

North Dakota Literacy Task Force: Convening #1 on the Science of Reading March 4, 2024 | 9:30 – 11:00AM CT | Virtual

OVERVIEW

The recent enactment of House Bill 1231 requires the State Superintendent to appoint a task force to review all sections of the North Dakota Century Code related to literacy, dyslexia, and teacher professional development. The first meeting of this North Dakota Literacy Task Force took place on March 4, 2024. The Task Force is comprised of [19 members](#) who will be responsible for developing a report of findings and recommendations to be presented to the sixty-ninth legislative assembly. North Dakota Superintendent Kirsten Baesler kicked off the meeting with opening remarks on the importance of strong literacy instruction in North Dakota and was followed by a presentation from The Hunt Institute on the science of reading.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction:

- [The Honorable Kirsten Baesler](#), State Superintendent | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

The Hunt Institute Staff:

FACILITATOR:

- [Maureen Stover](#), Deputy Director | K-12

STAFF:

- Kristen Green, Director of K-12
- Jaalil Hart, Deputy Director of K-12
- Kathleen Arney, Policy Analyst K-12
- Robel Kelkile, Policy Analyst K-12
- Joshua Walker, Policy Analyst K-12

Presentation:

The Hunt Institute provided an overview of The Science of Reading, a field of research that examines how people learn to read and how reading difficulties can be effectively addressed. It emphasizes evidence-based practices rooted in cognitive science, linguistics, and educational psychology. By understanding the underlying processes of reading acquisition, educators can better tailor instruction to support all learners, particularly those who struggle with reading.

[Power Point Presentation](#)

[Convening #1 Agenda](#)

[Recording Link](#)

Evidence-Aligned Literacy Instruction Key Takeaways

RESOURCE EXPERT

✉ [Superintendent Kirsten Baesler](#) North Dakota State Superintendent of Public Instruction

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The Science of Reading is a [multidisciplinary field](#) rooted in cognitive science, linguistics, and educational psychology.
- It explores how people learn to read and identifies evidence-based strategies for effective reading instruction.
- The Science of Reading [emphasizes](#) the importance of understanding the underlying processes of reading acquisition to tailor instruction to the needs of all learners.
- What the Science of Reading Is [Not](#):
 - The Science of Reading is not a singular approach or method but rather a framework based on rigorous research and evidence.
 - It is not limited to phonics instruction but encompasses various aspects of literacy development, including phonological awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.
- The Science of Reading principles benefit all students, emphasizing the importance of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers who are trained in evidence-aligned literacy instruction strategies and methods.
- Training programs like Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling ([LETRS](#)) and pre-service training for universities are important to make up for lost time and improve teacher effectiveness.
- Proposed solutions include a focus on [structured literacy](#) and a systematic approach to teaching oral and literacy skills, aligning with the [Science of Reading](#) research.
- Indicators of reading promise include preschool initiatives, language standards like [WIDA](#), increased language in classrooms, and [longer](#) school weeks.
- Implementing structured literacy requires careful planning, including data collection and analysis, setting benchmarks, and scheduling literacy blocks.
- Adequate funding and support, including liaison roles and professional development via learning management systems like [Canvas](#), are necessary for effective implementation.

Small Group Discussions

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The task force discussed several key themes to be considered for recommendations, including opportunities to strengthen broad based support for literacy.

SCIENCE OF READING-ALIGNED (SOR) CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION AND IDENTIFYING HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS:

- Beginning literacy adoption presents challenges, particularly in ensuring that all teachers receive adequate training to effectively implement new instructional approaches.
- It is important to recognize education compulsory attendance law in [North Dakota](#), enrollment is required at the age of seven, prompting the need to devise strategies to ensure the youngest learners are consistently attending school. This can include:
 - Working alongside health and human services.
 - Strengthening family engagement, with a focus on initiatives that educate families about the importance of regular school attendance and provide support for reading and writing instruction.
- Broad-based support for teaching LETRS is crucial, aligning with the long-term perspective that emphasizes interim goals and patience for measurable results.
- Data from across the US underscores the need for stable leadership and systemic collaboration to effect change, recognizing that there's no quick fix.
- Raising awareness of what success looks like and compiling success stories from states implementing the Science of Reading are recommended.
- Educator Preparation Programs and professional learning should include training to ensure teachers know how to identify SOR-aligned curricula and align syllabi and coursework to the International Standards for Teaching with Dyslexia
- Regional Education Agencies (REAs) provide professional development centered on evaluating scope and sequence of curriculum to identify shortfalls, including explicit instruction, and implementing a learning-first approach.
- All North Dakota schools are required to report which curriculum they are using and identify misalignment.
- Curriculum fairs enable districts to learn about options, identify holes in current curriculum, and identify criteria curriculum selection teams should look for in SOR-aligned curriculum. This process ensures districts have resources and framework to understand strategic literacy plans.
- North Dakota is a local control state. The Department of Public Instruction can offer resources to local districts but cannot mandate or require specific instructional materials.
- The state is currently developing SOR curriculum [guidance](#).
- High quality instructional materials can significantly improve student [outcomes](#).
- District level approaches instruction and training provide the structure and support teachers need to implement SOR-aligned instruction with fidelity in classrooms.

RESOURCES

[Mississippi's Success Story](#) | Overview from Mississippi Department of Education on how the state improved NAEP reading outcomes.

[Sold a Story](#) | Podcast from the New York Times on how teaching kids to read went so wrong.

[Synergy in the Science of Reading: How Meaningful Policies Transform Literacy Instruction](#) | Blog post from Lexia Learning

Appendix A

North Dakota Literacy Task Force Members

Task Force Members:

- Kirsten Baseler | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, State Superintendent
- Angie Waletzko | Parent and Family Engagement
- Dr. Pam Krueger | Dickinson State University
- Janet Bassingthwaite | Mandan Public Schools, Early Learning Coordinator
- Tina Pletan | Bismarck Public Schools, K-5 Literacy Specialist
- Jerlyn Gaberielson | Flasher Public Schools, Elementary Teacher
- Nicole Manson | Fargo Public Schools, Interventionist
- Nicole Polum | Grand Forks Public Schools, Middle School Teacher
- Ben Scallon | Lakota Public Schools, High School Teacher
- Dr. Nicole Reybok | Griggs-Steele-Traill Special Education Unit, Director of Special Education
- Cheryl Hagar | Minot Public Schools, Title I and Family Engagement Coordinator
- Kerri Whipple | Southeast Education Cooperative, Director of Literacy
- Beth Slette | West Fargo Public Schools, Superintendent
- Dr. Sherry Tandeski | St. John School District, Elementary Principal
- Dr. Noelle Green | McKenzie County Public Schools, Middle School Principal
- Representative Cindy Schreiber-Beck | North Dakota State House
- Senator Donald Schaible | North Dakota State Senate
- Kari Bucholz | Haley's Hope Dyslexia Learning Center
- Dr. Cory Steiner | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Chair

Ex-Officio Members:

- Dr. Becky Pitkin | North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board, Executive Director
- Brenda Ehrmantraut | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Academic Support
- Lea Kugel | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Assistant Director of Specially Designed Services
- Ann Ellefson | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Director of Academic Support
- Jessica Thomasson | North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Executive Policy Director