

# READING & WRITING

## Colorado Annual Standards Review



## The State's Look at Literacy

2007

**A report on the performance of our  
state's reading and writing  
standards and recommendations for  
stronger achievement in literacy.**

**cde**

Colorado Department of Education



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READING AND WRITING

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*Colorado Annual Standards Review*

*The State's  
Look at Literacy*



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## COLORADO'S READING & WRITING STANDARDS REVIEW

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*This is the third in a series of annual reviews of the Colorado Model Content Standards. Its purpose is to identify student performance over time on measures of our existing standards, identify ways to affirm and strengthen our standards and more clearly articulate the practices used by Colorado schools to make substantial gain in the achievement of students to the state's standards.*

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### Year of Reading and Writing" Process

The Office of Learning and Results visited, presented and interviewed over 300 literacy-minded policy, educator, and university-based individuals. This nine-month series of studying and listening, and asking was statewide. Research on data points and historical trend data was gathered from state and national resources, university faculty, and department staff including finance, licensure, special education, English language acquisition, assessment, Title I and information management services.

### Timeline (2006 – 2007)

September	Examined history of Colorado Standards and Assessment Frameworks in reading and writing
September	Compared international and national literacy standards with student performance
September	Examined existing Colorado student literacy performance data
Sept – Dec	Conducted classroom observations and interviews statewide
Sept – Dec	Examined literacy teacher preparation, licensure, and professional development standards
Sept – April	Shared data with: State Board of Education 13 sites statewide Higher Education Groups BOCES leadership Superintendent and principal state meetings Teacher groups Professional development leaders Literacy educator professional associations
Jan – April	Identified, surveyed, visited schools making gains or getting better than expected outcomes
Jan – March	Review of current research on literacy cognition & learning
April	Review of existing literacy resources
May	Statewide Reading Summit
July	Summary of statewide review of reading & writing standards
Sept – Nov	Statewide focus groups assembled for any work on the standards
Dec- Feb	Statewide discussion of focus group work
February 2008	State Board approval of any changes

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## NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF K-12 READING & WRITING

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As the reading wars rage on across America, millions of children are caught in the crossfire. Literacy skills remain stagnant nationwide, while the age of information and technology rapidly increases literacy demands and globalizes access to a highly educated workforce.

In the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) of 2001, an international comparison of the reading skills of fourth graders from 35 countries across the globe, 11 out of 35 countries outperformed the United States in reading. On the precursor assessment used in the International Reading Study (IRS) in 1991 and repeated in 2001, US fourth graders showed no significant change in reading achievement over ten years.

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), an international assessment of 15 year olds (10<sup>th</sup> graders) from 31 countries nationwide found in 2000, 14 countries performed as well as or outperformed the United States in reading.

The United States has no mandated national standards for reading. However, all 50 states participate voluntarily in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). On average, fourth grade reading scores were 1 point higher and eighth grade reading scores were 1 point lower in 2005 than in 2003. Overall, only 31 percent of fourth-graders, 31 percent of eighth-graders, and 35 percent twelfth-graders performed at or above proficient in reading in 2005.

This overall low achievement is not a clear representation of the inequity in achievement in this “land of opportunity”. Significant achievement gaps exist in the performance of fourth-graders’ in 2005 with 40% of white students scoring at or above proficient and only 13% of black students and 15% of Hispanic students scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP reading assessment. Similarly, a gap exists related to poverty, with 42% of students not eligible for free/reduced lunch scoring at or above proficient and only 15% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch scoring at or above proficient in reading. These achievement gaps continue to be evident in the performance of eighth-graders with 37% of white students and 38% of students not eligible for free/reduced lunch scoring at or above proficient in reading and only 11% of black students, 14% of Hispanic students and 15% of students eligible for free/reduced lunch score at or above proficient. (NCES, 2005)

These low levels of literacy skills for American children result in negative outcomes for individuals and our society as a whole. Students with limited literacy skills are less likely to be successful in other academic content areas and more likely to drop out. High school dropouts have higher unemployment rates and higher incarceration rates. In addition, only about one-third of high school graduates are adequately prepared for college, many having to take remedial reading and writing courses. (NASBE, 2006) The median annual earnings in 2004 of Americans ages 25-34 with a high school diploma or GED was \$30,400 for males and \$24,000 for females. In contrast, with a bachelor’s degree or higher, males were making \$50,700 and females \$40,300 (NCES, 2006). Compounding the problem, limited literacy skills are recursive in nature.

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## NATIONAL OVERVIEW OF K-12 READING & WRITING

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When students who do not obtain basic literacy skills grow up and have children of their own, their children are likely to be at risk of academic failure due to family risk factors such as living below the poverty level, mother's highest education less than a high school diploma or GED, and living in a single parent household. (USDE, 2005)

In a time when education and innovation are the most valued commodities worldwide, Colorado is faced with what has been coined in education circles as the "Colorado Paradox". The paradox is that while Colorado attracts highly educated adults and has one of the highest college graduation rates in the nation, its high school graduation rate ranks 30th in the nation.

So, how do we stop battling among ourselves and turn the Colorado paradox into a collaboration that results in increased student success and closing of the achievement gap?

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## COLORADO READING & WRITING STANDARDS

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Colorado's Model Reading and Writing Standards were adopted by the Colorado State Board of Education in 1995. The assessment frameworks, which articulate each reading and writing benchmark that students are expected to know on the Colorado Student Assessment Program, were built beginning in 2000.

The Colorado Reading and Writing Content Standards were developed by experienced Colorado educators both from the field and in higher education. The work was revised through public meetings and written reviews. More than a year was spent listening, responding and discussing the documents. (See Appendix D for a complete list of the 1995 Colorado Model Reading and Writing Content Standards Taskforce.)

The numerical order of the six reading and writing content standards did not imply any particular judgments regarding their relative importance or teaching priorities. In fact, Standards 2 and 3 – are exclusively writing standards. The expressed expectations about what students should know and be able to do include four specific objectives for success in the workplace, life and as a responsible citizen. These included the process of becoming fluent readers, writers and speakers. The second was the ability to communicate effectively, concisely, coherently and imaginatively. The third expressed expectation of the task force was the potential to recognize the power of language and use that power ethically and creatively. Finally, the task force recognized the need to be at ease communicating in an increasingly technological world. (See Appendix C for a list of the 1995 Colorado Model Reading & Writing Content Standards.)

**No state literacy curriculum exists in Colorado as textbooks, curriculum decisions, and supplemental resources are decided and purchased at a local district level.**

No state literacy curriculum exists in Colorado as textbooks, curriculum decisions, and supplemental resources are decided and purchased at a local district level. Also, at the local level, individual schools and districts determine when a literacy topic is introduced or offered.

Various American educational institutions have rated and ranked individual states' standards and performance based on a host of variable conditions. The national teacher union, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), put a premium on the overall *quality* of standards as written. Colorado's standards were given an "*adequate*" rating. The Fordham Foundation rates reading standards based on state's adopted standards, benchmarks, and curriculum guidelines. Fordham evaluated and graded Colorado standards with the grade of "C-". *Education Week* evaluates states' reading standards based on clarity and alignment. Colorado was given a "C".

At the national level, conversations continue in the discussion to build both national standards and national assessments. This debate is a similar topic as Colorado discusses minimum high school reading and writing graduation requirements. Both will resolve themselves as the evidence and policy mindsets converge.

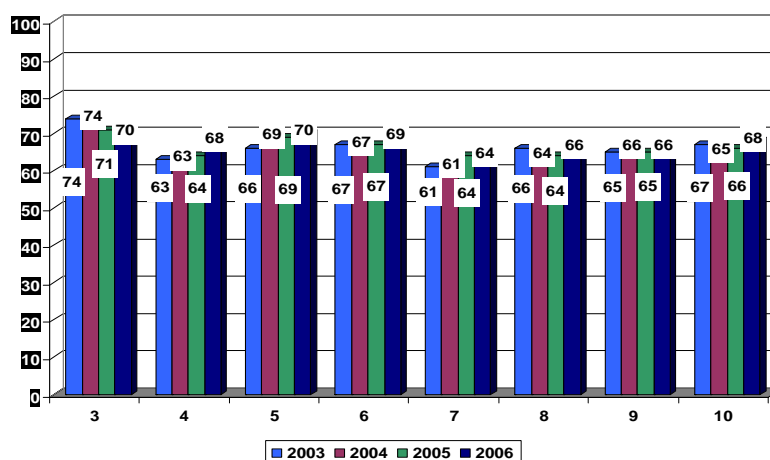
# READING & WRITING ACHIEVEMENT IN COLORADO

## Achievement over Time

Reading achievement in Colorado, across grade levels, has remained flat over the last six years. Figures actually show that over this course of time, Colorado has seen an overall decline of 2% of students reading at the proficient or above level. On average 67% of students are scoring proficient or above.

