



A comprehensive outline of the priorities  
for literacy instruction in the East Baton  
Rouge Parish School System

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'Every Child, in Every Class, in Every Community, Every Day' are the guiding words for the East Baton Rouge Parish School District. For us, that means ensuring that every child in our city leaves our classrooms prepared for success in the world beyond these four walls.

Literacy is the key that unlocks the door to opportunity for our students. A thriving city, state and country need a population of young adults equipped with the literacy skills and knowledge the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands of them. It is truly a foundational building block to a future of success.

We believe it takes the support of the collective "village" — in this case our capital-area community —to get the work done.

"Through the support of our city and state leaders; literacy experts; and a dedicated group of caring community-minded individuals, we have created a literacy blueprint that will lead our students, schools and communities into the future and ensure their success. I am grateful to that small group of caring, committed individuals who have laid out the pathway forward in the following pages, and we remain committed to supporting this important work as it comes to life," stated David Tatman, President of the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board.

Our ask is that we, as a group, commit to the work ahead and the map that we have in front of us. The vision of supporting our students from cradle to career continues through our commitment to improving literacy rates and experiences for children and families across our district. Every educator, family member, business leader and community partner has a role to play in the work ahead. My challenge to you is to lean into the task we have at hand to elevate the experience and accomplishments of all of our city's children.

"Together we can redefine Baton Rouge as the literacy capital of Louisiana, but it will take every member of our school and larger community to commit to the way created for us. By following the thoughtful blueprint laid out before us, we have the opportunity to ensure that every child is reaching his or her full potential," said Superintendent Sito Narcisse, "Literacy is about more than a student's ability to piece together words on a page; every child in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System should be able to read, write and comprehend so that they can navigate this world, their careers and their futures with confidence."

We remain hopeful, steadfast and enthusiastic about the work ahead for our children, families and our community.



Sito Narcisse, Ed.D.  
Superintendent  
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools



David Tatman  
President  
East Baton Rouge Parish School Board



# Importance of the Literacy Blueprint

## A Letter from The Chief of Literacy

### Dr. Barbara Lashley

Literacy is the bridge between equitable educational experiences and quality of life; **it's a civil right of every human being**. At its simplest, literacy is the way that we interact with the world around us, how we shape it and are shaped by it. It is how we communicate with others via reading and writing but also by speaking, listening and creating. It is how we articulate our experience in the world and declare, "We are here!"

Literacy is also the global metric we use to assess the health and competence of communities. High literacy rates have been found to correlate to everything from better access to economic opportunity to better nutrition to environmental sustainability. Every resident of East Baton Rouge Parish deserves access to all of these things and more, and the East Baton Rouge Parish School System is committed to doing its part in providing them – **we are here for you!**

During the past 10 months, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools embarked on the development of a multiphase literacy blueprint that would reflect the voices of our teachers; parents; students; state and school leaders; and institutes of higher education, along with the business community and faith-based leaders. Our aim has been to create a **shared vision of what literacy should look like** for the students of our communities. We have blended those voices and ideas into a single document, capturing research, best practices and resources that will make a difference for our students and the broader community.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

~Margaret Mead

Now that the blueprint is complete, we will work diligently to implement it across the entire school system. We are also determined to **empower and equip our parents, guardians and caretakers with the tools that position them as our students' "first teachers."** We are committed to connecting our community partners to our students and families to align the appropriate and equitable resources and support regardless of zip codes in which our students live or educational structures our students experience, including traditional, magnet and charter schools.

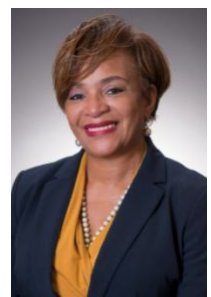
This blueprint will guide our practices and help us identify the appropriate resources needed to improve literacy instruction and ultimately create an even more optimistic future for our schools and communities. **Improved literacy is the change that can shift community values, relationships and economic outcomes.**

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System, along with community leaders, are on a single mission: to make **"Baton Rouge, the Literacy Capital of Louisiana."**

Many thanks to all those who shared in the endeavor.



