



KANSAS STATE LITERACY PLAN AND KANSAS GUIDE TO LEARNING: LITERACY

A comprehensive literacy plan to advance learning from birth to grade 12.



Career, Standards and Assessment Services

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ABOUT THE KANSAS STATE LITERACY PLAN

This plan is an updated version of the 2012 Kansas State Literacy Plan, titled *The Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy*. This updated plan is informed by the research and findings used to support the writing of *The Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy*, as well as data from four separate needs assessments, administered between 2015 and 2017. This document was revised in 2018 to reflect the standard revisions to English Language Arts in November of 2017.

For more information, contact:

Sarah Perryman
Education Program Consultant-ELA
(785) 296-1074
sperryman@ksde.org



Career, Standards and Assessment Services
Kansas State Department of Education
Landon State Office Building
900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 653
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212

(785) 296-3142
www.ksde.org

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Introduction

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) strives to support educators, parents, and students across the state of Kansas. In October 2015, the State Board of Education and Dr. Randy Watson, Kansas Commissioner of Education, revealed a new vision for the state of Kansas: to lead the world in the success of each student. Under this new vision, "Success" would be measured against six outcomes carefully selected by the Board, which were based on qualitative data collected during a statewide listening tour in 2015. The outcomes include Kindergarten readiness, high school graduation, individual plans of study for each student based on career interests, postsecondary success, civic engagement, and social-emotional development. While growth in literacy is not explicitly mentioned in the findings of that statewide needs assessment, it is understood that strong literacy skills provide a foundation for each of the selected outcomes and without that solid foundation, student success will not be possible.

This plan is an updated version of the 2012 Kansas State Literacy Plan, titled the *Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy*. It is informed by the research and findings used to support the writing of the *Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy*, as well as data from four separate needs assessments administered between 2015 and 2017. These assessments were designed to gain a comprehensive view of the quality and condition of literacy curriculum and instruction from a variety of education professionals, including teachers, instructional coaches, curriculum leaders, and administrators. The assessments were administered during in-person meetings, conferences, professional learning sessions, and via email. Together, the assessments provide insight into a variety of issues relevant to high quality, evidence-based literacy instruction, and can help to guide work and resources at the state and local levels, including professional learning, coaching support, administrative support, materials, resources, assessments, and interventions.

This multi-part literacy guide serves as a comprehensive literacy plan for children ages birth through grade 12. It integrates the Kansas Early Learning Standards for children from birth to age five, the K-12 Kansas English Language Arts Standards, recommended evidence-based instructional practices, tiered systems of support, and critical questions and considerations for teaching and learning in the literacy strands of Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening. This plan provides direction for educators seeking to boost or improve local literacy efforts both within and outside of the school environment. It also provides guidance for literacy efforts directed toward special student populations, including English learners, students with disabilities, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. It also addresses equity concerns for students throughout the state.

Overview

Kansas schools are responsible for providing students with the instruction they need to become literate members of society. In its simplest form, literacy can be defined as the ability to effectively communicate with others through reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Most educators include numeracy in this definition to complete the core foundational skills of literacy. Moving into the 21st Century, the term *Information Literacy* has changed once again to become *Contemporary Literacy*. Changes in the workplace demand that workers be able to exist and succeed in a digital world, which requires continual acquisition and development of new knowledge and skills. This greatly expands schools' responsibilities to students beyond teaching the basic five components of reading. Literacy instruction also must consider tasks such as information-seeking strategies, synthesizing and evaluating information, efficient multi-layered communication and making wise and informed decisions.

Rather than establishing a marked differentiation between instruction focused on learning to read and instruction focused on reading to learn, literacy instruction must be a continuous process from birth through secondary instruction."

The Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy (KGLL) defines literacy learning as a lifelong process on a socially and culturally-constructed continuum. This continuum is characterized by the ability to derive, create, and convey meaning through a variety of socially contextual symbols in oral, written, digital, and other formats.

Literate individuals:

- Build relationships in varied contexts to solve problems collaboratively and cross-culturally.
- Develop critical perspectives about what they read.
- Comprehend, analyze, and evaluate what they see and hear.
- Analyze and synthesize multiple streams of information simultaneously.
- Generate and embrace rich understandings of ideas and concepts.
- Create and share information for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Recognize ethical responsibilities required by these complex tasks.
- Assess their own literacy learning competencies and direct their future growth.

