



2016

K-12 Literacy Guiding Document

Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium



Advancing Students' Literacy Success

Committed to providing quality professional learning, the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) supports over 18 school districts and 13,000 educators as “*partners in adult learning for students' sake*”. The K-12 Literacy Guiding Document was written in response to district requests, and in collaboration with the Literacy Advisory Committee that supports the ERLC.

Approximately 250,000 students are enrolled in schools across the ERLC. Since literacy is a key factor in learning, how best do we equip all students? In our increasingly global society, literacy skills are foundational for students to function in society and fulfill their potential. Without proficient literacy skills, students will not have the basic tools to pursue their goals. They run the risk of poor health and safety, exclusion from civil activity, and financial well-being. The effects of low literacy are far-reaching.

“Literacy has become an essential part of the fabric of modern societies, a thread that links all aspects of life and living in our contemporary world. Its reach is extensive and complex.” (Canadian Council on Learning, 2007, p. 83)

The K-12 Literacy Guiding Document provides support for the development, planning, and teaching of literacy. Use the guiding questions as a starting point to engage in conversation for the purpose of achieving greater literacy success for all students.

I would like to thank the members of the ERLC Literacy Advisory Committee for the continued commitment to improving the professional capital of our staff.

Thérèse de Champlain-Good

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Guiding Questions



What is literacy?



Why do we need literacy?



Is literacy important at all grade levels?



How is literacy taught?



How can we support literacy instruction?



Who shares the responsibility for literacy learning?



How can districts "think literacy"?



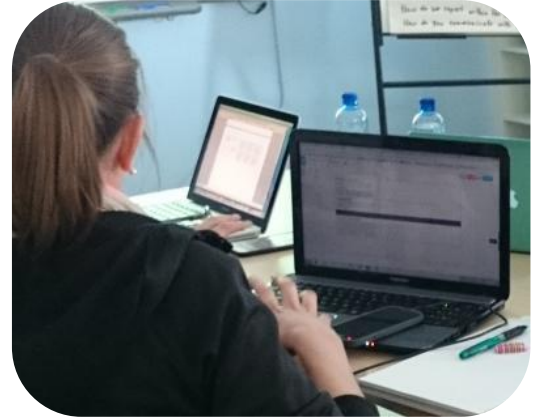
What is literacy?

What does it mean to be fully literate?

Alberta Education (2015) definition:

Literacy is the ability, confidence and willingness to engage with language* to acquire, construct and communicate meaning in all aspects of daily living.

*Language is a socially and culturally constructed system of communication



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supports various achievements and actions around the world. One major literacy initiative UNESCO led globally was the *United Nations Literacy Decade* (2003 - 2012) (UNLD). Using the slogan “Literacy as Freedom”, UNLD recognized that literacy is a basic human right. The UNLD described literacy as follows:

“Literacy is about more than reading and writing – it is about how we communicate in society. It is about social practices and relationships, about knowledge, language and culture.

Literacy... finds its place in our lives alongside other ways of communicating. Indeed, literacy itself takes many forms: on paper, on the computer screen, on TV, on posters and signs. Literacy can be connected to terms such as digital literacy, academic literacy, information literacy, visual literacy, cultural literacy, etc.

Those who use literacy take it for granted – but those who cannot use it are excluded from much communication in today’s world. Indeed, it is the excluded who can best appreciate the notion of “literacy as freedom”. (UNESCO, 2005)

What does a school staff need to know about the definition of Literacy?
Here are 2 video clips from Alberta Education and the accompanying learning guide.

http://erlc.ca/resources/resources/administrators_learning_guides/documents/literacy-learning-guide.pdf





Why do we need literacy?

Alberta students need many ways to discover the world and make sense of it. Literacy is considered:

- Foundational for learning
- Beneficial to individuals
- A factor in high school completion rates
- Influential to social and civic engagement
- A key set of skills and strategies needed for Alberta's economy



Alberta's Next Generation:

“In the Kindergarten to Grade 12 system, students need to develop a broad and deep range of literacy skills so they can have the literacy future they deserve, optimize their lifelong learning potential and become active, participating members of their communities and the wider society” (Alberta Education, 2010b, p. 1)

“Literacy is the foundation for continuous learning... [and] has benefits for individuals, society and the economy. Stronger literacy skills are associated with higher income, better health and greater social and civic engagement”
(Alberta Education 2010b, p.1)





Is literacy important at all grade levels?