Barbara Lashley, Ed.D.  
Chief of Literacy  
East Baton Rouge Parish Schools





# Our Call to Action



Sharon Weston Broome  
East Baton Rouge Parish  
Mayor-President

*"Youth literacy is an essential component of the foundation of our community. Education empowers our youth to perform well in school; learn new skills and information; and reach new heights."*

Literacy is a critical national issue in the United States. Research has shown that students who are not reading on grade level by third grade are more likely to still be below grade level when they enter ninth grade and are four times more likely to drop out of high school than proficient readers, according to a long-term study conducted by the [Casey Foundation](#). In other words, your reading level at the end of third grade can have an impact on your long-term success in college and future careers. Currently, only 35% of our nation's fourth grade students and 34% of eighth grade students are reading on grade level, according to the most recent results from the [National Assessment of Educational Progress](#). This means that two-thirds of the students in the United States are entering high school without the literacy skills needed to complete rigorous coursework.

In the state of Louisiana, 40% of kindergarten students, 42% of first graders, 48% of second graders and 50% of third graders are currently reading at or above grade level; and the data has been declining over the past several years. These statistics have contributed to Louisiana being ranked 49th in the nation in reading proficiency. As a result, the [state Department of Education](#) recently announced a statewide initiative to help ensure that every student is able to read on grade level and graduate ready to succeed after high school.

## What Is Literacy?

Literacy is defined as the ability to use language to read, write, listen, speak and think critically. The East Baton Rouge Parish School System's approach to teaching literacy includes explicit instruction, guided practice, small group instruction, individualized instruction, and independent practice. These activities allow students to read, write, listen and speak for a variety of purposes using increasingly complex texts from different genres and content areas.

Section 1

# Our Why



Literacy has an impact beyond the classroom. Below are a few ways that literacy impacts people's lives outside of school.

## Social Impact of Literacy



### Social

Voting, employment and housing require basic levels of literacy.



### Multigenerational

Ensuring children are literate can disrupt the cycle of poverty and enable children to overcome the limitations of previous generations.



### Economic

Lowest literacy scores = lowest wage group < \$300/week

*"Being able to read is a foundational goal in education, and we must refocus efforts to support this basic need for students. Unfortunately, more than half of the students in our elementary and middle grades are reading below grade level in Louisiana. These new supports will give leaders, educators and families resources to help our students and states move forward."*



Dr. Cade Brumley  
Louisiana State Superintendent  
of Education

## Employment

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), workers who did not graduate from high school have the lowest median weekly earnings (\$592), which is three times less than people with the highest education levels.
- The National Council for Adult Learning (2015) reports that 25% of adults who are unemployed are either illiterate or functionally illiterate.

## Generational Literacy

- According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, 72% of children whose parents have low literacy skills will likely be at the lowest reading levels themselves. (Proliteracy.org)
- The American Library Association says a child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade has a 90% chance of still being a poor reader at the end of fourth grade. (Rosenthal, 2004)

## Crime

- According to the U.S. Bureau of Justice (2003), 75% of state incarcerated individuals are classified as low literate or did not complete high school.
- According to the [Literacy Project Foundation](#), 3 out of 5 people in American prisons can't read, and 85% of juvenile offenders struggle in reading.

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## The Purpose of the Plan

This plan was written to serve as a guide for how the school district and community can work together to improve literacy for the students of East Baton Rouge and to serve as a blueprint for making East Baton Rouge the literacy capital of Louisiana. This guide will start with an overview of the current literacy data for the East Baton Rouge Parish School System, the goals for where we want to be in five years and the benchmarks we will use to know if we are on track to achieving those goals. It will also include research on what high-quality literacy programs include, the action steps that will need to be taken in order to achieve those goals and how the community can work together with the district to reach those goals.

