it for goal setting and for tracking progress toward goals. The project

evaluation will provide both formative and summative assessment information about teacher learning and student achievement.

Louisiana (\$29,994,028): Project objectives and activities: In a state with one of the highest child poverty rates, Louisiana's students are among the most disadvantaged in the nation. Literacy Is for Everyone (LIFE) Promise represents Louisiana's plan to effectively ensure these children receive effective literacy instruction.

Built upon research-based best practices and modeled after the state's highly successful K-12 Pilot, LIFE Promise will meet the following objectives: 1) improve school readiness and success through grade 12 in the area of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students; 2) enable data-based decision-making to improve instructional practices, policies, and outcomes for all students, ensuring disadvantaged students receive maximum benefits; and 3) use technology to address student learning challenges to increase student engagement and achievement, and to increase teacher effectiveness, ensuring the needs of disadvantaged populations are particularly addressed.

LIFE Promise will advance and implement the Louisiana Comprehensive Literacy Plan (LACLIP). LACLIP is a framework for comprehensive and cohesive literacy instruction beginning at birth and ensuring the best literacy outcomes for Louisiana's students through 12th grade. The plan outlines clear, measurable steps for building effective literacy instruction from birth and is supported by high-quality professional development. Data-driven decision-making is integral to every component of the plan, and technologies to support student engagement and teacher effectiveness are clearly outlined in every phase of the plan serving every age level from birth to 12th grade.

The State will fund subgrantees who propose implementation of LACLIP in a feeder system, identifying a cluster of early childhood education providers and schools that are likely to serve the same children as they progress through their education. The goal is to create a replicable model providing a continuum of literacy instruction with a commitment to shared responsibility for ensuring literacy development for each child from birth through 12th grade. Successful subgrantees will demonstrate inclusion of the greatest number of disadvantaged students, incorporation of families into literacy activities, and active partnerships with community-based resources to support children and families. The project will serve an estimated 40,000 children during the first full year and at least 60,000 in the second, with increases of 5,000 children in subsequent years. The project will serve 26-31 LEA-led cluster groups which will be determined specifically through the subgrant application process. Through LIFE Promise, one-third to one-half of the State's LEAs, including charters, will successfully implement a cohesive and coherent evidence-based literacy plan serving children from birth to 12th grade.

Montana (\$7,998,104): Montana's work addresses the Secretary's absolute and competitive priorities for improving learning outcomes, enabling more data-based decision making, and effectively using technology. All proposed activities are informed by careful analysis of data and supported through connected professional development. Through the MT Literacy Plan, the Montana Striving Reader's Project (MSRP) is committed to dramatically improving literacy achievement for all students, especially disadvantaged students, and to providing support systems for all subgrantee LEAs (district-operated K-12 schools and special education preschools) and Head Start programs. Through a collaborative process, six teams will ensure that comprehensive, effective literacy instruction based on evidence and ongoing data analysis will be effectively implemented. The Implementation Teams will coordinate implementation of project goals in the LEAs and Head Start programs. The Statewide Teams will continually evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation and continually provide the support and resources necessary for increased outcomes, and sharing of resources with all LEAs and Head Start programs throughout

Montana. The MT Office of Public Instruction Implementation Team will oversee all six teams and the entire MSRP.

The MSRP is anticipating awarding between 25 and 35 subgrant sites located throughout the State benefiting over 8,000 children and youth and 500 teachers. The eligible subgrantees are located throughout MT from Lame Deer to Libby. From previous subgrant experiences (Reading First and Response to Intervention Project), we anticipate LEAs and Head Start programs scattered throughout the state with numerous on or near the seven Indian Reservations.

Nevada (\$15,000,000): On January 8, 2011, Nevada convened its first Nevada State Literacy Team. Over a two month period, 21 statewide literacy experts created and published the 2011 Nevada State Literacy Plan (NSLP). With this grant, the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) will transfer the literacy plan into action. Through a rigorous subgrant selection process open to eligible local education agencies (LEAs) and nonprofit early childhood education (ECE) providers, the NDE anticipates awarding three to 12 subgrants ranging from \$1 million to \$9 million per year per subgrant. The NDE will partner with subgrantees to provide services over five years to more than 400,000 Pre-K-12 children and 22,000 teachers with statewide intensive, individualized, cross-discipline literacy instruction, diverse professional development activities, training, technical assistance, networking, and peer coaching and support. The delivery of services will be aligned to the NSLP Six Essential Elements. Services will reach approximately 1,500 school administrators, literacy specialists, student support personnel, and librarians, as well as thousands of families to improve their own literacy and assist their children.

Project goals and objectives include:

- Pre-K students will demonstrate literacy achievement, including oral language development that will indicate data documented growth in all subpopulations.
- Students in grades K-5 will demonstrate improved literacy achievement that will indicate growth in all subpopulations.
- Students in grades 6-12 will demonstrate improved literacy achievement and an increased graduation rate of 5% over five years compared to baseline data.
- Teachers will annually participate in a minimum of three professional development events to become skilled in the use of instructional curriculum and materials aligned to the Common Core State Standards and incorporate the components of effective literacy instruction to support the needs of all students, including the socially and/or economically disadvantaged.
- Teachers will use valid and reliable assessments to identify (screen) and monitor progress of students in need of intervention or advanced enrichment.
- LEAs and schools will implement programs of intervention and enrichment that will increase by a minimum 10% over five years the number of students performing at, or above, grade level compared to 2010-11 baseline data.