The KGLL intends to shape literacy instruction for each Kansas student by identifying foci for targeted age groups, and by providing parents, educators and other caretakers with guidance related to engagement, motivation, curriculum, and instruction for student literacy experiences from Birth through Grade 12. The KGLL is informed by current research on literacy learning, evidence-based practices, and key questions and considerations for stakeholder groups.

Although strong reading skills are certainly a foundational element of literacy learning, this framework also emphasizes that "learning to read" and "reading to learn," Figure 1, must happen simultaneously and throughout one's lifetime – in the home, in school, and in the larger community.

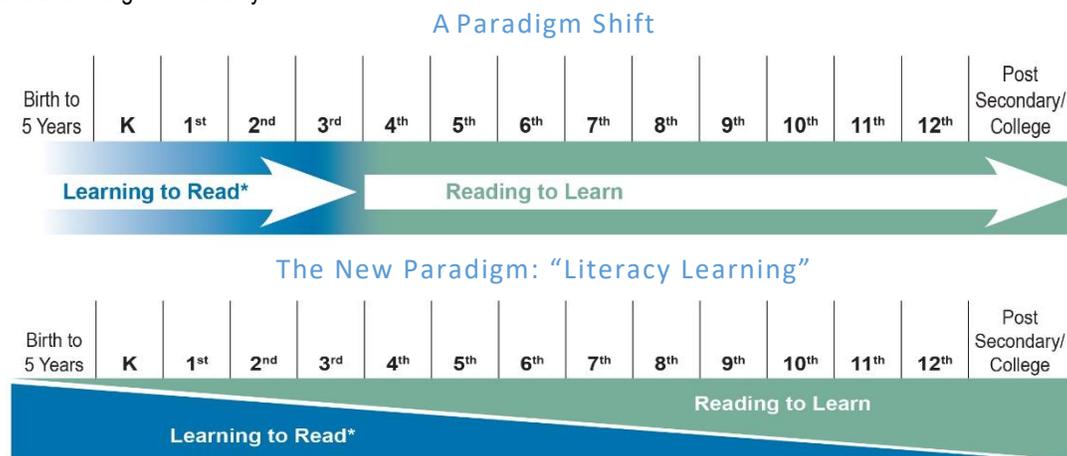


Figure 1 Copeland (2011)

*Because Literacy is more than just reading, similar transitions would also be present for writing, speaking and listening, and language as well.

Rather than establishing a marked differentiation between instruction focused on learning to read and instruction focused on reading to learn, literacy instruction must be a continuous process from birth through secondary instruction. Because literacy is more than just reading, similar transitions also would be present for writing, speaking and listening, and language. As a system-wide commitment, the KGLL provides a framework for local districts, early-learning facilities, and families to create more specific plans to address their students' literacy learning needs.

Needs Assessments Data and Findings

In the past several years, the Kansas State Department of Education has been gathering data from educators and education stakeholders in order to help guide the direction of things such as policy, professional learning, and resources. This information-gathering has occurred through surveys, exit tickets, polling, facilitated conversations, and analyses conducted by external partners. It has also been developed and guided at various times by every level of agency staff, from Consultant to Commissioner. Beginning in 2014, the Kansas Commissioner of Education, Dr. Randy Watson, along with members of the Kansas State Board of Education, set out on a listening tour to determine what Kansans wanted to see and gain from their education system. As a result of this listening tour, the Kansas State Board of Education established a new vision for Kansas education: Kansas will lead the world in the success of each student. Outcomes pursuant to this vision were established: A focus on social-emotional skills and character development, Kindergarten readiness, an individual plan of study for each student focused on a career goal, improved high school graduation rates, postsecondary success, and civic engagement.

A Focus on EACH Student

A renewed focus on students as individuals serves to shift conversations from determining how students fit into existing systems, programs, policies and protocols, and instead is concerned with creating systems, programs, policies, and protocols that can flexibly adapt to the needs of each student.

The varying and multiple needs of students continually challenge educators to determine which practices will be most effective in engaging learners and improving the literacy skills of each student.”