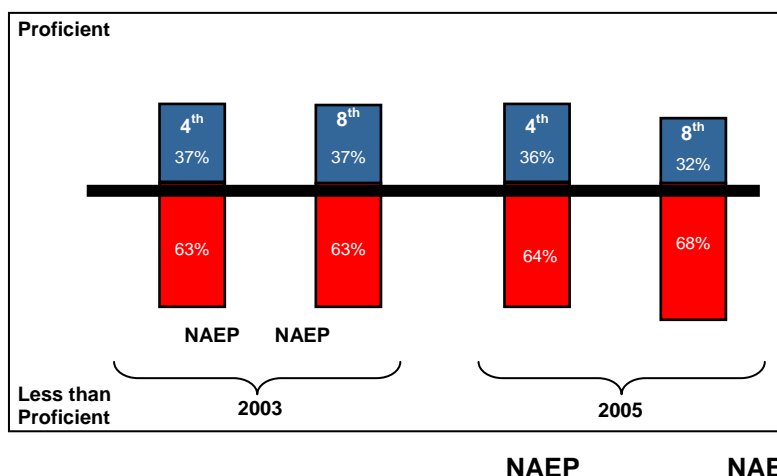
CSAP Reading – Proficient and Advanced 2003-2006

Reading achievement in Colorado, across grade levels, has remained flat over the last six years.



## NAEP Reading and Writing

Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), “The Nation’s Report Card”, indicates that 25 states performed the same or better than Colorado on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade assessment in 2005, and 27 states performed the same or better on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade assessment.



The NAEP illustrates a different picture of our students showing only 36% of 4<sup>th</sup> graders at the proficient level and only 32% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders. This difference between state and national proficiencies is marked.

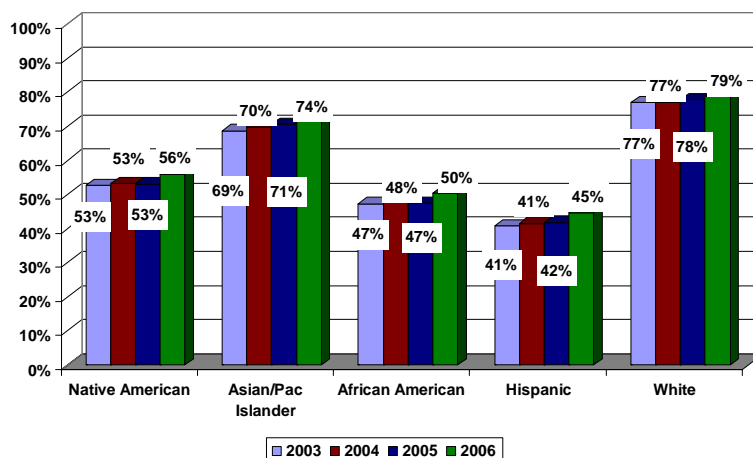
## READING & WRITING ACHIEVEMENT IN COLORADO

In 2009, the new NAEP Reading Framework will be launched. The Framework is consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and will not advocate a particular approach to instruction. The Framework makes extensive use of international reading assessments and exemplary state reading standards. For the first time in NAEP, vocabulary will be measured explicitly.

### Which Students Struggle Most?

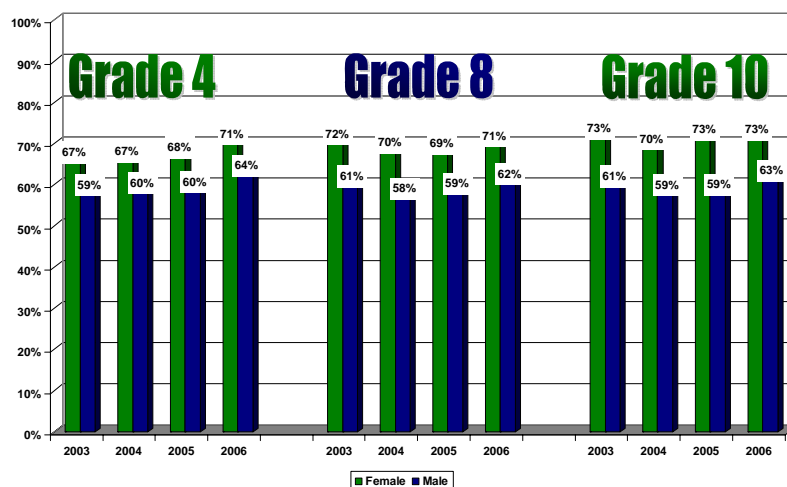
A significant gap in literacy skills is apparent between ethnicities with White and Asian students performing a third better than Black and Hispanic students. This gap in literacy skills between ethnicities has potentially devastating implications for academic and employment success of a growing number of students. The changing demographic profile within Colorado demands that we put a forced focus on closing this achievement gap.

**Reading by Ethnicity – 2003-2006**



The much-discussed gap in performance between boys and girls is evident in Colorado, as it is in states across the nation and around the world (NAEP, PISA, PIRLS).

**Reading by Gender – Grades 4, 8 and 10 from 2003-2006**



### The Reading & Writing Teaching Field

Recent advances in scientific research in reading have necessitated a sense of urgency to move the knowledge acquired from the convergence of research findings into daily practice in the classrooms of Colorado.

Reading achievement scores among Colorado's children over the last several years show limited growth. As a result, the Colorado State Board of Education has established a focused priority on increasing literacy achievement in Colorado.

Teacher quality has been shown to be a critical factor in student achievement (NASBE, 2006). In fact, the absence of quality teaching over multiple years may have a devastatingly negative impact. Therefore, teacher education and qualifications play an important role in increasing reading and writing achievement in Colorado.

Initial reading and writing instruction is the responsibility of the elementary teacher. Currently, there are 38,489 elementary school teachers in Colorado. Approximately, 6,671 Colorado teachers currently hold secondary English Language Arts endorsements and 472 hold Reading endorsements.

Colorado candidates for initial educator licenses are required to take and pass a content test for endorsement in any content area(s) in which they will teach. For example, elementary school teachers take an elementary test and secondary English teachers take an English content test. A dedicated reading and writing content test is required only for reading teachers and reading specialists. The content assessment is intended to determine the content knowledge of those candidates seeking licensing and endorsement and is based on what Colorado PK-12 practitioners and content and preparation program faculty have determined a first-year teacher should know and be able to demonstrate.

Currently, the Colorado State Board of Education has two assessments:

- The National Evaluation Systems (NES) PLACE test (Program for Licensing Assessments for Colorado Educators) is built on Colorado's teacher performance-based standards, which were, in turn, built on the State Board's-adopted Colorado student content standards.
- The Education Testing Service (ETS) provides an optional nationally based testing instrument, the Praxis II, also adopted by the State Board.

Colorado candidates in teacher preparation programs are required to pass their applicable licensing endorsement content exams *prior* to student teaching.

Those teaching in Title I programs or schools in Colorado must be either fully licensed and endorsed, or "Highly Qualified" (indicating that they have completed 24-semester hours in their content area[s] or have passed their content test[s]) in the subject matter they teach.

### The Teacher Endorsement Preparation Standards in Reading & Writing

Colorado reading teacher preparation includes and incorporates both nationally recognized literacy standards and the content knowledge required of Colorado students in the classroom, as identified in Colorado's Model Content Standards for students.

Colorado's teacher endorsement preparation standards in literacy were adopted, by the State Board of Education, in September 2003. Colorado teacher preparation Standard One: Knowledge of Literacy is attached in the appendix.

The content of Colorado reading and writing teacher preparation programs is based on three elements:

1. Nationally-recognized reading and writing standards for teachers;
2. Colorado's student reading and writing content standards; and
3. The candidate's ability to demonstrate literacy application and *effectively* instruct students in reading and writing.

All institutions with *new literacy programs*, including elementary education, special education, linguistically diverse education, early childhood, and gifted/talented are required to show how their programs provide their literacy teaching candidates with the content knowledge required under the State Board of Education adopted rules (see Standard One: Knowledge of Literacy, Appendix A). Higher education institutions with *new literacy programs* must illustrate how they determine that their candidates can effectively deliver that content.