Literacy transcends all subjects and grades. Students at every level focus on:

- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Motivation

Oral language also has an important role to play as it helps support learners as they think about texts across all curriculum areas. (Council of Ministers of Education, Key Factors to Support Literacy Success in School-Aged Population, 2009)

“It is now widely recognized that even skillful reading at early grade levels will not automatically translate into higher-level academic literacy” (Greenleaf et al. 2011,p.654).

There remains a strong “need for explicit reading instruction in both middle schools and secondary schools (Statistics Canada, 2009, p. 8)... Many of the students who reach secondary school have problems in comprehension, inadequate vocabulary, insufficient background knowledge, poor reading fluency, and little or no motivation to read. These students need to develop appropriate levels of proficiency to learn from the textbooks that include conceptual and technical language in the different curriculum areas. (Maughan, Hagell, Rutt er, and Yule1994; Knighton and Bussière 2006)

Biancarosa & Snow (2006) provide fifteen key recommendations for designing effective adolescent literacy programs. Some of their principal recommendations include:

- Explicit instruction
- Literacy practices embedded across the curriculum K-12
- Subject specific instruction (vocabulary, text features, and formats).
- Intensive writing





How is literacy taught?

Literacy is framed around seven key areas:

- Phonemic awareness (emerging readers)
- Phonics (emerging readers)
- Vocabulary /Word study
- Fluency
- Comprehension
- Writing
- Motivation



In a classroom, teachers should incorporate the following components in their literacy planning and programming:

- Use diagnostic assessments regularly; early identification of reading skills and areas for remediation is essential in supporting learners
- A belief that all learners can improve their reading skills – even older learners
- Design inclusive environments
- Address individual learner's needs
- Use diverse anchor texts (both narrative and expository) to frame lessons, model skills and guide strategy instruction
- Provide support before, during and after reading/writing
- Create authentic, engaging tasks
- Build in opportunities for small group instruction, collaboration and self-assessment
- Teach thinking processes explicitly
- Teach phonics and word study systematically
- Use graphic organizers, technology and other tools to support learners
- Provide extended, dedicated blocks of literacy time so student can hone their skills – practice, practice and practice!
- Incorporate literacy instruction across grades and content areas
- Help learners see themselves as readers and writers – the goal is for them to build confidence and develop *a love of literacy*

For more details regarding best practices in literacy instruction, see Appendix A.





“The goal of this Student Learning Ministerial Order for an inclusive Kindergarten to Grade 12 education is to enable all students to....
employ literacy and numeracy to construct and communicate
meaning; and discover, develop and apply competencies across
subject and discipline areas for learning, work, and life”
(Alberta Education, 2013b).

To see updated Literacy Progressions from Alberta Education, see Appendix B.

For further information regarding information focused on supporting all learners, explore the following websites:

<https://education.alberta.ca/inclusive-education/inclusive-education/everyone/overview/>