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## Who We Wrote This Plan For

This plan is written with all stakeholders in East Baton Rouge in mind. In order to develop a plan that worked for East Baton Rouge, we met with members of the community, including teachers, students, families, community members, civic organizations, city government, early childhood centers, the community college, local universities, and the state Department of Education to gather their ideas about literacy and the need to improve literacy throughout the district, city and state. Our hope is that every member of the community sees themselves reflected in this plan.

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## How The Plan Was Developed

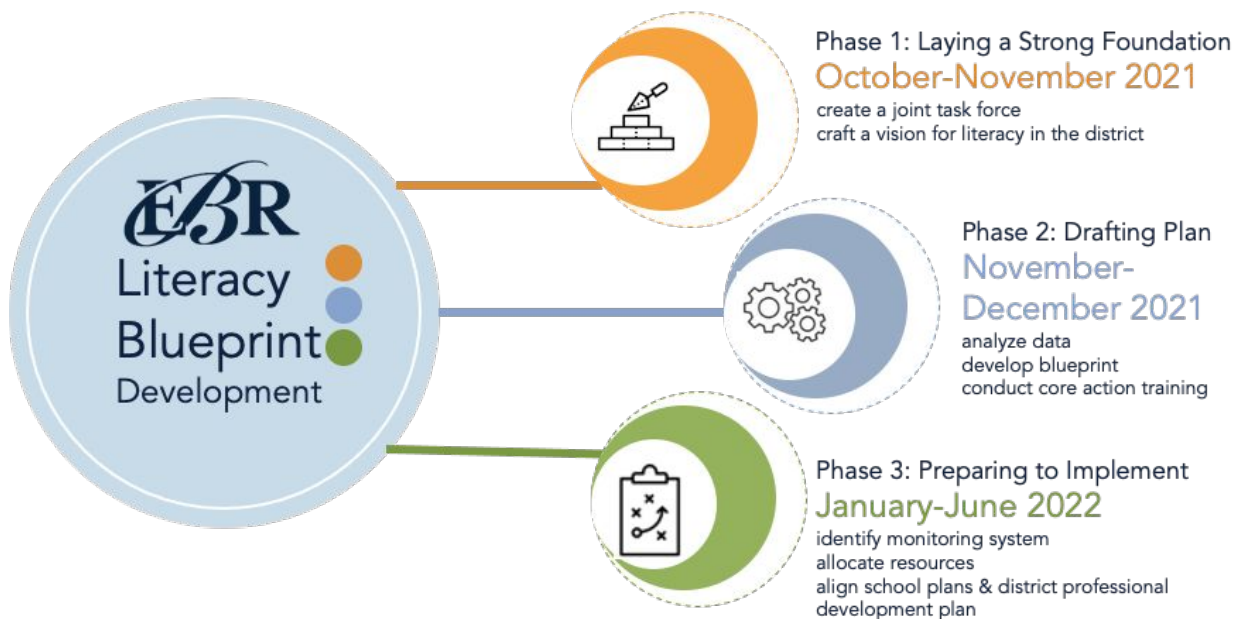
In order to drive districtwide literacy improvement, East Baton Rouge Parish Schools engaged in a multiphase literacy plan development process. In the first two phases of the development process, a joint task force with the Mayor's Office gathered and worked collaboratively with the East Baton Parish Schools leadership team on the development. The team was called the "Mayor's Joint Literacy Task Force," and it represented community stakeholders and played a critical role in providing ideas for the development of the plan and feedback on the drafts. They also served as consultants for the process to ensure communication and transparency throughout the community. This group used multiple data and feedback collection methods to inform the creation of one coherent literacy plan for the district.



After gathering ideas for the development of the literacy plan from the Mayor's Joint Literacy Task Force, the district literacy team worked with the Insight Education Group to develop the framework and content for the district literacy plan. The framework and drafts were then reviewed by a larger team of district representatives known as the "district literacy ambassadors." This larger team included executive directors, principals and teachers.