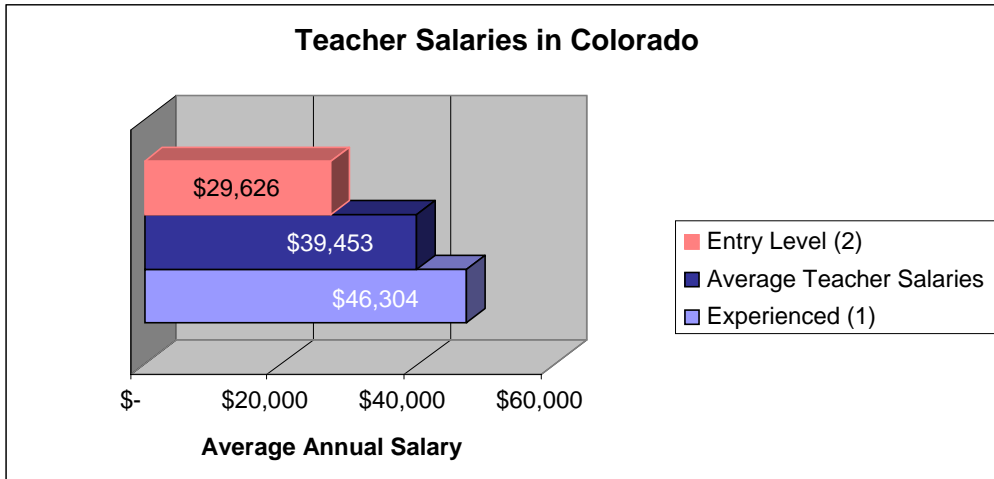
**Colorado literacy teacher preparation includes both nationally recognized literacy standards and Colorado student standards.**

All institutions with *previously approved* literacy programs are reviewed on a five-year cycle to insure that the content of their literacy teacher preparation programs is consistent with the teacher preparation licensing and endorsement standards. If their content does not match, the programs are not submitted to the Colorado State Board for re-approval.

In 2006, the Colorado Department of Education developed the Colorado Teacher. Preparation Program Approval Rubric and Review Checklist for Literacy Courses to be used in the review of literacy courses. This process is intended to ensure that teacher preparation programs are implementing the State Board of Education's Standards for the Approval of the Program Content of Professional Education and Professional Development of Teachers and Special Service Personnel - Standard One: Knowledge of Literacy.

### Reading Teacher Salaries and the Marketplace

Based on 2003 data (IES, USDOE), the following chart illustrates average Colorado language arts teacher salaries.



Footnote to Teacher Salaries Graph

- 1) Experienced Teachers are those with 15 or more years of experience plus a Masters degree.
- 2) Entry Level Teachers have little experience and no Masters degree.

Colorado teacher salaries have generally been higher in the Metro area and in suburban schools, than those in the Northeast and Southeast regions of Colorado, and in smaller towns that are more rural.

**Nearly three-quarters of Colorado teachers have been trained in out-of-state preparation programs.**

Nearly three-quarters of Colorado's teachers are trained in out-of-state programs. Out-of-state applicants for Colorado educator licenses must provide documented evidence of three-years, or more, of demonstrated teaching experience, or pass their applicable content-area tests. For an initial endorsement, secondary language arts teachers are required to have 30-hours in language arts coursework and pass the State Board-approved English content test.

The state educator recruitment web page, [www.TeachinColorado.org](http://www.TeachinColorado.org) registers all regions of the state currently hiring for language arts positions.

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## COLORADO READING & WRITING EDUCATORS

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As the long-term Colorado student reading and writing performance data were showcased in regional presentations throughout the state and during subsequent interviews and classroom observations, questions were posed to the field:

- ➡ **Is the 3rd grade CSAP reading test adequate?**
- ➡ **Do we really know how well our Kindergarten, First and Second Graders are learning to read and write?**
- ➡ **Why are CSAP READING results inconsistent with other standardized tests (e.g. ACT READING and NAEP READING)?**
- ➡ **Why do we have four years of flat reading and writing achievement results on any standardized test?**
- ➡ **Why do students scoring in the unsatisfactory category remain in the unsatisfactory category over time?**
- ➡ **Are the organization, wording and rigor of the Model Content Standards in Reading & Writing efficient and effective?**

The following responses emerged:

- ➡ In every discussion, the standards and benchmarks were seen to be too broad and vague. What does it mean to appreciate literature? How does it translate to write and speak for a variety of purposes?
- ➡ The benchmarks were perceived as repetitive or dated. The absence of an 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade articulation and the difference of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade test from the 4-10<sup>th</sup> sets up different expectations. Where is the alignment of consistent CBLA proficiencies with the K-3<sup>rd</sup> grade benchmarks?
- ➡ A slight majority indicated that a third grade CSAP test that was comparable to the other third grade content tests and the 4<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> reading would be more helpful. (All agreed that it does not need to be any longer or more difficult.)
- ➡ Every session indicated the need for more professional development for teachers in reading and writing pedagogy.
- ➡ The majority of educators and district leaders wanted direction from the state about end of year early reading benchmark tools. The need for comparable data and support based on this information must come without penalty or judgment. The minority were concerned about previous local decisions that may run counter to a statewide common tool.
- ➡ Concern was expressed in every meeting about the low cut point expectations on all Reading CSAP tests. Also, concern was noted for the implications to schools and our longitudinal data in attempting to fix this subject area's low cut point threshold.
- ➡ Perceived reasons for flat reading performance across the state most often included poverty, school funding and student mobility. All groups discussed the need for professional development necessary to meet the reading needs of ALL students, including students learning English as a second language.

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## COLORADO READING & WRITING EDUCATORS

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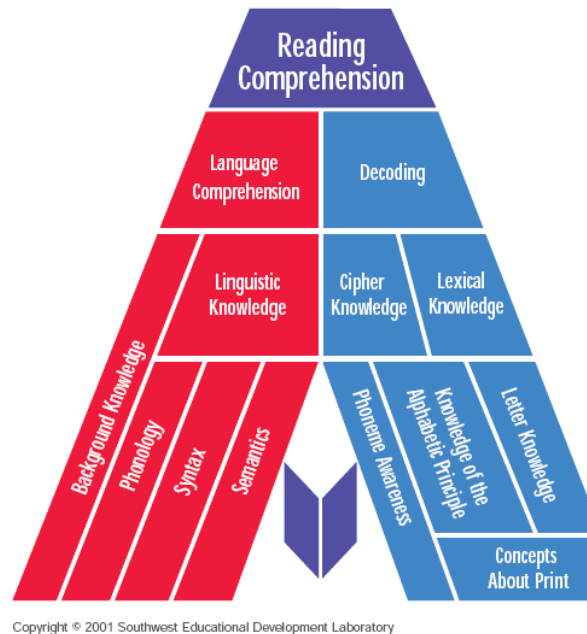
- The need for greater emphasis on information literacy and media in reading tasks was often discussed.
  - At every visit, there was a call for a voluntary scope and sequence of the essential learnings of reading and writing at each grade level.
  - All voices agreed on the need for the state to support the unique needs for adolescent literacy and explicit technical assistance for middle and high school reading and writing instruction.
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## RESEARCH ON READING & WRITING COGNITION AND LEARNING

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### “The Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read: A Framework”



See Appendix B

### Early Reading Research (Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

*“A substantial body of existing research about the development of word reading among primary-age children has contributed to successful interventions for children who experience difficulties in reading.” (Snow et al., 2002, p.xvii)*

Convergence of scientific research over the last 30 plus years indicates that the following five components are essential to reading acquisition. Systematic and explicit instruction in these essential components have been found to support the acquisition of reading skills and reduce the risk of reading difficulties (National Reading Panel (NRP), 2000; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998).

#### Phonemic Awareness

- A solid body of evidence indicates that the sensitivity to sounds within words is critical in the early acquisition of reading skills
- Phonemic awareness can be directly taught and is not generally dependent on intelligence, socio-economic status, or parents' level of education

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## RESEARCH ON READING & WRITING COGNITION AND LEARNING

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### Phonics and Word Recognition

- Alphabetic languages, like English, are comprised of a series of individual speech sounds (phonemes) which are represented by letters. This is generally referred to as the Alphabetic Principle
- The failure of an individual to notice that spoken words can be made up of these individual sounds and to apply that understanding to reading can lead to profound difficulty in learning to read
- Phonics instruction stresses the relationship between letters and letter patterns and the sounds they represent
- Systematic phonics instruction has been found to support word recognition in students kindergarten through 6<sup>th</sup> grade
- Early word identification and phonemic decoding skills are strong predictors of later reading comprehension, better than IQ and verbal ability.

