Guiding Principles for a Comprehensive Approach to Reading Instruction in Manitoba

Introduction

All students have the right to learn to read, through appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction that is both engaging and responsive to student learning strengths and needs. Learning to become a literate citizen includes listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, and representing as interrelated processes. All Kindergarten to Grade 12 teachers are teachers of literacy and contribute to a student's growth in reading in a variety of ways.

> Literacy is the ability to think and use language for learning, communicating, creating, and interacting with ideas, others, and the world around us.

Reading is a developmental process and all readers progress at different rates and have different needs at different times, which means that one approach for all students will not ensure success for every student. Reading is a complex process that continues to develop throughout one's life and teachers continue to support learners in becoming stronger readers and learners in all subject areas throughout a student's Kindergarten to Grade 12 learning journey.

> Language development is critical to the success of all learners and is the foundation on which literacy skills are developed. Students need to develop a solid language base to read and to be able to understand what they read.

Classroom teachers are best situated to identify evidence-based strategies for reading instruction that are responsive to learning contexts and the needs of their students. Teachers, school leaders, and school divisions are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of literacy programming using data to inform planning for continuous improvement.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning is committed to strengthening student literacy achievement, and the document titled *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (2022) provides the foundation for an inclusive and responsive system where all Manitoba students succeed, no matter where they live, their background, or their individual circumstance. This commitment requires the collaborative efforts of home, school, and community to support students to acquire and develop high-quality, culturally specific and well-supported early literacy skills as part of everyday living.

Manitoba

Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba, along with Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion, sustain equal access to educational opportunities for all students and support efforts to remove barriers to learning. Schools and school divisions are required, at a minimum, to follow these standards. The following standards relate specifically to the learning needs of students with reading disabilities:

- *Universal Design*: "Access to learning is maximized by using universal design principles in all planning processes. Universally designed schools, classrooms, curricula, and materials provide all students with access to resources they need, regardless of their diverse learning needs" (MEECL, p. 8).
- *Planning in Education*: "Teachers plan and use instructional practices to meet the diverse needs of all students in their classes. For some students who have special learning needs or abilities, student-specific planning is necessary" (MEECL, p. 14).

The following provincial guiding principles support teachers, school leaders, school divisions, and others to ensure a common understanding of reading instruction in Manitoba.

Guiding Principles

1 Guiding Principle #1

Reading instruction must be student-centred and responsive to student-specific identified learning strengths and needs.

There are a number of systems and approaches to teaching students how to read that are practised both within Manitoba and in other jurisdictions. There is no single approach to the teaching of reading that will be responsive to the needs of all students, therefore Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning strongly recommends and supports a comprehensive approach to reading instruction.

A comprehensive approach to reading instruction is focused and responsive to the individual needs of each reader and is embedded in rich and meaningful learning contexts, which include speaking/communicating, listening, and writing. Explicit and responsive teaching of reading is required and includes instruction on fluency, comprehension, vocabulary development, phonemic awareness, and decoding words through whole class, small group, and individual mini-lessons based on the identified strengths and needs of the students.

All literacy instruction and tasks provide students with opportunities to engage with texts while making meaningful connections to text, self, and world, developing their identity as a reader and nurturing curiosity and a joy of reading.

Students must be able to read across all content areas and Kindergarten to Grade 12 classroom practice must support this development by ensuring that time is spent on what conversationalists, writers, and readers actually do across disciplines.

Reading instruction must be embedded in authentic and purposeful contexts and be responsive to the languages, cultures, and experiences students bring to reading. Instruction must support students' confidence and metacognitive skills to help them grow as independent, avid readers.

> Being student-centred demonstrates respect for students and families, and acknowledges the diverse needs for understanding world views, values, identities, traditions, and contemporary lifestyles in a culturally safe way.

2 Guiding Principle #2

Observation, early screening, and ongoing assessment facilitates early identification of student learning needs and informs student programming decisions.

Planning effectively for Kindergarten to Grade 12 reading instruction requires ongoing assessment *as*, *for*, and *of* learning. Information is gathered through a variety of methods to inform the required next steps for student-specific literacy instruction. On a day-to-day basis, rich descriptions of student learning are gathered from conversations with students; observations in a variety of learning experiences, contexts, and processes; and an examination of student work in progress. The assessment data collected supports teachers and/or school teams in providing appropriate instruction, support, and evaluation of student-specific, small group, and/or whole class programming/interventions.

> "Early identification refers to the process used to identify students with special learning needs and abilities in preschool, Kindergarten, the Early Years, or as early as possible before or after their entry into school" (MEECL, p. 11). This generally includes vision, hearing, and speech, as well as some basic literacy and numeracy concepts.