After incorporating feedback from the district literacy ambassadors, the district also conducted focus groups to gather feedback from teachers, students, caregivers, community members and school leaders on different aspects of the plan and used that feedback to revise the plan. The members of the Mayor's Joint Literacy Task Force and the district literacy ambassador team are listed in the appendix.

In the spring of 2022, the district will develop implementation, administration, monitoring systems and structures to ensure the successful and sustainable ongoing execution of the plan.



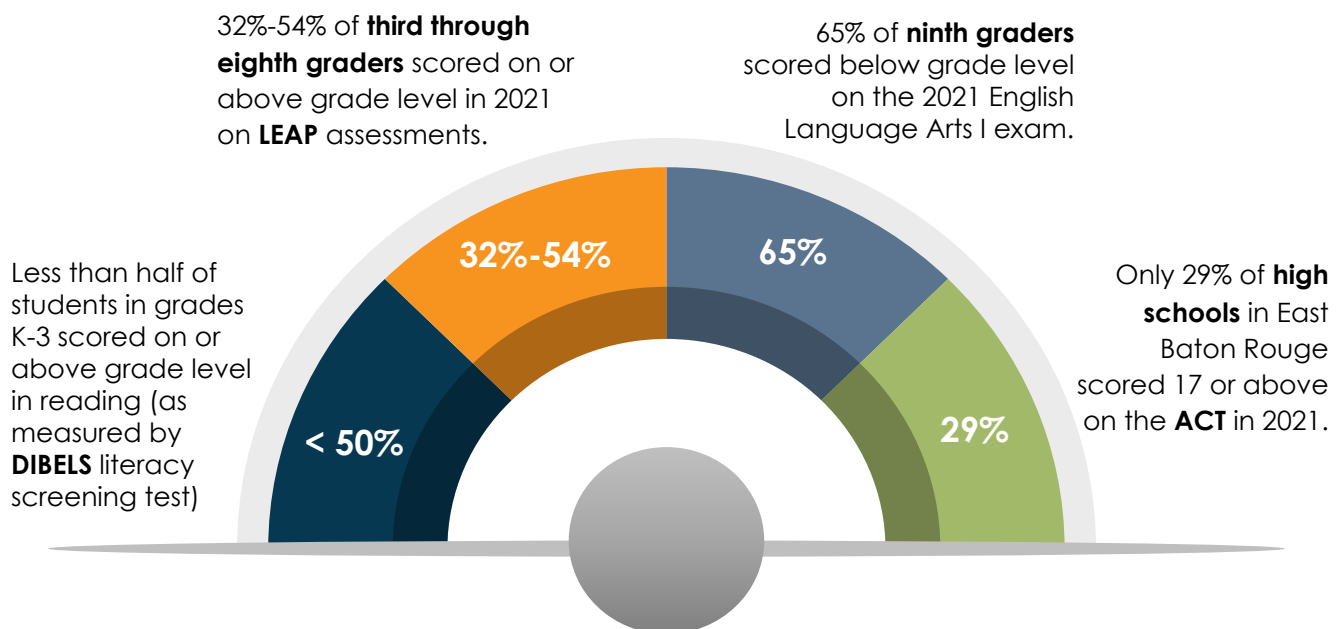
# How to Use This Plan

This plan is designed to provide clear and concise information about the state of literacy in East Baton Rouge. It will be used to provide actionable information to all stakeholders. Below, you will find a section titled, "Where We Are and Where We Are Headed." This section outlines the district's current literacy achievement and why the urgency for a literacy plan is needed. You will also read a brief summary of the five keystones that have been developed to drive this plan's focus. The East Baton Rouge Parish School System's strategic plan revolves around a five-year matrix consisting of four commitments. These commitments revolve around growing each child from cradle to career, providing inclusive experiences to all stakeholders, involving the community as contributors to success and professionally growing all employees. Much work was involved in considering the district's strategic plan and making sure that the district's vision is woven into the five keystones and action steps.