### Fluency

- Fluency, the ability to read words orally with speed, accuracy and expression, is necessary for reading comprehension
- Slow, laborious reading makes it difficult to remember what is read and takes cognitive energy away from making connections with background knowledge and vocabulary
- Guided repeated oral reading has been shown to increase word recognition, fluency and reading comprehension
- A relationship has been found between the amount of time spent reading and fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension
- By fifth grade, reading fluency problems are very difficult to remediate

### Vocabulary

- Knowledge of word meanings are essential to text comprehension
- Additional studies are needed to determine the best ways to teach and measure vocabulary
- Vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly
- Teaching words before reading and providing multiple exposures to words support vocabulary development

### Text Comprehension

- Gaining meaning from text requires the reader to actively engage in thinking about what they have read
- Text comprehension is dependent upon language comprehension abilities and decoding skills
- Direct, explicit teaching of comprehension strategies supports the development of reading comprehension

(NRP, 2000; Adams, 1990; Rathvon, 2004)  
(Snow, Burns, Griffin, 1998)

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## RESEARCH ON READING & WRITING COGNITION AND LEARNING

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### Adolescent Reading Research (4<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade)

Recent national attention has been focused on the need to expand the limited research base on adolescent reading development. (McCombs, Kirby, Barney, Darilek & Magee, 2005) Studies suggest that many children, who advance to 4<sup>th</sup> grade with basic decoding skills, do not yet have adequate fluency or reading comprehension skills to be successful in later academic and workforce requirements. (McCombs et al., 2005) While we have learned much from scientific research in the area of learning to read, much is still unknown in the area of reading to learn (Snow, 2002; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003).

The RAND reading study characterizes the “knowledge base on reading comprehension” as “sizeable but sketchy, unfocused, and inadequate as a basis for reform in reading comprehension instruction.” (Snow et al., 2002, p. xii). Still, research findings to date indicate the following important elements of instruction for the development of adolescent literacy: (Kamil, 2003)

#### Motivation

- A student’s willingness and desire to read are influenced by their personal goals, values, and beliefs about the outcomes of reading
- Strategies such as activating prior knowledge, searching for information and self monitoring have been found to increase self-efficacy in students

#### Word Analysis and Decoding

- In the overall population of students, one in ten are estimated to have serious difficulties with word analysis and decoding
- Systematic, explicit, and direct instruction in the sound-spelling relationships and connections among word analysis, word recognition and semantic access at the syllable and morpheme level has been found to help remediate decoding problems

#### Fluency

- Oral reading instruction results in increased reading fluency and reading comprehension
- Older readers who struggle with fluency appear unable to catch up to their peers in reading fluency, even when accurate decoding has developed

#### Vocabulary

- Direct instruction in vocabulary has been found to increase both vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension
- Effective vocabulary instruction is both direct and indirect and provides repetitive interactions with vocabulary words

#### Comprehension

- The following comprehension strategies have been found to be effective: monitoring understanding, cooperative learning, graphic organizers, text structures, question answering, question generating, summarization
- Direct instruction in comprehension strategies has been found to be effective across content areas

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## RESEARCH ON READING & WRITING COGNITION AND LEARNING

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### Reading Disabilities Research

Research on students with reading disabilities has contributed significantly to the overall understanding of how reading develops for typically developing children and why children with disabilities struggle to acquire the same skills. (Snow et al., 1998; NRP, 2000; Torgesen et al., 2003)

In the area of reading achievement, reading disability represents “a matter of degree.” The more severe the deficit is, the greater the impact of the disability on an individual’s life. It is estimated that as many as 1 in 5 individuals struggle with reading acquisition (Shaywitz, 2004).

The most common reading disability, referred to as dyslexia or specific reading disability is characterized by deficits in accurate and/or fluent word recognition or decoding. A second, less prevalent reading disability, referred to as hyperlexia, is characterized by adequate decoding skills but significant difficulties with reading comprehension (Shaywitz, 2004; IDA, 2007; Haskins Labs, 2007).

For students with specific reading disabilities, systematic, explicit phonics instruction has been demonstrated to have a significant positive effect on the development of reading skills (NRP, 2000).

Effective instruction for students with specific reading disabilities: includes explicit teaching of phonemic decoding skills with opportunities for supervised practice applying skills, is more intensive in terms of time and duration, and is provided in instructional groups of no more than four students. (Torgesen, Rashotte, Alexander, Alexander, & MacPhee, 2003)

### Literacy for English Language Learners Research

The National Literacy Panel examined the limited research currently available on acquiring literacy in English as a second language and found evidence that the same five essential components of reading instruction are necessary for students who are English language learners.

The development of oral language proficiency is also critical and often underemphasized in instruction. Reading instruction should take place concurrently with oral language instruction, not be delayed until oral language proficiency is attained (Quiroga, et al., 2001). While oral language proficiency in English is not a strong predictor of decoding skills for English language learners, it is necessary for the development of reading comprehension and writing skills (August and Shanahan, 2006).

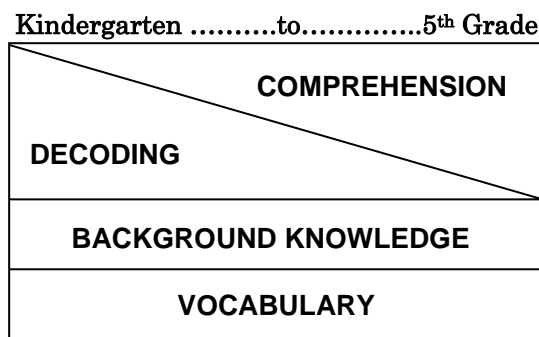
Studies suggest that the basic sequencing of reading instruction is the same for English language learners, with more time spent on decoding earlier and more time spent on reading comprehension later in reading acquisition. In addition, intensive, explicit instruction in vocabulary and background knowledge should be provided throughout the sequence of instruction. (August and Shanahan, 2006)

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## RESEARCH ON READING & WRITING COGNITION AND LEARNING

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### Instructional Sequence for English Language Learners



### Writing Research

*“Most students cannot systematically produce writing at the high levels of skill, maturity, and sophistication required in a complex, modern economy.” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 54)*

Although reading and writing are complementary skills, they develop in different ways. Writing is an interactive process that can be used to both demonstrate knowledge and to enhance knowledge (National Commission on Writing (NCW), 2003). The 2005 ACT found one third of high school students planning to go to college did not meet the benchmarks for success in entry-level English composition courses (National Commission on Writing (NCW), 2004). Writing skills are often a gatekeeper to employment and promotion opportunities and over three billion dollars is spent annually on writing remediation for employees in the United States (NCW, 2004).

While research in the area of writing development is still emerging, a meta-analysis of existing research conducted by Graham and Perin (2007) indicates the following are some key elements of writing instruction supported by research:

- Teaching writing strategies for planning, revising, and editing compositions
- Teaching students how to summarize texts explicitly and systematically
- Arranging instruction so that adolescents work together on collaborative writing
- Assigning students specific, reachable goals for writing
- Using computers and word processors as instructional supports for writing assignments
- Teaching students to construct more complex, sophisticated sentences

Quality writing is achieved through the interdependence of writing skills and application.

**Learning to Write** – sub-skills and processes such as handwriting and spelling; rich knowledge of vocabulary; mastery of the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and grammar; and the use of strategies, and

**Writing to Learn** – writing as a means to extend and deepen students’ knowledge and to learn content specific subject matter

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## COLORADO FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR READING & WRITING INSTRUCTION

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### Literacy existing resources

Most districts use a seven-year cycle of decision-making per subject area. While school and district budget decisions vary, Colorado schools receive from the state up to \$165 per student, per year, to purchase equipment, resources, textbooks and supplementary materials for curriculum subject areas. This is over \$126 million dollars annually. Many larger districts obtain overrides to supplement this item of revenue at the local level. Additionally, other districts administer annual gifts, grants and donations to the reading and writing instruction agenda. Some of these same resources are also used, instead, to limit class size or alter the number of instructional classes per day. Some dollars are spent on para-professionals.

Every district in the state determines how they will spend their dollars to acquire reading textbooks, writing materials, supplementary material, and reading and writing-appropriate software during their decision-making year. The state does not approve or deny the local district decisions about how to spend this revenue.

While salaries (IES, 2003) for Language Arts teachers have been addressed, the aggregate local, state and federal investment exceeds \$130 million a year for secondary Language Arts teacher salaries; elementary teacher salaries are conservatively estimated at \$249 million.

State research monies in reading, reading difficulties, writing labs and other literacy work is difficult to determine. Current national expenditures on research and development in education (RAND, 2000) is only .3% of total national K-12 spending. Research and development in other fields nationally is 2-3%.