Teacher observation and classroom-based assessment is critical to the early identification of student learning strengths and needs. The objective of early screening and ongoing assessment in literacy is to identify students who require more extensive literacy learning instruction and opportunities. When assessments indicate that a student may have additional literacy needs, teachers, school teams, and parents/caregivers must work collaboratively to develop learning plans responsive to those identified needs.

3 Guiding Principle #3

School divisions, school leaders, and teachers must have processes in place to respond to student learning needs through intervention and accommodation.

Reading is a complex process. Students who struggle with reading present a wide variety of learning profiles. Teachers, schools, and school divisions must work to intervene as soon as possible when students are encountering literacy difficulties, at all grade levels and in all content areas. Knowing when and how to provide effective intervention is critical; early literacy intervention is key.

Through observation and classroom-based assessments, teachers determine whether a student requires adaptations to meet or approximate the learning expectations of the provincial curriculum. The student may require student-specific instruction and practice on reading and writing. It is crucial that students have access to a variety of reading materials that are meaningful, engaging, and appropriate for their purpose, as well as assistive technology to access grade-level reading content if/when required.

Student-specific planning is the process through which members of student support teams, including educators and parents, collaborate to meet the unique needs of individual students. The purpose of student-specific planning is to help students attain the skills and knowledge that are the next logical step beyond their current levels of performance. Through the student-specific planning process, the student support team works to identify a student's learning needs and to develop, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions. These interventions may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming. (MEECL, p. 14)

Effective intervention includes direct instruction to teach content, strategy instruction to strengthen cognitive processes, and rehearsal and practice to integrate the new learning within literacy tasks.

The diagnosis of a learning disability can only be made by a qualified mental health practitioner with education and experience in diagnosing learning disabilities; however, classroom supports and interventions begin as soon as

School divisions, schools, and teachers are responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention(s) offered to students. A model of continuous improvement supports the ongoing collection of data that is used to summarize efforts and progress, identify areas for improvement, and plan for change.

4 Guiding Principle #4

Ongoing, job-embedded professional development is essential to support teachers in responding to the literacy needs of individual learners.

Students require teachers who are experts at observing students and making the moment-to-moment decisions necessary to support student achievement. In order to develop this expertise, ongoing professional learning is necessary.

Effective professional development is content-focused, incorporates active learning, supports collaboration, uses models of effective practice, provides coaching and expert support, offers feedback and reflection, and is of sustained duration (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning supports a model of ongoing, job-embedded professional development of teachers. A sustained approach to ongoing professional learning is part of a school's comprehensive approach to literacy.

The Public Schools Act requires school divisions to employ certified teachers. Staff in Manitoba school divisions must meet the diverse needs of all students. Teachers and other professionals have a responsibility to engage in ongoing professional development (*The Education Administration Act*, M.R. 468/88). As the employing authority, school divisions are responsible for ensuring that staff have or can develop the skills needed to implement inclusive practices using universal design principles in order to address the needs and abilities of all students.

A.   As part of their school planning process, school divisions must

   1.   Identify the needs and abilities of the student population and provide the necessary professional learning opportunities for staff.

   2.   Support staff in gaining the knowledge and skills to meet the individual needs of all students.

   3.   Assess, monitor, and report their progress in relation to divisionally identified target and provincial priorities.

Complementary Departmental Policies and Resources

Manitoba Education. *Développement de la pensée critique et de la communication orale*. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/frpub/me/touchstones/index.html.

———. *Educators' Resource Guide: Supporting Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*. 2021. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/dhh_resource/pdfs/full_doc.pdf.

———. *Kindergarten to Grade 12 English Language Arts Curriculum Framework: A Living Document*. 2020. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/framework/index.html.

———. *La langue au cœur du programme d'immersion française : une approche intégrée dans la pédagogie immersive*. 2021. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/m12/eval/langue_coeur/index.html.

———. *Recovery Learning in Literacy: Kindergarten to Grade 2*. 2020. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/docs/pdf/recovery_learn_literacy%20rev.%20Aug%2026.pdf.

———. *Student-Specific Planning: A Handbook for Developing and Implementing Individual Education Plans (IEPs)*. 2010. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/iep/pdf/planning/student_specific_planning.pdf.

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning. 2015. *Supporting Inclusive Schools: Addressing the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities*. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/learn_disabilities/index.html.

———. *Supporting Students Who Are Deafblind : A Handbook for Teachers*. 2014. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/deafblind/document.pdf.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. 2022. *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With – An Indigenous Education Policy Framework.* www.edu.gov.mb.ca/iid/mamahtawisiwin.html.

———. *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba*. 2022. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf/standards_for_student_services.pdf.

Manitoba Education and Training. *Supporting Inclusive Schools: Educational Assessment: Considerations for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired*. 2019. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/ed_assess_bvi/index.html.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. *Listening and Speaking: First Steps into Literacy: A Support Document for Kindergarten Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists*. 2008. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/ela/list_speak/.