<https://education.alberta.ca/first-nations-métis-and-inuit-education/>

<http://literacyforallab.ca/>

<http://www.engagingalllearners.ca/>

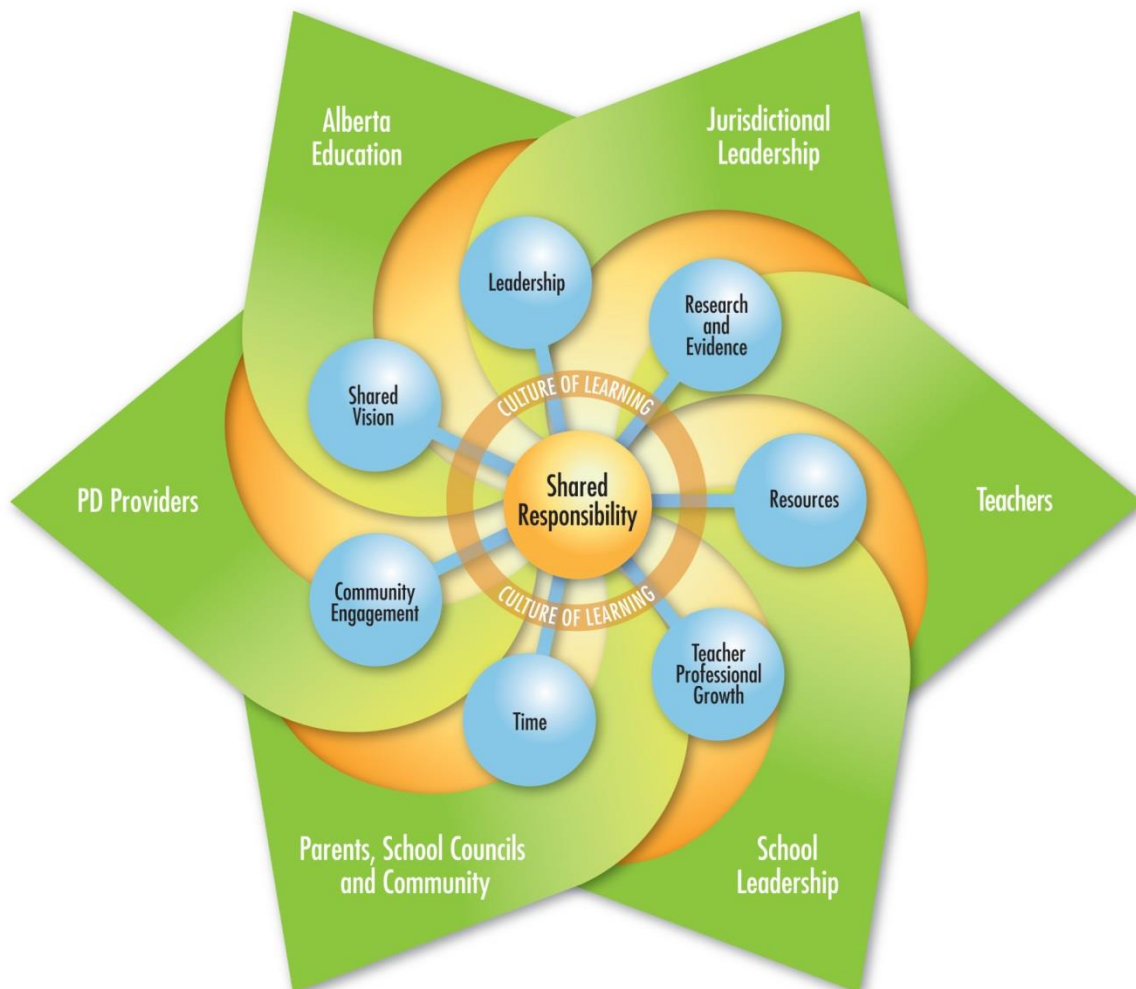




How can we support literacy instruction?

A key element to professional capacity-building needs to focus on “enhancing principals’ and teachers’ curriculum knowledge in literacy and numeracy... developing a range of effective instructional practices” (Campbell, Fullan & Snow, 2006, p.26). Paterson & Rolheiser. (2009) *13 Parameters: A Literacy Leadership Toolkit*

“Although schools and school authorities are critical builders of literacy” (Alberta, 2010b, p. 6), literacy learning is dynamic and interrelated. Successful implementation is possible in environments where education stakeholders are committed to sharing the responsibility within a culture of learning.