State literacy initiatives are available in most every district. These funds are a composite of local revenue, state grants and federal initiatives. Examples of these reading and writing dollars include:

#### A Sampling of State and Federal Science Dollars

\$99,000,000	Five year total award of Colorado Read to Achieve grants
\$62,000,000	Six year total grant award total Reading First Schools
\$57,000,000	Average annual Title I and II schools and district consolidated reading resources
\$2,584,846	Family Literacy grants and Migrant Title III literacy grants
\$500,000	More than a third of McREL services annually for Professional Development and research
\$328,000	Average annual grants for literacy teacher professional growth and student writing development from state and university partnerships
\$315,000	State and Regional IDEA “set aside” reading initiatives

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## COLORADO SCHOOLS THAT GET RESULTS

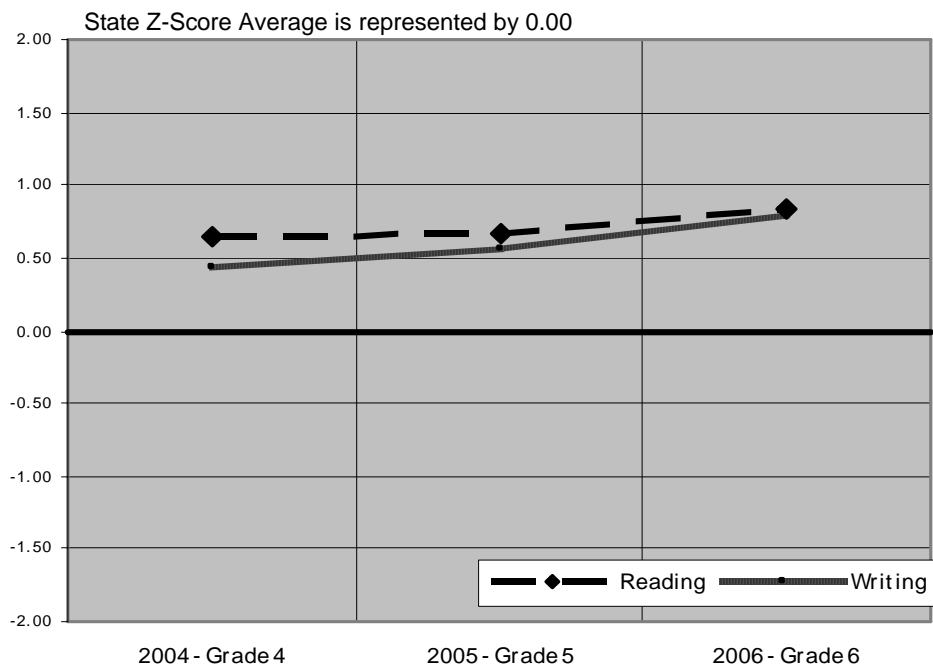
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One of the most powerful ways to analyze student achievement data is to examine the progress of the same students over time. It is also important that this examination include data for students who are in the same school district so district policies and program can be evaluated.

The data used to find schools “getting results” are cohort data based on CSAP reading and writing scale scores from 2004 to 2006. The individual student scores were matched using the state assigned student identifier (SASID) for students who remained in the same district (not necessarily in the same school) from 2004 to 2006. Students included in the analyses at each school were students who achieved the normal grade progression over the three-year period. For example, a fifth-grade student in 2006 had to have a valid score on the fifth grade CSAP in 2006, the fourth grade CSAP in 2005 and the third grade CSAP in 2004.

Statistical significance was determined by statistically testing the difference between the 2004 standardized mean score and the 2006 standardized mean score for each school. Schools of various sizes were included in the analysis. The statistical significance test adjusts to the number of students included in each grade and school. The significance test also adjusts to the use of matched data over time.

For example:



**What do “Literacy Successful Schools” do  
to Achieve these Results?**

Recruit and develop teachers with deep knowledge of research proven reading and writing instruction and demonstrated student success.

Monitor the progress of every student using proven and reliable tools and use individual student data to drive all instructional decisions.

Prioritize time for literacy by establishing a minimum of 90 minutes of dedicated literacy instruction for all students with additional time for interventions and enhancements.

Establish and use explicit grade level expectations, performance benchmarks, and align curriculum and instruction to these specific outcomes.

Provide direct, explicit instruction and opportunities for guided practice in essential reading and writing skills.

Use all content areas as opportunity for literacy instruction.

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 1. Collect and use individual student literacy data to drive instructional decisions.

(Without near medical-like information by skill set, teaching reading and writing to ALL students is not easy.)

*Progress monitoring and effective diagnostic assessment systems include screening, progress checks, diagnosis and benchmarking of proficiency. The value of this kind of assessment is in the meaningfulness of instructional implications.*

*To understand, by skill, each student is reading and writing difficulty is to begin to know how to effectively teach literacy. The complexity of learning to read and the concomitant value of reading demands that a full picture of student learning be made available and understood.*

#### Resources:



- a) CSAP Assessment Frameworks for Reading and Writing: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/csap/frameworks/index.htm>
- b) CBLA Assessment Flowcharts <http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/index.htm>
- c) Response to Intervention  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdesped/RTI.asp>

#### Guiding Questions

1. Do you have valid and reliable assessment tools? How do you know?
2. How do you identify kids at risk in reading and writing difficulties?
3. How do you use data to group students for instruction, select interventions, manage your data and monitor progress of students?
4. Do you have access to an efficient data management system?
5. How often are members of your staff trained in reading and writing feedback tools?
6. How much do you invest in high quality learning assessments?
7. Do your teachers value the need for these tools?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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2. Establish at least 90 minutes a day for literacy instruction with additional time for intervention and tutoring.

(If reading and writing are so essential to other areas of learning, how much time is it worth in your day to have student's master literacy?)

*The degree to which successful schools devote their valuable instructional time to literacy is one of their common characteristics for getting student achievement. The view that all school resources and time are "on the table" for these opportunities to diagnose, teach, monitor and nurture the love and skill of literacy is essential.*

*The additional time for tutoring and intervention must be seen as part of a good teaching process and not a temporary and "special" maneuver. More than 90 minutes of dedicated instruction will be required to enhance gifted readers and to target and tutor all students with discrete reading difficulties. To view this time as expendable is to see these students' reading success as expendable.*

### Resources:

- d) *The Prisoners Of Time* Report of the National Education Commission on Time [www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime](http://www.ed.gov/pubs/PrisonersOfTime)
- e) The Education Trust Report <http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust>
- f) Colorado Reading First 90 Minute Literacy Policy Brief [http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/crf/downloads/PolicyBriefs/RB\\_PolicyBrief.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdecomp/crf/downloads/PolicyBriefs/RB_PolicyBrief.pdf)



### Guiding Questions

1. How much actual time do you currently devote to literacy teaching?
2. Do your teachers believe that this amount of time is necessary?
3. What kind of time is proportioned in your current professional development to literacy teaching and learning?
4. What is currently getting more priority in your day than literacy?
5. How does time symbolize what you value to your students?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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3. Ensure that every teacher is extremely immersed and thoroughly trained in research-based literacy knowledge and skills.

(Reading and writing instruction is more complex than is often conventionally believed. The process of learning to read and write is neither simple nor linear.)

*The assumption that reading and writing instruction can be acquired by a teacher on the job or over time with classroom experience and infrequent in-service does not bear out in student achievement results. What has once been given conventional and equal weight in university syllabi or professional development schedules is now being re-visited within higher education and district decision making.*



Resources:

g) Teacher Knowledge References

[www.cde.state.co.us/edprepprogram/downloads/Biblio\\_List.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/edprepprogram/downloads/Biblio_List.pdf)

h) Colorado Teacher Preparation Program Approval Rubric and Review Checklist for Literacy Courses

[www.cde.state.co.us/edprepprogram/downloads/Rubric.pdf](http://www.cde.state.co.us/edprepprogram/downloads/Rubric.pdf)

i) Teaching Reading Well - International Reading Association Research Synthesis

[www.reading.org/downloads/resources/teaching\\_reading\\_well.pdf](http://www.reading.org/downloads/resources/teaching_reading_well.pdf)

### Guiding Questions

1. In what ways can you determine the depth of knowledge and skills your teachers actually possess to effectively teach all students to read and write?
2. How can you evaluate traditional in-service material to embed the best research into reading and writing training?
3. How do you go about recruiting teachers with an aggressive knowledge and proven set of teaching skills in literacy?
4. Which students with specific reading difficulties need research improved practice? Who is responsible for collecting reading innovations?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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4. Plot and map the reading and writing standards and essential learnings into your grade- by- grade curriculum, daily lessons and text selections.

(When does the habit of the textbook running the class surrender to the few and essential standards?)