———. *Rethinking Classroom Assessment with Purpose in Mind*. 2006. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/wncp/index.html.

References

Allington, Richard. (2013). "What Really Matters When Working With Struggling Readers." *The Reading Teacher*. 66. 10.1002/TRTR.1154.

Allington, Richard and Gabriel, Rachael. (2012). *Every Child, Every Day*. 69. www.ascd.org/el/articles/every-child-every-day (12 June 2023).

Cervetti, G.N., Pearson, P.D., Palincsar, A.S., Afflerbach, P., Kendeou, P., Biancarosa, G., Higgs, J., Fitzgerald, M.S., and Berman, A.I. (2020). "How the Reading for Understanding Initiative's Research Complicates the Simple View of Reading Invoked in the Science of Reading." *Reading Research Quarterly*, International Literacy Association. 55(S1), S161–S172. https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/handle/2027.42/162815/rrq343.pdf?sequence=1. (12 June 2023)

Compton-Lilly, C. (2008), "Teaching Struggling Readers: Capitalizing on Diversity for Effective Learning". *The Reading Teacher*, 61: 668–672. www.jstor.org/stable/20204648 (12 June 2023).

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., and Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective Teacher Professional Development*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606743.pdf (12 June 2023).

Duke, N., and Cartwright, K. B. (2021). "The science of reading progresses: Communicating advances beyond the simple view of reading." *Reading Research Quarterly*, International Literacy Association. 56(51), 525–544. https://foundationforlearningandliteracy.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Science-of-Reading-Progresses.pdf (12 June 2023).

Every Child a Chance Trust.org. *The long term costs of literacy difficulties, 2nd ed*. (2009). www.ucl.ac.uk/reading-recovery-europe/sites/reading_recovery_europe/files/The_long_term_costs_of_literacy_difficulties_2nd_edition.pdf (12 June 2023).

Gabriel, R. (2018). "Preparing Literacy Professionals: The Case of Dyslexia." J*ournal of Literacy Research*, 50(2), 262–270. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1179576 (12 June 2023).

Gabriel, Rachael. (2020). "The Future of the Science of Reading." *The Reading Teacher*. 74. 11–18. 10.1002/trtr.1924. www.researchgate.net/publication/343068420_The_Future_of_the_Science_of_Reading (12 June 2023).

Harmey, S. (2021). "Perspectives on dealing with reading difficulties." *Education* 3–13, 49:1, 52–62, DOI: www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03004279.2020.1824702 (12 June 2023).

International Literacy Association. (2019). *Literacy Leadership Brief: Children Experiencing Reading Difficulties: What We Know and What We Can Do*. Newark, DE: Author. www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-children-experiencing-reading-difficulties.pdf?sfvrsn=eff5bf8e_6 (12 June 2023).

———. 2019. *Literacy Leadership Brief*: Meeting the Challenges of Early Literacy Phonics Instruction. Newark, DE: Author. www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-meeting-challenges-early-literacy-phonics-instruction.pdf (12 June 2023).

———. 2016. Research Advisory: Dyslexia. Newark, DE : Author. www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/where-we-stand/ila-dyslexia-research-advisory.pdf?sfvrsn=411ba18e_6 (27 June 2023).

Johnston, P. and Scanlon, D. (2021). *An Examination of Dyslexia Research and Instruction With Policy Implications. Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice*.ᵃ Vol. 70, 107–128. https://readingrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/An-Examination-of-Dyslexia-Research.pdf (12 June 2023).

Manitoba. *The Education Administration Act*, C.C.S.M. c. E10. Education Administration Miscellaneous Provisions Regulation, M.R. 468/88. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/468-88r.php?lang=en.

———. *The Public Schools Act*, C.C.S.M. c. P250. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/p250.php?lang=en.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. 2022. *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba*. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf/standards_for_student_services.pdf (12 June 2023).

Neitzel, A.J., Lake, C., Pellegrini, M., and Slavin, R.E. (2022). "A Synthesis of Quantitative Research on Programs for Struggling Readers in Elementary Schools." *Read Res Q*, 57(1), 149–179. https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/rrq.379 (12 June 2023).

Slavin, R. E., Lake, C., Chambers, B., Cheung, A., and Davis, S. (2009). "Effective Reading Programs for the Elementary Grades: A Best-Evidence Synthesis." *Review of Educational Research*, 79(4), 1391–1466. https://readingrecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Effective_Reading_Programs_for_the_Elementary_Grad.pdf (12 June 2023).Thomas, P. L. (2022). *How to End the Reading War and Serve the Literacy Needs of All Students: A Primer for Parents, Policy Makers, and People Who Care*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

Wyse and Bradbury (2022). *Reading wars or reading reconciliation? A critical examination of robust research evidence, curriculum policy and teachers' practices for teaching phonics and reading*. BERA. https://bera-journals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/rev3.3314 (12 June 2023).