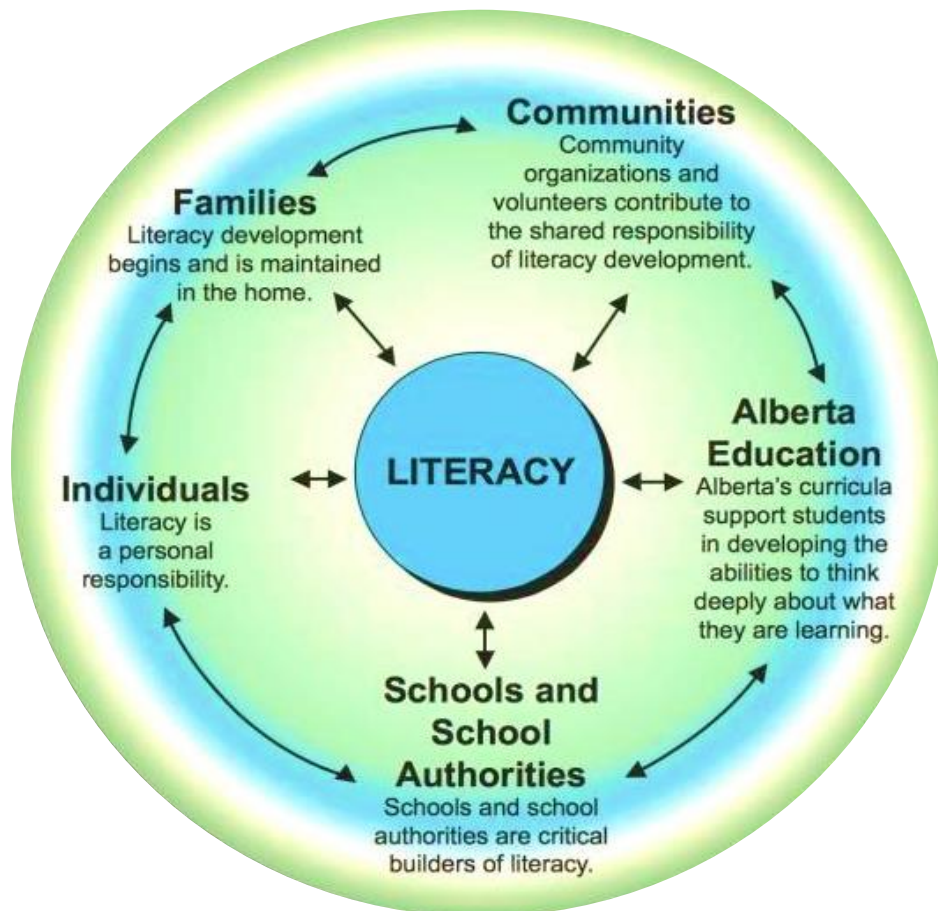




Who shares the responsibility for literacy learning?

Literacy is for all learners and is a shared responsibility with stakeholders working together:

- Students
- Educators
- Educational Assistants
- Administrators
- School Authorities
- Parents
- Communities



“By developing positive connections... a sense of common purpose was fostered.... A key element of building partnerships was to encourage positive and purposeful joint working with a shared responsibility for student achievement.” (Campbell, Fullan & Glaze, 2006, p.29)





How can districts "think literacy"?

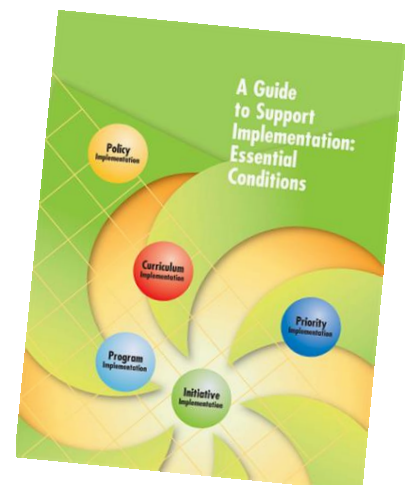
“Despite abundant evidence indicating its central importance, teacher expertise remains the most under-rated, under-recognized, and under-valued component of reading achievement.... Teachers cannot be expected to raise the bar and close the gaps in reading unless they are provided with appropriate and ongoing supports and resources” (Statistics Canada, 2009, p. 9)

1. Recognize that all teachers are teachers of literacy
2. Integrate literacy instruction in all grades and across subjects
3. Reinforce with all teachers that literacy skills need to be specifically taught.
4. Support teachers to work collaboratively to identify key literacy expectations and standards at each developmental level and to determine how they will scaffold learning.
5. Ensure schools have appropriate resources and the capacity to deliver quality literacy instruction.
6. Create a plan for intervention for children experiencing difficulties.

KEY PLANNING RESOURCES

Use the *Essential Conditions Implementation Planning Tool* and *A Guide to Support Implementation: Essential Conditions for Literacy Programming* to determine your district's literacy goals, needs and next steps.