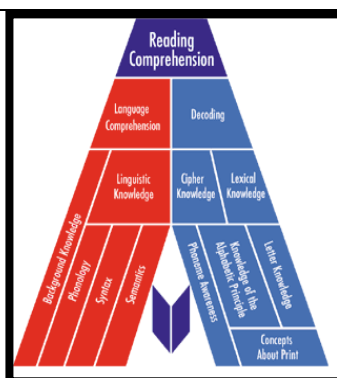
*More often, a reading program or textbook is the driver in public education than the school's own identification of the reading and writing central outcomes. What are the few and crucial reading and writing goals you hold for each grade? What are the benchmarks you set for all students?*

*Are these explicitly understood by your students, parents and fellow teachers? How aligned are your literacy expectations at each grade?*

Resources:

j) Southwest Educational Development Laboratory  
<http://www.sedl.org/reading/framework/frameworkk.pdf>.

k) Pikes Peak Literacy Strategies Project at  
[www.pplsp.org/materials.php](http://www.pplsp.org/materials.php)



### Guiding Questions

1. What are your current literacy benchmarks? Are they yours or are they your publisher's?
2. How would you agree as a staff and local school board about the "essential learnings"?
3. When do you gather and establish (or re-establish) the expectations each grade has in literacy?
4. Does anyone have grade-by-grade examples of unsatisfactory writing samples? What are the differences between partial proficient and proficient writing? What is an advanced sample of writing in the grade you teach? Do your students know this? Parents?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 5. Insist on both direct, explicit instruction and guided practice in essential reading and writing skills.

(How do you organize your students for small group instruction? What is the content of the instruction in your guided reading groups? How do you ensure that silent reading is being done and at an appropriate level?)

*Students need not be left to intuit the patterns and rules of written language. Still, to master reading and writing, students need opportunities to apply what they learn about language structures in meaningful ways to construct their knowledge of the world.*

#### Resources:

##### l) Reading First

<http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/PFRbooklet.pdf>

##### m) Reading Next

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/ReadingNext/ReadingNext.pdf>

##### n) Writing Next

<http://www.all4ed.org/publications/WritingNext/WritingNext.pdf>



#### Guiding Questions

- a. How well prepared are your teachers to explicitly teach the essential components of reading and diagnose what goes wrong for some students?
- b. How can you infuse direct instruction in comprehension strategies across content areas?
- c. How do you assess what your students are learning?
- d. In what ways do you hold students accountable for practicing reading and writing skills? How do they track their own progress?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 6. Guarantee that leadership has permission to hold all staff accountable for literacy instruction.

**(Is your entire building committed to seeing all students proficient in reading and writing?)**

*Traditionally, the language arts staff is the only personnel who are “eligible” to teach literacy to students. Now, however, all students are expected to be proficient readers and writers and it requires that all teachers expand their job description.*

*When leadership is explicit in asking hard questions and investing time and money in literacy, it signals to all members of the staff about the priorities the school has in the student literacy outcomes. Despite the initial discomfort associated with this straight talk and inquiry, teachers indicate that the culture shift is positive and the results are very beneficial for students.*



Resources:

o) Insistent Leadership Examples at <http://www.co-case.org/>

p) Profiles in Leadership and School Improvement McREL at [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org)

#### Guiding Questions

1. In what ways are both your principal and /or department leaders permitted to discuss the effectiveness of literacy instruction?
1. How are the boundaries of classroom walls and traditional job descriptions erased in favor of collaborative accountability?
2. How accountable is your building leadership now to student literacy achievement? What would it look like if the leadership were even more engaged in contributing to the literacy outcomes?
3. How clear are your superintendent and local board about which literacy concepts are expected to be known at which grades?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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7. Be clear that faculty meetings or Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) collaboratively own and regularly share literacy performance results.

(Are you talking about “cause and effect” on student results in your staff meetings or just reporting your activities?)

*Common faculty conversation must transcend the typical reporting styles and become data-supported learning opportunities. Action research has modeled how teachers can use actual student work and hypotheses to reflect on ever better practice.*

*The culture of most teacher meetings is not as results-based as it is anecdotal and qualitative. Reporting on the activities and assignments is not as effective as looking at the impact high quality instruction may or may not yield for your students. How does your staff value results-talk in meeting time?*



Resources:

q) Colorado Consortium For Data-Driven Decisions (C2D3) at [www.c2d3.org](http://www.c2d3.org)

r) SEDL - Issues About Change: Professional Learning Communities  
[www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.htm](http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.htm)

### Guiding Questions

1. Who monitors the quality of your PLC conversations?
2. Who is responsible for gathering the data for your faculty meetings?
3. How do you begin to change the mores of your meetings?
4. What is the motivation for your teachers to present student work and both the successes and failures of the craft?
5. Is it profitable to have one group present to other faculty groups each semester? How does this model lead you to think about beginning and ending of school years and the annual staff meetings your schools and districts always hold?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 8. Agree on common instructional literacy strategies across the school.

(Do you represent a school faculty with a common literacy mindset or a collection of well-intentioned individual practitioners?)

*When a school has a divided mind about the approach to teaching reading and writing it drains itself of momentum, time and money. As one grade introduces and approaches reading difficulties with one solution, another grade can be measuring an entirely different problem. The decisions behind one professional development program versus another become exhausting and unproductive.*

*Financially and intellectually, the faculty and local leadership can become drained at the multiple and often competing points of view. Schools in trouble often say “We are doing everything we can and nothing is working. Don’t ask me to do MORE!” Schools that get results have a unified approach to their instructional methods to literacy. They grow in depth and in data with a common research-based technique. Strong schools supplement students in the midst of reading difficulties or gifted needs with one or two additional enhancements, which all staff approve and use.*



#### Resources:

s) Center for Teaching Excellence

<http://www.cte.ku.edu/>

t) Standard and Poor's Study on Return on Investment [JS Online: Standard & Poor's takes stock of education](http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/mar05/313858.asp) –  
[www.jsonline.com/news/state/mar05/313858.asp](http://www.jsonline.com/news/state/mar05/313858.asp)

#### Guiding Questions

1. How much time are your teachers spending on competing methods to teach reading and writing?
2. What is your “return on investment”? Some small schools are spending \$275,000 on reading programs and get 40% of their students to grade level. How can you improve the expenditure-to-achievement ratio within your reading budget?
3. Who in your building or on your school board can help you keep track of your efficiencies and your fidelity to a writing or a reading program?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 9. Be explicit about grade level expectations to your own staff, students and parents.

(Are we sure, to the letter, what 6<sup>th</sup> grade writing looks like at grade level?)

*One chief characteristic of successful schools includes the explicit handling of benchmarked student work and the successive daily grading to that benchmarked standard. Freelance and independent scoring causes variability between the passing thresholds of one teacher to another. Standard notions of proficiency are essential to good teaching and student learning.*

*Successful schools invest plenty of time printing and discussing the difference between partially proficient and proficient student work. This “tuning” activity helps individual teachers learn what the expectations are for their students and improves their craft. Students and parents are encouraged to examine similar examples in order to learn what the school’s expectations are for their participation.*



#### Resources:

##### u) CDE RELEASED ITEMS

[http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/index\\_assess.html](http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/index_assess.html)

##### v) CBLA Proficiencies

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/action/CBLA/index.htm>

##### w) Reading and Writing Standards

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeassess/documents/standards/reading.pdf>

#### Guiding Questions

1. How much variability in grading occurs in your school?
2. How many students know explicitly the difference between unsatisfactory or partially proficient writing?
3. How much do your daily grades match the state thresholds for summative assessment?
4. Does your school facilitate time for teachers to discuss student work regularly?

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## TEN ESSENTIAL READING & WRITING IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 10. Acquire and leverage the best literacy-minded and performance-based volunteers.

**(Are your successful boosters, parents and business partners untapped literacy resources? Do your volunteers know your grade level expectations?)**

*Professional teaching demands contact time with students and educators follow through. Students need as much practice time as a school can offer. Writing requires opportunity to write and re-write. Conversations that invite critique and the reading of other people's writing are valuable to this life long skill.*

*With caution, schools should consider bringing the most literacy-minded community members into the school to give students even more time to practice hearing and reading literature. As long as the volunteers know your grade level expectations and have concrete outcomes, this contribution of public time has enormous potential for your students.*

Resources:

x) AMERICORP

<http://www.americorps.org/about/ac/index.asp>

y) Parent Teacher Association: [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org)

z) Effects of Family Literacy Interventions

[http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/pdf/lit\\_interventions.pdf](http://www.nifl.gov/partnershipforreading/publications/pdf/lit_interventions.pdf)



#### Guiding Questions

1. What popular and talented writers do you have in your community?
2. How do you convince educated volunteers to avoid free-lancing and encourage them to commit themselves to your grade level expectations?
3. How are you recruiting volunteers to read and invest their time to the listening and guided tutoring of better reading by your students?
4. How would you measure the value of this activity? How much time is too much when you encourage others to visit your school and “help”?