Kansas school demographics may look very different from one location to another. Therefore, educators need to make critical instructional decisions based on the school populations that they serve. The varying and multiple needs of students continually challenge educators to determine which practices will be most effective in engaging learners and improving the literacy skills of each student.

Core curriculum – which includes resources, instruction, and assessment, as well as routines, procedures, and policies -- creates a foundation upon which successful literacy experiences are built. Instructional practices utilized during core instruction should be evidence-based and differentiated in a manner that guarantees each student will learn and grow. However, even within a well-functioning core, some students will require additional supports in order to continually learn and achieve to high expectations.

The Kansas Education Systems Accreditation (KESA) model requires that districts achieving at the “modeling” level for instructional strategies do the following:

- Demonstrate that educators are using structures and processes for data-gathering and analysis, including formative assessment, in order to determine appropriate instructional strategies that will meet students' learning needs.
- Shows how selected strategies align with curriculum.
- Demonstrates process for determining effectiveness of instructional strategies and curriculum, and for determining student interventions based on data.
- Many districts in Kansas have adopted a tiered system of support for both academic and behavioral interventions, and effective models would meet the needs of these accreditation criteria. With respect to literacy instruction, such a system should emphasize early and accurate identification, targeted and personalized instruction, and progress monitoring to determine whether intervention support should continue. Students continually challenge educators to determine the most effective methods of instruction.

While subpopulations of students such as English Learners (ELs), students with exceptionalities, and students considered at-risk of educational failure sometimes share commonalities that enable educators to plan whole or small group instruction, excellent literacy instructors recognize that there are innumerable differences between learners, and that each student's unique strengths and needs should assist and inform plans for literacy instruction.

English Learners

The population of English learners (ELs) in Kansas is rapidly changing, and educators must adjust accordingly in order to meet the unique and varied needs of the state's diverse group of English Learners (ELs). Although approximately 73 percent of ELs are Spanish speakers (Migration Policy Institute, 2010), primarily hailing from Latin America (Aud, Fox, and Kewal Ramani, 2010), this is not always the case. No two ELs are alike, even within the same culture or home-country background. Additional differences may include length of time in the United States, literacy skills, previous schooling, and students' primary languages.

Similarities between learners' home languages and English tend to make initial learning of English easier, whereas differences make the process more difficult. Some ELs have a primary language that resembles English in word order, sound system, intonation, or word-formation patterns. Other students' languages may be very different from English in these respects. Therefore, educators must make different decisions based upon the makeup of their student population. For example, throughout Kansas we have diverse pockets of ELs. In some areas of our state, we have large populations of ELs who speak mostly Spanish. As a result of this commonality, the use of cognates as an instructional strategy is very helpful. However, other areas of Kansas have a large EL population in which multiple languages are represented.

Some important tasks for educators who work with ELs include:

- Identify whether the school atmosphere is accepting of multiple perspectives that are presented through cultural differences.
- Identify students' biographies.
- Identify the sources and kinds of support students have at home.
- Identify the different languages spoken.
- Determine the proficiency of students in their native language and in English.
- Consider how students approach the reading process and literacy. Their idea of literacy may vary from the mainstream understanding.
- Identify if there are cultural/religious issues to be considered.
- Determine whether English assessments measure ELs' understandings of language or of content.
- Determine the effectiveness of collaboration between EL teachers and homeroom teachers in making instructional and assessment decisions.

When instructional accommodations within core instruction take into account students' sociocultural, linguistic, cognitive, and academic backgrounds, the need for additional levels of intervention may be greatly reduced. Pre-assessment, scaffolding of instruction to ensure comprehensibility, and formative assessment enable teachers to best support ELs to attain lesson objectives and to develop the skills measured on summative assessments. Providing opportunities for student dialogue and interaction throughout instruction enables ELs to practice language and literacy skills and to share their diverse perspectives with peers.

Students with Exceptionalities

Students with exceptionalities also have a wide variety of skills, needs, and abilities, that require different instructional strategies targeted to their individual strengths and needs. In Kansas, “Exceptional children” means “children with disabilities and gifted children” (K.A.R.91-40-1(w)).