As we navigate through the plan, it is important that in order for this plan to be successful, each and every keystone must be reviewed and implemented with commitment. This plan will use data to showcase the need for each keystone. Examples of exemplary lessons and strategies will also be showcased to provide a basis for what literacy instruction should look like. We will include specific sections that show how to support diverse learners. We will also explain how families and the community can help in the work of literacy learning with our children. All stakeholders are encouraged to ask questions, make connections and identify information and recommendations that are most important to them. **By sharing a common language and vision for literacy, we will increase collaboration and accountability; and make more aligned, strategic and unified decisions that support all students and members of our community.**

# Where We Are and Where We Are Headed

In East Baton Rouge



**The Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) exam** is administered to students in grades K-3 as a screener throughout the school year. This research-based assessment can predict later reading proficiency. In East Baton Rouge, less than half the students in grades K-3 are reading on grade level, according to the DIBELS exam. Although this statistic appears alarming, it helps guide schools to make necessary changes in order to improve literacy in the lower grades.

As students move into upper elementary and middle school, they are tested using the **Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP 2025)**. This exam measures student proficiency in English Language Arts and reading. According to the 2021 spring exam, 32% to 54% of 3-8 students were reading on grade level. In high school, 65% of English I students scored below grade level on the end-of-course exam.

As students continue on through high school, they are offered the opportunity to take the **American College Testing (ACT) exam as a college-ready proficiency test**. The ACT can be used as an entrance exam and a placement test into English and math courses in college. In EBRPSS, 29% of high school students scored a 17 or above. A 17, which is a low score, on the ACT exam puts a student at the bottom 31st percentile.

From early literacy to preparing students for college and career readiness, EBR can work together to make the necessary changes in order for students to succeed.

## Moving Forward

The challenge in front of us is clear. We must be equally clear about the foundation upon which our plan for overcoming the challenge is built. We are committed to a set of goals, outcomes and research-based actions that are targeted and will transform this community.

First, we will create clear and consistently monitored goals. We will make sure all students develop the advanced literacy knowledge and skills needed to take full advantage of academic and personal opportunities.

Students will also have access to an academic environment where high-quality, differentiated instruction is delivered.

Together with explicit interventions and extensions, students can build knowledge and vocabulary across all content areas.

Students will have the literacy skills necessary to successfully complete high-level courses (dual-enrollment, Advanced Placement and industry-certified courses) at the high school level.

It will also be crucial that this high-quality instruction can be found in every school, across grade levels. In order to ensure effective literacy instruction, we will focus on the essential component of effective instruction, which would include necessary training for literacy teachers and monthly training for literacy coaches. Lastly, we will encourage community involvement in the growth and nurturing of literacy in East Baton Rouge.

*Working with the Mayor's Task Force; community entities such as libraries and higher education institutions; and the community as a whole will help drive and grow literacy initiatives within the community.*



Section 2

# Effective Literacy Instruction





# What Are the Components of Literacy?

## Emergent Literacy (Age 0-3)

Literacy development begins at birth when babies first become exposed to their native language. A child's early experiences with literacy develop their ability to communicate with others and develop the foundational skills necessary to read and write.

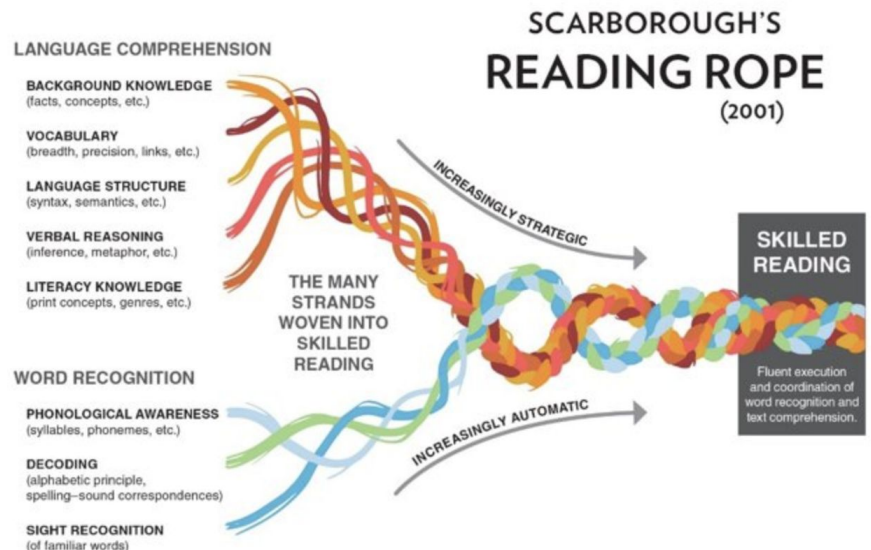
## Early Literacy (Pre-K-3)