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## SUMMARY OF THE 10 ESSENTIAL LITERACY IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Collect and use individual student literacy data to drive instructional decisions.	To understand, by skill, each student's reading and writing difficulty is to begin to know how to effectively teach literacy. The complexity of learning to read and the concomitant value of reading demands that a full picture of student learning be made available and understood.
2. Establish at least 90 minutes a day for reading and writing instruction with <u>additional</u> time for intervention and tutoring	The degree to which successful schools devote their valuable instructional time to literacy is one of their common characteristics for getting student achievement. The view that all school resources and time are "on the table" for these opportunities to diagnose, teach, monitor and nurture the love and skill of literacy is essential.
3. Ensure that every teacher is extremely immersed and thoroughly trained in research-based literacy knowledge and skills.	The assumption that reading and writing instruction can be acquired by a teacher on the job or over time with classroom experience and infrequent in-service does not bear out in student achievement results
4. Plot and map the reading and writing standards and essential learnings into your grade- by- grade curriculum, daily lessons and text selections.	More often, a reading program or textbook is the driver in public education than the school's own identification of the reading and writing central outcomes. What are the few and crucial reading and writing goals you hold for each grade? What are the benchmarks you set for all students?
5. Insist on both direct, explicit instruction and guided practice in essential reading and writing skills.	Students need not be left to intuit the patterns and rules of written language. Still, to master reading and writing, students need opportunities to apply what they learn about language structures in meaningful ways to construct their knowledge of the world.
6. Guarantee that leadership has permission to hold all staff accountable for literacy instruction.	Traditionally, the language arts staff is the only personnel who are "eligible" to teach literacy to students. Now, however, all students are expected to be proficient readers and writers and it requires that all teachers expand their job description.  When leadership is explicit in asking hard questions and investing time and money in literacy, it signals to all members of the staff about the priorities the school has in the student literacy outcomes
7. Be clear that faculty meetings or Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) collaboratively own and regularly share literacy performance <u>results</u> .	Common faculty conversation must transcend the typical reporting styles and become data-supported learning opportunities. Action research has modeled how teachers can use actual student work and hypotheses to reflect on ever better practice.
8. Agree on common instructional literacy strategies across the school.	When a school has a divided mind about the approach to teaching reading and writing it drains itself of momentum, time and money. !" Schools that get results have a unified approach to their instructional methods to literacy. They grow in depth and in data with a common research-based technique. Strong schools supplement students in the midst of reading difficulties or gifted needs with one or two additional enhancements, which all staff approve and use.
9. Be explicit about grade level expectations to your own staff, students and parents.	One chief characteristic of successful schools includes the explicit handling of benchmarked student work and the successive daily grading to that benchmarked standard. Freelance and independent scoring causes variability between the passing thresholds of one teacher to another. Standard notions of proficiency are essential to good teaching and student learning.  Successful schools invest plenty of time printing and discussing the difference between partially proficient and proficient student work. This "tuning" activity helps individual teachers learn what the expectations are for their students and improves their craft.
10. Acquire and leverage the best literacy-minded and performance-based volunteers.	With caution, schools should consider bringing the most literacy-minded community members into the school to give students even more time to practice hearing and reading literature. As long as volunteers know your grade-level expectations and have concrete outcomes, this contribution of public time has enormous potential for your students.

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## SEVEN STATEWIDE READING & WRITING SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR SCHOOLS

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*Local classrooms and schools are not alone in raising student literacy performance, but they are the most direct and intimate point of contact with students. No Governor, lawmaker, state board member or state agency will ever be held responsible for good or bad student literacy performance.*

*Seven support systems do exist to put a forced focus on the very best reading and writing practices for our educators. This more precise focus has not always been applied, but could be a significant difference, especially to any school or district that does not always have local resource, or time to enhance literacy instruction beyond usual practice.*

*Below are possible recommendations of how each professionally supportive network might extend their own reach to effectively disseminate what we know:*

### **1. Literacy Support System: Reading and Writing Related Associations or Networks**

- a. Provide names of regional literacy teachers, professional writers, and educators/researchers with evidence of results who can coach and model best practice. They must collaborate and market with greater penetration the names of educators who can tutor others and diagnose common reading and writing teaching mistakes. These networks can continue to feature more specifically the current barriers that are appearing in classrooms with specific students.
- b. Capitalize on the data of early reading successful schools.
- c. Continue to offer the profession forums, newsletters, conferences and time to discuss the latest research.
- d. Subsidize monthly “webinars” of best practice and student work examples for teachers and para-professionals to share and discuss.
- e. Financially contribute and seek partnership with the most successful reading and writing programs in the state, which “seed” intense and long-term student achievement.

### **2. Literacy Support System: Teacher Networks and Associations**

- a. Continue support for teaching and learning outreach with schools.
- b. Consider the electronic dissemination of the reading and writing assessment frameworks, video clips of teaching and learning examples and names of colleagues who are being recognized for helping increase student literacy achievement in regions across the state.

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## SEVEN STATEWIDE READING & WRITING SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR SCHOOLS

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### **3. Literacy Support System: CDE (Colorado Department of Education)**

- a. Develop a Colorado Reading and Writing Webpage with resources for school districts.
- b. Offer, once a year, CTB/McGraw Hill scoring feedback “webinars” to teachers regarding specific observations about annual student reading and writing performance.
- c. Electronically issue annual, specific examples, by grade level, of student performance benchmark reminders and actual student work.
- d. Post annually the names of schools that move student literacy performance in significant ways.
- e. Leverage all federal and state dollars issued by CDE around more precise expectations for best practice.

### **4. Literacy Support System : Professional Development Community**

- a. Capitalize on the universal understanding of members for professional learning communities and for pre- and post- needs assessments training.
- b. Continue to offer professional development in the latest research behind reading and writing instruction. By deconstructing the assumptions teachers have about teaching literacy and making the most of in-service opportunities to re-build the new essentials in literacy instruction, the profession grows.
- c. Direct professional development communities to eschew conversation-based gatherings in favor of data driven and results based professional development in-services.
- d. Exploit even stronger partnerships with local community colleges and universities in order to build an intentional and long-term literacy mentor program for new literacy teachers.

### **5. Literacy Support System: Leadership Associations and District Administrators**

- a. Raise awareness and celebrate the critical role both administrators and teachers play in improving literacy performance. Examine in print and visit schools and districts called out as improving reading and writing achievement. Note the synergy and success of an intentional leadership agenda in literacy.
- b. Promote teacher supervision and evaluation practices aligned with research-proven instruction and the habits of classrooms with consistent literacy success.
- c. Support all administrators with more aggressive and effective recruiting outlets which match schools in search of open reading and writing positions with the most effective literacy teachers.

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## SEVEN STATWIDE READING & WRITING SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR SCHOOLS

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### **6. Literacy Support System: Local School Boards**

- a. Promote the explicit inclusion of research-based reading and writing practices in district curriculum and textbook decisions.
- b. Consider the findings of this report in teacher and administrator hiring's.
- c. Electronically disseminate to teachers in your district information about the characteristics of schools that get positive results in reading and writing.

### **7. Literacy Support System: Higher Education**

- a. Reinforce the Colorado Teacher Performance Standards, through recognition of teacher preparation programs that have demonstrated effective incorporation of Colorado Teacher Standards as the keystone of their programs.
  - b. Ensure that teacher preparation programs include the state's reading and writing standards and assessment frameworks and the Colorado Basic Literacy Act proficiencies in their fieldwork and student teaching applications.
  - c. Publicize documented success stories, with regard to the correlation between teacher preparation and candidate success with student reading and writing achievement.
  - d. Invest in the expansion of educational research and implementation of research findings in teacher preparation programs.
  - e. Offer support to graduates and school districts in the way of induction and in-service professional development in research proven practices.
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## CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

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Reading and writing skills are the fundamental elements inherent in an educated person. For this reason, having a deeply literate student body is essential for successful schools and communities. The process of teaching reading and writing to all students is neither simple or linear. Despite conventional wisdom, literacy is one of the more complex skill sets to both teach and learn. It is not an intuitive process.

Colorado ranks in the middle (25<sup>th</sup> in the nation) for reading achievement results. According to NAEP results, however, this reflects only about a 34% proficiency rate in both fourth and eighth grades, respectively. However, state assessments indicate about a 67% success rate in reading and about a 50% success rate in writing. Information collected from teachers and administrators indicates there are variable expectations and outcomes for our youngest readers, students in third grade, and eleventh and twelfth graders. Both students with early reading difficulties and adolescent literacy learners were populations of concern for our educators.

The national conversation about now expecting all students to be competent readers and writers invites new types of educators into the work. Migrant educators, specialists in language and learning disabilities, specialists in language acquisition and researchers from across disciplines are coming together to better understand our students' needs.

**While practitioners debate one ideology over another, the state's students are in achievement limbo.**

An extensive body of research in early reading development is now available to guide our curriculum, instruction and assessment decisions and preliminary implementation of this research has been successful in raising reading achievement and reducing the numbers of students at risk. Still, these results are happening only in isolated schools and issues of how to scale these results statewide remain at hand.