“Child with disability” means “a child evaluated as having mental retardation, a hearing impairment including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, any other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf-blindness, or multiple disabilities and who, by reason thereof, needs special education” (K.A.R.91-40-1 (k), K.A.R.91-40-1(l)).

In the best classroom, students are engaged much of the time in reading and writing, with the teacher monitoring student progress and encouraging continuous improvement and growth, and providing “scaffolded” instruction, in which the teacher notices when students are having difficulty and provides sufficient support so that students are able to make progress. Furthermore, this skillful instruction is based on the exact strategies that students need to work on.”

P. David Pearson

“Gifted” means “performing or demonstrating the potential for performing at significantly higher levels of accomplishment in one or more academic fields due to intellectual ability, when compared to others of similar age, experience, and environment” (K.A.R.91-40-1(bb)).

Students with exceptionalities have unique needs that influence retention of knowledge, response to instructional strategies, and engagement in instructional activities across the academic areas of reading and writing. Students with exceptionalities likely will require different kinds of instruction to meet or exceed grade-level expectations.

Teachers must have high expectations for all their students, and students with exceptionalities must be included in core reading or math programs for elementary students or content-area classes for adolescents in middle and high school. Early identification of each student’s strengths and needs is critical in determining the appropriate level and type of instructional support (including enrichment). This early identification of students’ strengths and needs is accomplished through the effective use of assessment and their related processes – including diagnostic, formative, and progress monitoring. When teachers know the learning needs of each of their students and use that knowledge to differentiate their instruction, students will become more engaged and motivated. Through effective use of ongoing assessment, teachers can identify students who may need intervention.

Instruction for the intervention is designed through a diagnostic process that targets specific skills for instruction.

Effective intervention for students with exceptionalities involves choosing effective instructional approaches that require ongoing assessment and analysis of student progress-monitoring data. Instruction for all students, and in particular for students with exceptionalities, must focus on the student’s strengths and areas of need so each student can make progress in accordance with grade-level expectations. Instruction and interventions for students with exceptionalities should be explicit, systematic, and scaffolded. Students with exceptionalities may need more opportunities for practice and immediate corrective feedback as part of the intervention process. Students who need intensive support should receive targeted skill-based instruction through individualized instruction or in a small group.

Students At-risk of Educational Failure

Students at-risk of educational failure are another population that educators must monitor to ensure adequate academic progress. Many at-risk students come from poverty and/or have other factors (e.g., single parent families, minorities, level of parent education, student attendance, etc.) that may influence their success. Children who arrive at school with limited experiences with print, books, language, and literacy need the most effective teachers and supportive school environments to become literate members of society. Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson (2002) list school factors that are responsible for high achievement in high-poverty schools:

- Focus on improved student learning
- Strong school leadership
- Strong teacher collaboration
- Consistent use of data on student performance
- Focus on professional development and innovation
- Strong links to parents

Providing the environment for students to attain a high level of literacy requires a school-level system for identifying “at-risk” students and providing them with the interventions they need to become literate. Good classroom instruction should meet the needs of *most* students, but an efficient system for providing high-quality interventions is required to meet the needs of *all* students. The most efficient interventions for struggling learners are to provide instruction in smaller groups in addition to core instruction. This allows the instruction to be targeted to the specific needs of the students who have more opportunities to respond and receive feedback.

Educators who make effective educational instructional decisions for English language learners, students with exceptionalities, and at-risk students create an environment where all students learn to be literate and to utilize efficient communication and intelligent decision-making.

Kansas Standards

The KSDE recommends and supports standards for early learning through grade 12. As a guide to early kindergarten readiness, the *Kansas Early Learning Standards* provide an understanding of the skills, knowledge, and abilities young children (birth through age 5) have and can learn with the help of caring and knowledgeable adults. Based on research about young children’s language and early literacy development, the *Kansas Early Learning Standards* can be used to improve instructional planning by aligning curriculum and other learning activities.

The Kansas State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in 2010. By state legislative statute, Kansas Curricular Standards are reviewed by a panel of content area experts every seven years. The Kansas State Board of Education received revised Standards for English Language Arts in Fall 2017. As a rule, Kansas Standards are developed in collaboration with teachers, school administrators, and experts to provide a clear and consistent framework to prepare children for college

and the workforce.