<http://essentialconditions.ca/implementation-planning-tools/>





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Appendix A

Considerations for Literacy Instruction

5.1 Teachers use the Alberta Programs of Study, the <i>Ministerial Order on Student Learning</i>, and the <i>Learning and Technology Policy Framework</i> to guide their daily, unit, and year plans in order to meet the needs of diverse learners https://education.alberta.ca/media/1626588/ministerial-order-on-student-learning.pdf http://www.education.alberta.ca/admin/technology/policyframework/	Literacy plans reflect the Program of Studies, Ministerial Order, and Learning and Technology Policy Framework. Teachers have: • Year plans, • Unit plans, • Daily plans. • With assessment plans embedded Teachers have a clear understanding of outcomes: • Within their assigned grade(s), • In the grades below, • In the grades above, • In all subject areas Universal supports are in place (e.g. word wall, access to technology). http://www.literacyforallab.ca/ Targeted supports are in place (alternative pencils, text to speech applications). http://education.alberta.ca/admin/supportingstudent/instructionalsupports/ Intentional planning for curriculum connections across content areas which align with the ELA outcomes. Technology where available is included with unit plans that intentionally support the creation and sharing of literacy learning. The competencies are integrated in planning. https://arpcresources.ca/consortia/learning-through-competencies/
5.2 Teachers provide regular and on-going instruction in speaking, listening, reading, writing, viewing and representing.	Planning purposefully integrates opportunities for speaking, listening, viewing and representing opportunities across the content areas. Teachers offer direct, explicit instruction, model, and provide shared and guided practice to allow students to become independent in each of the six dimensions. Formative assessments are used to guide instruction. Anchor charts are co-constructed with students, are posted, and are in kid language.
5.3 Teachers provide support before, during and after the learning.	Background knowledge is activated. (Before) Students are taught strategies to use to support their understanding during their learning. (During)





	Skills and outcomes are embedded (taught alongside the knowledge outcomes). (During) Students are able to demonstrate their learning in different ways. (After) Subject content vocabulary is intentionally taught. There is a systematic method for teaching vocabulary.
5.4 Teachers use flexible groupings to support all learners (e.g. reading, writing, word study, discussions, and inquiry groups)	Assessments are used to determine groupings (e.g. pre-assessment, formative assessment). Students are grouped for instruction (e.g.: by ability, strategy, interests, extent of background knowledge, social factors). Groups are fluid. Students have a thinking/talking partner. There is a systematic organization used to gather student assessment (e.g. portfolio, anecdotal records, binder of observations, digital).
5.5 Teachers use varied approaches to meet the needs of all their students	Assessments and reflection inform teacher practice. Varied pedagogies are evident in planning (e.g.: whole class modeling, independent conferencing, mini lessons, strategy groupings, close reading, etc.). Oral language strategies are intentionally planned and implemented (purposeful talk, book talks, talking partners, collaborative groups). A systematic approach is used to teach word study, phonological awareness, morphology, and vocabulary (e.g. word wall, word meaning –root words etc.). Differentiated choices are made about pedagogy to meet the needs of students (resources, technology, instruction, multi-modalities, etc.). Learning tasks are designed that are authentic and purposeful Students have opportunities to self-reflect on their growth, and determine how effective and efficient their uses of strategies are.
5.6 Teachers engage in literacy across all content areas, K-12	Students are explicitly taught how to be literate in subject area (e.g. are students taught to: read a chart, the periodic table, navigate through a web site, understand and use text features). Scaffolding (modeling, guided, and independent) literacy practices are evident in the content areas. Thinking processes in subject areas are explicitly taught (e.g. self-monitoring, making connections, predicting, visualizing, inferencing, synthesizing and evaluating).





Appendix B

Components and Elements of Literacy Progressions

Alberta Education (2015)

These updated elements identify the essential behavior, knowledge and understandings that are the building blocks for continued growth in literacy.

Component	Elements
Literacy Awareness	Importance of Literacy (LA1) Students recognize that literacy provides enjoyment and enables them to make sense of and participate in the world around them.
	Learner Awareness (LA2) Students identify what they know, are able to do and need to learn when engaging in tasks that involve literacy.
	Task Awareness (LA3) Students are aware of the literacy demands within a task.
Component	Elements
Literacy Knowledge and Understanding	Rules of Language (LKU1) Students use rules of language to acquire, construct and communicate meaning.
	Acquire Information (LKU2) Students use efficient and effective strategies to acquire, evaluate and ethically use information.
	Construct Meaning (LKU3) Students use efficient and effective strategies to construct meaning.
	Communicate Meaning (LKU4) Students communicate to convey concepts, ideas and understandings.





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