When learning to read, students can be faced with a number of challenges. In 2001, [Hollis Scarborough created the Reading Rope](#) to explain that although there are various "strands" of reading, they can all be connected and independent from one another. This is why reading can be such a challenge to young children. Scarborough's Reading Rope consists of upper strands and lower strands. When all these parts are intertwined, the results are skilled reading with accuracy, fluency and strong comprehension. Code focused instruction (word recognition strands) is four times more effective in small group instruction (Connor, 2014). To maximize reading instruction in EBR, small group instruction should be an expectation in a classroom.

### Supporting Children Birth to 3 At Home

Here are some early literacy tips for families from the early learning experts at [Start Early](#):

- **Use board and cloth books for babies.** These books are great options for babies who like to grab things and put them in their mouths.
- **Read together with your toddler.** Allow your toddler to hold the book, point at pictures and turn the pages as you read together.
- **Ask your child questions while you read.** Sample questions could include:
  - What do you think this story is about?
  - What do you think will happen next?
  - What was your favorite part of the story?
- **Count objects in the pictures as you read.** Pointing and practicing counting together with your child will help them develop early numeracy skills while reading.
- **Reread your child's favorite books.** By age 3, children can start to finish sentences in their favorite stories. Reading them over and over again helps them learn through repetition.



## Adolescent Literacy (4-12)

Adolescent literacy encompasses the skills that must be taught to all students so they can meet increasingly challenging reading and writing demands as they move through the upper grades (i.e., comprehension, vocabulary, writing skills), as well as what needs to be done for those students who fall behind who may need intervention instruction in foundational literacy skills (i.e., decoding and fluency).

Research suggests implementing the following practices in grades 4-12 to improve adolescent literacy:

- Provide explicit vocabulary instruction.
- Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.
- Provide opportunities for an extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.
- Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning.
- Make available intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by trained specialists.