Standards provide teachers and parents with a common understanding of the knowledge and skills students should have within their educational careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs.

The standards:

- Are aligned with college and work expectations;
- Are clear, understandable, and consistent;
- Include rigorous content and application of knowledge through high-order skills;
- Build upon strengths and lessons of current state standards;
- Provide guidance to ensure that students are prepared to compete and succeed in a global economy and society; and
- Are evidence-based.

Kansas Standards provide guidance for the design of curricula, instructional materials, and instruction, but do not prescribe curriculum or instruction. LEAs in Kansas are granted the freedom to conduct independent reviews and select curricular materials and resources that they believe will best

suit the needs of their students.

A meaningful, comprehensive assessment system provides a complete picture of diverse learning goals and how well students are attaining them.

This assessment system documents what students know and are able to do.”



Curriculum

Standards are not curriculum. Standards should serve as guidance for educators as they determine course content and materials, sequencing, strategies, protocols, and methods for teaching students. Kansas has a longstanding tradition of providing local schools the flexibility to make determinations about curriculum that best suit their students and communities.

Effective and Impactful Instruction

Effective and impactful instruction is critical if students are to learn the curriculum. For young children, it is particularly important that instruction follow a developmental sequence, however, it is not always necessary to wait for mastery of each task before progressing. Providing instruction of skills in a developmental sequence and then cycling back through also supports young children's learning. Embedded instruction helps children learn how to apply skills within authentic literacy activities, and should occur throughout the day.

Effective instruction for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers looks different than instruction for school-age children. The guidance on instruction provided here for the birth to five-year-old population includes how to talk with young children and how to integrate opportunities for rich language and literacy exposure into everyday routines, including book sharing, circle time, play, center time, and mealtimes. Guidance in effective instruction indicates ways to ensure that children receive opportunities for language and literacy exposure and practice that promotes their language and cognitive development and their growing independence and self-regulation. Research literature about effective instruction for young children is summarized in the corresponding *Kansas Guide to Learning: Literacy* tables for Birth through Age 5.

Research about effective instruction for kindergarten through high school identifies that teachers must engage in explicit instruction, scaffolded learning, and active contextualized coaching (CIERA, 2001; NICHD, 2000; Pearson and Gallagher, 1983; Vygotsky, 1978). "Explicit teaching refers to the practice of deliberately demonstrating and bringing to learners' conscious awareness those covert and invisible processes, understandings, knowledge, and skills over which they need to get control if they are to become effective readers" (Cambourne, 1999, p. 126).

Attributes of teacher-based instruction that have improved reading and writing performance include:

- Clear teacher presentations,
- Direct explanation (includes **what** skill or strategy is being taught, **how** readers use the skill or strategy, **when** they will use the skill or strategy, and **why** they should use this skill or strategy),
- Modeling and guided practice with scaffolding,
- High levels of active student involvement (e.g., collaborative construction of meaning, improved thinking through conversation and discussion),

Review of feedback (Lipson and Wixson, 2009).

Extensive research on scaffolding by Pearson and Gallagher (1983) and Vygotsky (1978) suggests a need for teachers to structure lessons that provide modeling to students and then gradually release responsibility for task completion to students. Scaffolding combined with a simultaneous focus on self-regulated learning (Paris and Paris, 2001) helps students become independent self-sufficient readers, writers, speakers, and listeners.

Longitudinal studies revealed that effective teachers spend a great deal of time coaching students who are actively engaged in reading and writing (Allington and Johnston, 2002; Langer, 2004; Pressley et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2000). Coaching may happen at any time in the instructional process. Teachers should utilize assessment data to determine where students are at in the learning process and what differentiated and specific coaching they need.

Effective instruction is where the "art" of teaching shows itself. Teachers who are masterful at providing effective instruction that includes explicit instruction, scaffolded learning, and active contextualized coaching prepare students to be self-regulated, literate members of society.

“ Explicit teaching refers to the practice of deliberately demonstrating and bringing to learners' conscious awareness those covert and invisible processes, understandings, knowledge, and skills over which they need to get control if they are to become effective readers.”

(Cambourne, 199, p. 126)

Assessment

Evidence gathered from evaluation and assessment(s) provides the groundwork for instructional decisions. Although *evaluation* and *assessment* often have been used interchangeably, they have different meanings.