Despite what we know in the extensive bodies of research and professional development and the financial state and federal contributions, the challenge is implementing these practices into daily instruction. Colorado's schools in the past six years of state assessing has demonstrated a nearly flat student performance gain. While some schools are making advances with this work we do not have a critical mass of student achievement success in either reading or writing skills.

While additional scientific research is still needed to guide us in developing reading comprehension, adolescent reading instruction and writing instruction across the developmental range, we can use what we know about successful schools and effective instruction.

Both the research and the results point to a confluence of common characteristics of effective literacy instruction.

- One common quality was the presence of teachers with extensive knowledge of literacy research and proven practices of teachers.
- Another characteristic was the devotion to on-going monitor the progress of individual students and the fearless examination of strengths and weaknesses of the programs and practices.

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## CONCLUDING STATEMENTS

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- In addition, these schools commit at least 90 minutes to dedicated literacy instructional time. Also, they provide a additional dose of time for student who require interventions or enhancements.
- They also establish and use explicit grade level expectations as performance benchmarks, and align curriculum and instruction to these specific outcomes.
- Schools don't spend time debating the reading ideology but provide both direct, explicit instruction and opportunity for guided practice in the essential reading and writing skills.
- Finally, the culture of the schools considers all teachers as reading teachers and all content areas as opportunity for literacy instruction.

In conclusion, Colorado schools are demonstrating a very inconsistent execution of best practices for either reading or writing. While practitioners debate one ideology over another, the state's students are in achievement limbo. Of all content areas, both reading and writing teaching practice is mired in conflict between old and new knowledge and doesn't appear to be definitively making progress.

This summary paper is designed to briefly articulate the state of what we know and what can be done to focus our time and monies toward only those practices that cause positive effect for more literate Colorado students.

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## APPENDIX A

### COLORADO TEACHER PREPARATION STANDARDS

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#### **Standards for the Approval of the Program Content of Professional Education and Professional Development of Teachers and Special Service Personnel.**

The following shall serve as standards for the licensing of all teacher education candidates in Colorado and reflect the knowledge and skills required of beginning teachers.

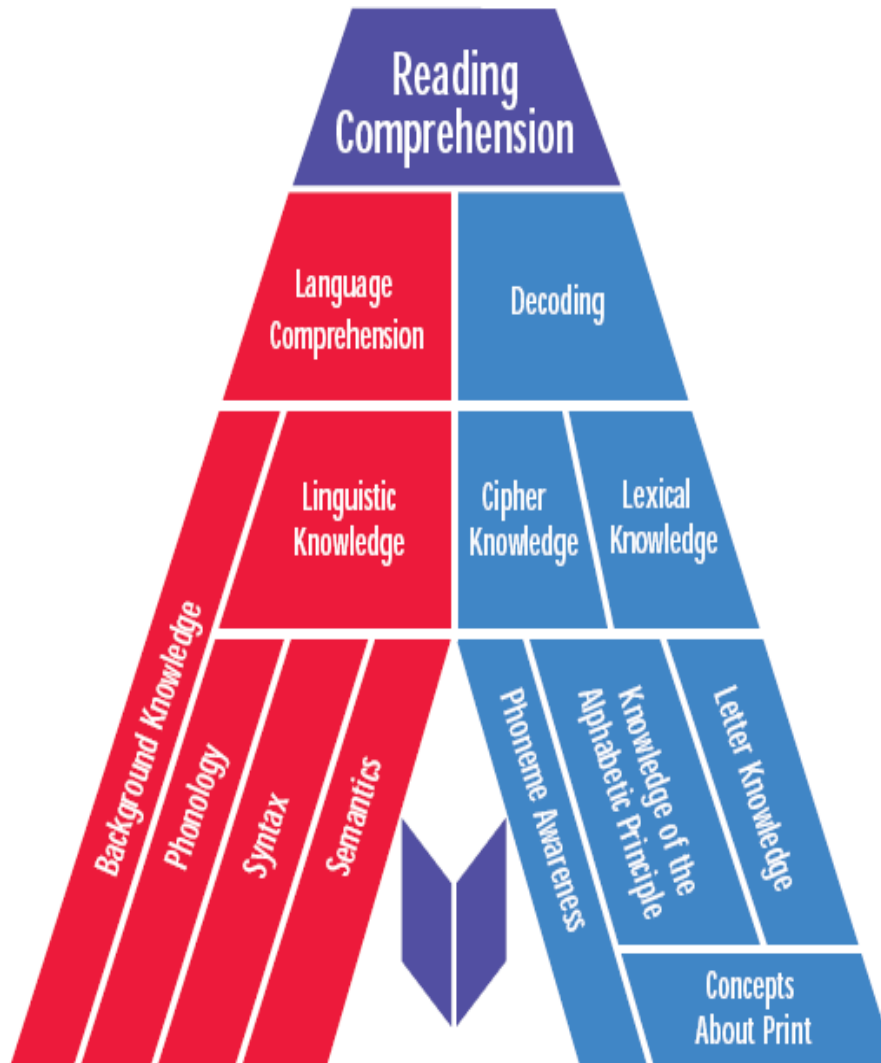
#### **5.01 Standard One: Knowledge of Literacy.**

The teacher shall be knowledgeable about student literacy development in reading, writing, speaking, viewing, and listening. The teacher has demonstrated the ability to:

- 5.01 (1) Plan and organize reading instruction based on ongoing assessment.
- 5.01 (2) Develop phonological and linguistic skills related to reading including:
  - 5.01 (2) (a) Phonemic awareness. 34
  - 5.01 (2) (b) Concepts about print.
  - 5.01 (2) (c) Systematic, explicit phonics.
  - 5.01 (2) (d) Other word identification strategies.
  - 5.01 (2) (e) Spelling instruction.
- 5.01 (3) Develop reading comprehension and promotion of independent reading including:
  - 5.01 (3) (a) Comprehension strategies for a variety of genre.
  - 5.01 (3) (b) Literary response and analysis.
  - 5.01 (3) (c) Content area literacy.
  - 5.01 (3) (d) Student independent reading.
- 5.01 (4) Support reading through oral and written language development including:
  - 5.01 (4) (a) Development of oral English proficiency in students.
  - 5.01 (4) (b) Development of sound writing practices in students including language usage, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and spelling.
  - 5.01 (4) (c) The relationships among reading, writing, and oral language.
  - 5.01 (4) (d) Vocabulary development.
  - 5.01 (4) (e) The structure of standard English.
- 5.01 (5) Utilize Colorado Model Content Standards in Reading and Writing for the improvement of instruction.

Retrieved in April 2007 from the Rules for the Administration of the Education Licensing Act.  
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/resources.htm>

## APPENDIX B

**“The Cognitive Foundations of Learning to Read:  
A Framework”**

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Wren, S. (2001). *The cognitive foundation of learning to read: A framework*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Retrieved April 16, 2007: <http://www.sedl.org/reading/framework/framework.pdf>.

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## APPENDIX C

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### **Colorado Reading & Writing Model Content Standards**

- 1. Students read and understand a variety of materials.**
- 2. Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.**
- 3. Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.**
- 4. Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**
- 5. Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.**
- 6. Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.**

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## APPENDIX D

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### **1995 Colorado Model Reading and Writing Standards Task Force**

#### **Co-Chairs from the Standards and Assessments Development and Implementation (SADI) Council**

Judy Gilbert, Eagle Rock School, Estes Park  
Dianne Harper, Yuma High School, Yuma

#### **Task Force Members**

Narcissa Channel, Ruland Middle School, Gunnison  
Fred Cheney, Assessment Specialist, Colorado Springs District #11  
Jane Christensen, Past Deputy Executive Director, National Council of Teachers of English, Idaho Springs  
Beth Cutter, Language Arts Specialist, Academy District, Colorado Springs  
Sylvia Datz, Language Arts Specialist, Pueblo 60 School District  
Ann Foster, Director of Curriculum, Poudre Valley Schools, Fort Collins  
Jeanne Gieck, Big Sandy High School, Simla  
Tracy Grant, Laredo Middle School, Cherry Creek Schools, Aurora  
Janice James, Liberty School, Joes  
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Cindy Olson, Rocky Mountain Elementary, Adams County 12, Westminster  
Lynn Rhodes, University of Colorado, Denver  
Pearl Richard, Educational Support Team, Denver Public Schools  
Tim Rizzuto, Front Range Community College, Westminster  
Nancy Shanklin, University of Colorado, Denver  
Sharon Summers, Arapahoe High School, Littleton  
Jerry Thuelin, Reading Specialist, Platte Canyon Schools, Bailey  
Frank VanDeHey, Deer Creek Elementary School, Bailey  
Naomi Westcott, King Elementary, Widefield  
Janet White, Front Range Community College, Westminster

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