Pennsylvania (\$40,000,000): Keystones to Opportunity: Pennsylvania's Vision for Sustainable Growth in Reading Achievement, expects to serve 50,000 students and 5,000 to 6,000 teachers from October, 2011 to September, 2016. The project is designed around three keystones. The first is to improve literacy learning outcomes and dramatically increase reading achievement among students in danger of academic failure birth through grade 12 in Pennsylvania. The second is to create a culture of data-driven decision making by supporting implementation of Bernhardt's Multiple Measures Data logic model at the state, regional, and local levels. The third is to infuse digital technology and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), providing teachers with examples of how technology tools can provide multiple pathways to express and represent information as well as creative options for developing literacy persistence, stamina, and motivation.

Project goals and objectives include:

- Align literacy instruction and state initiatives along the birth to Grade 12 continuum at and provide guidance to sub-grantees in aligning local literacy initiatives.
- Demystify the language and essential elements of effective literacy instruction, and mobilize all literacy stakeholders in support of improved literacy outcomes.
- Provide structures, supports, and tools for school leaders and teachers to use valid and reliable data to guide instructional decision making in language and literacy.
- Create 21st century literacy environments where children can acquire the reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language skills they need to succeed academically.
- Seed innovation by incentivizing and disseminating research-based literacy strategies that result in exceptional reading growth.

The project will provide innovations such as: LEAs partnering with early childhood education providers to develop a comprehensive and coherent literacy plan that spans birth through grade 12; annual data retreats for administrators and teachers, innovation incentive awards for high-performing subgrantees; confidential summative student data portals; and the use of the Standards Aligned System portal as a “one stop” for literacy support.

Two nationally respected organizations will collaborate on the Keystones to Opportunity project evaluation: The Collaborative for Evaluation and Assessment Capacity (CEAC) at the University of Pittsburgh and SAS EVAAS, Inc. for K-12. There are four dimensions to the evaluation plan, based on the Bernhardt’s logic model. Dimensions 1 and 2 are largely quantitative, focusing on demographics and student learning. SAS EVAAS, Inc. will take the lead on these two dimensions. Dimensions 3 and 4 are primarily qualitative and focus on school processes and perceptions. A mixed-method design enhances evaluation efforts and allows for data to be triangulated in order to test the consistency of findings, stimulate future research questions, and provide opportunities to expand upon trends and themes observed in evaluation findings.

Texas (\$70,000,000): The goal of the Texas Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Initiative (TSRCLI) is to improve school readiness and success in the areas of language and literacy for disadvantaged students in targeted school districts and their associated early childhood education (ECE) providers who will form Literacy Lines to implement the Texas State Literacy Plan (TSLP). Objectives are to (1) increase the oral language and pre-literacy skills of participating preschool children; (2) increase the performance of participating students in K-2 on early reading assessments; (3) increase the percentage of participating students who meet or exceed proficiency on the State English Language Arts assessments in grades 3-12; (4) increase the use of data to inform all decision-making in participating districts, campuses, classrooms, and early learning settings; and (5) increase the implementation of effective literacy instruction throughout Literacy Lines.

Priorities of the TSRCLI are to (1) improve school readiness and success from birth through grade 12 in the areas of language and literacy development for disadvantaged students, especially those who are living in poverty, are limited-English-proficient, or who have disabilities; (2) collect, analyze, and use high-quality, timely data to improve instructional practices, policies, and student outcomes at all State, LEA, campus, classroom, and early learning levels; and (3) foster technology-based, professional learning communities to increase teacher effectiveness and encourage the use of technology to support instruction for student access and engagement. Outcomes of the TSRCLI will consist of yearly progress for all subpopulations on each assessment measure. After three years of implementation, subgrantees will show significant progress and be performing at or above the state average for all subpopulations on each measure.

Texas will provide subgrants to targeted LEAs and their partnering early childhood education (ECE) partners who demonstrate the priority needs and are committed to improving student outcomes by (1) partnering with early childhood providers whose clients “feed into” the LEA student population to improve oral language and early literacy skills; (2) implementing the evidence-based practices of the Texas State Literacy Plan—leadership: assessment and data analysis: standards-based instruction: effective instructional framework: Response to Intervention (RtI); reporting and accountability; and sustainability, and (3) modeling effective practices for other LEAs in the state. TEA will select subgrantees based on priority need with thought given to geography, size, and demographic diversity.

*Source: U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Education, “Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Program,” <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders-literacy/awards.html> (accessed April 1, 2013).

For more information about the SRCL program or copies of SRCL Comprehensive Literacy Plans visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/strivingreaders-literacy/literacyprofiles.html>.

ⁱ ACT, *The Condition of College and Career Readiness* (Iowa City, IA: Author, 2011), www.act.org/readiness/2011 (accessed December 3, 2011).

April 12, 2013