Evaluation is the process of making judgments about the evidence (assessments) collected. Evaluation allows teachers to:

- set learning goals based on the knowledge of the student;
- plan specific learning experiences;
- determine the effectiveness of the teaching;
- show the student's progress towards meeting the learning goals; and
- guide the setting of the new instructional goals.

Assessment refers to the process of observing and accumulating evidence of an individual student's progress. All assessment should provide feedback to inform instruction, monitor progress, or form the basis for evaluation. Assessment allows teachers to:

- identify the student's strengths and instructional needs;
- observe and record learning behaviors and strategies; and
- provide feedback and support to the learner.

Assessments must meet two basic requirements:

Validity The degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure; and also, the extent to which a test will provide information needed to make a decision.

Reliability The degree to which a test yields consistent results. In other words, if administration were repeated multiple times/places, the results would be the same or very similar.

A high quality system of assessments informs decisions about instruction, and evaluates effectiveness of programs and instructional strategies. A meaningful comprehensive assessment system provides a complete picture of diverse learning goals and how well students are attaining them. This assessment system documents what students know and are able to do.

Hall (2007) suggests developing a comprehensive assessment system that includes five steps:

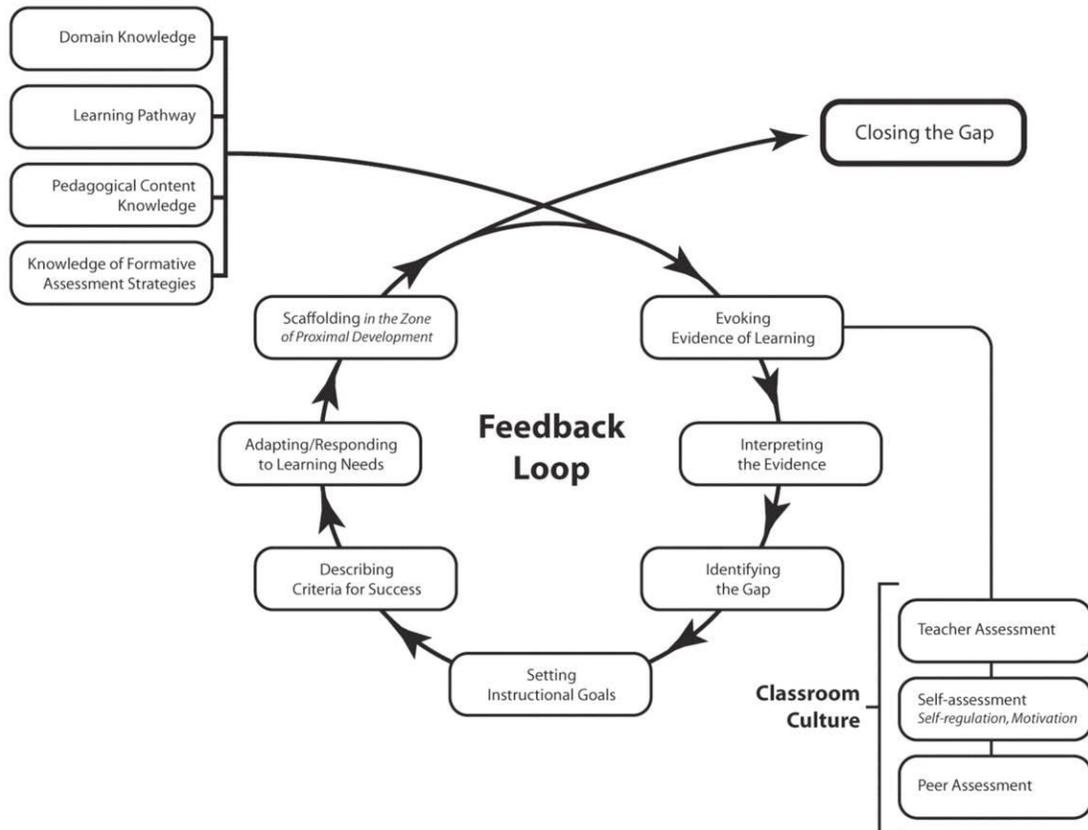
1. identifying specific types of assessments that include both summative and formative assessments;
2. determining who will conduct the specific assessments and the professional development for those conducting assessments;
3. developing an assessment schedule;
4. establishing a data-management system; and
5. planning and delivering professional development for teachers to provide an overview of the comprehensive assessment system and how to use the data to make instructional decisions.

Carefully chosen assessments are integral to developing a comprehensive assessment system. Different types of assessments are needed to inform both programmatic and instructional decisions. It is critical to understand that assessment tools are designed and built for specific purposes and only valid when used for those purposes. Evaluation of the results of these types of assessment informs and directs the selection and utilization of resources and materials, assists practitioners in determining appropriate teaching strategies, and increases the likelihood that all students will receive optimal instruction.

The Kansas State Department of Education currently supports and advocates for LEAs having a balanced system of assessments that includes measures in the following three categories: Formative, Interim, and Summative.

Formative Assessment Process

When teachers and students use a formative assessment process during their regular classroom instruction, they experience a mutual benefit from immediate and explicit feedback related to student performance. Teachers can use the formative assessment process to make immediate instructional decisions on behalf of individuals or groups of students. The State of Kansas advocates the use of a formative process such as the one shown below, which is the work of Dr. Margaret Heritage.



Interim Assessments

The KSDE recognizes the importance of educators administering periodic assessments which are aligned with a large-scale summative, and/or student learning outcomes, and/or curricular standards. A recent survey from the KSDE revealed that LEAs were spending a great deal of money on interim assessments they administered several times per year. In order to reduce this cost burden and also provide a valuable resource for LEAs, the KSDE funded the development of interim assessments. Kansas educators now have access to, and are encouraged to use, three interim assessments, provided cost free to LEAs. The interim tests are aligned with Kansas' ELA standards, are predictive to the summative test, and provide immediate results to teachers and students.

Summative Assessments

Summative assessments in general are administered after a block of instruction to measure student learning against a defined set of grade-level content standards. They are designed to evaluate student performance after instruction has been completed and are useful in determining the overall effectiveness of a given program for individual students or groups. Examples of summative assessments include outcome assessments, such as state or district mandated tests that measure specified outcomes.

An example of a summative assessment in Kansas is the Kansas Assessment Program (KAP) English Language Arts Assessment, which is offered at the end of the semester or school year to evaluate student performance against a defined set of grade-level content standards. Other examples of summative assessments are end-of-instruction assessments, such as unit or end-of-chapter tests.

Instruction

Instruction is the purposeful direction of the learning process for all students in a school. The Kansas Standards for English Language Arts allow educators to create unique and engaging opportunities to advance instruction for all students. Instruction aligned with the Kansas ELA Standards should be based on the conceptual understanding, knowledge, and skills that will help students address their Individualized Plan of Study, and progress toward postsecondary success. Because the instructional planning process is many times a highly personal and creative activity for teachers, educators should be mindful to ensure that implementation of instruction utilizes evidence-based practices and includes differentiated instruction or personalized learning targeted to the needs of each learner. Data should be utilized to inform instructional planning and implementation, and to communicate with students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders about next steps in teaching and learning.

Intervention

The Kansas Standards provide the vision for the conceptual understanding, knowledge, and skills that will help students succeed. As with any set of content standards, the Kansas Standards for ELA do not define intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade level expectations. A comprehensive tiered system of supports provides a framework to guide interventions for students who require more explicit, systematic, and focused instruction so that they are able to acquire the knowledge and skills represented in grade level Standards. Interventions are based on student need as determined by diagnostic assessment, focused on specific skills and strategies, and providing more opportunities for students to respond and receive immediate feedback. To ensure consistency of knowledge and skills being taught to students, core instruction and the instruction provided during intervention should be complementary and mutually reinforcing.

Conclusion

The Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) continues to collaborate across the agency to streamline communication and centralize literacy resources by creating a comprehensive literacy plan for children ages birth through grade 12. This plan, was constructed to be an easy-to-read document that administrators, teachers, parents, child-care providers, and others could use to easily find information and guidance regarding the literacy development and learning for children birth through high school. The KGLL is organized by age levels and provides curricula and instructional strategies in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.

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