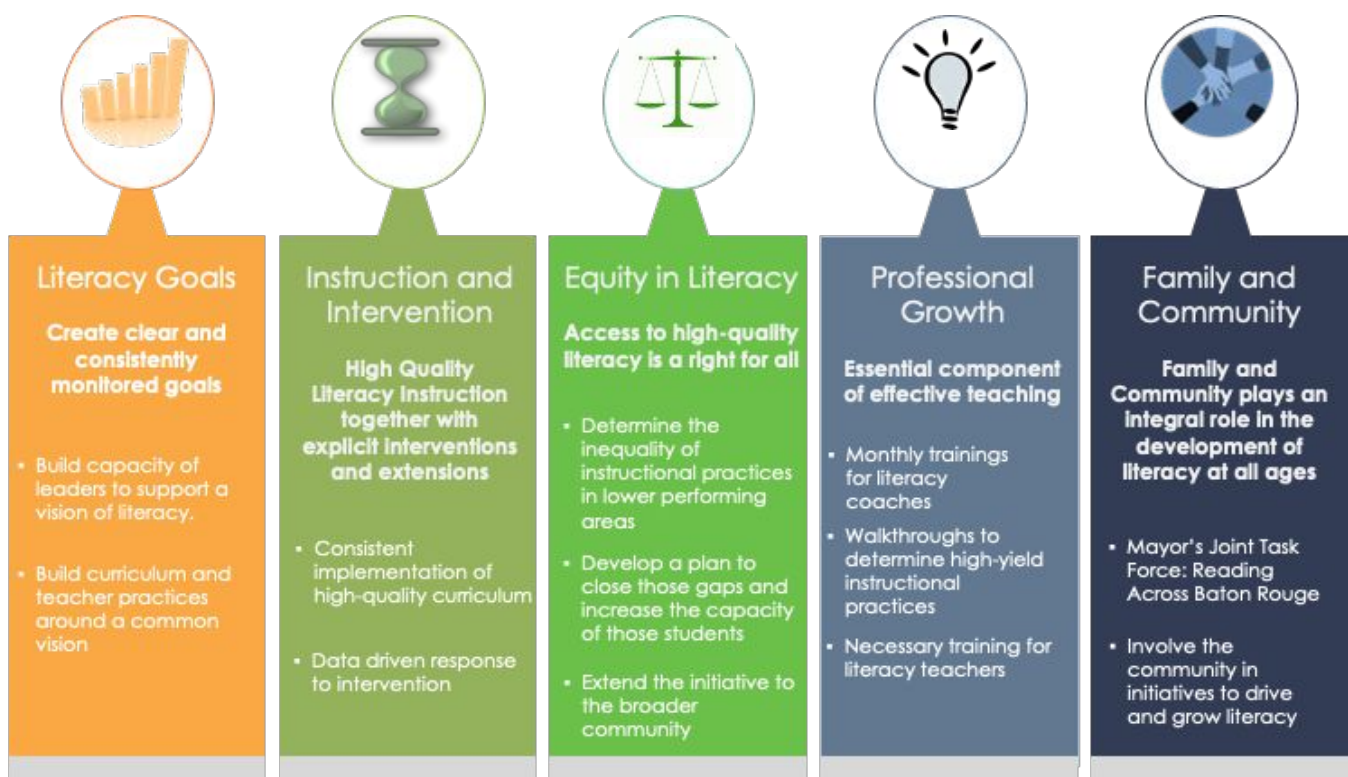
## Strong Implementation

The research on early and adolescent literacy is critical to improving the reading, writing, listening and speaking skills of students. The research alone, however, is insufficient. It must be incorporated into an effective plan of action that spells out how these practices will be implemented across an entire community both within and outside of schools. The East Baton Rouge Parish School System's five keystones of literacy serve as the foundation for such a plan.

# The Five Keystones of a High-quality Literacy Program

The Louisiana Department of Education recently announced a statewide reading initiative designed to improve literacy outcomes across the state. The state identified four foundational pillars for improving literacy in districts across the state. The four state literacy pillars included Literacy Goals; Instruction and Intervention; Professional Growth; and Family/Community.

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System and the members of the Mayor's Joint Literacy Task Force fully support those pillars and are using them as four of the foundational keystones of the work for East Baton Rouge, but they also added one additional area of focus around equity. It is our hope that by identifying inequities that may currently exist in our district, we will be able to put the right supports in place at every school and in every classroom to ensure that the needs of all students are able to be met. Focusing on those five areas is important for achieving the literacy goals for the students of the East Baton Rouge Parish School System.



## Keystone 1: Literacy Goals

In order to improve literacy for students, it is important that the district set clear goals for improvement and develop systems for monitoring progress toward those goals. Curriculum, teacher practices and community engagement can then be aligned to this common vision.

The district has set a goal to expand access to high-quality early literacy. A task force is being formed to develop a plan related to expanding access. The plan will be launched by fall 2022.

The current goals outlined in the school district [Strategic Plan Scorecard](#) include:

Increase the number of **second grade students reading at or above grade level** by 3 percentage points the first year and 5% annually thereafter.

2016-21 Multiyear Average	2022 (projected)	2023	2024	2025	2026
51%	54%	59%	64%	69%	74%

### Literacy Goals

Create clear and consistently monitored goals

- Build capacity of leaders to support a vision of literacy.
- Build curriculum and teacher practices around a common vision

Students reading at or above grade level in **grade bands 3-10** will demonstrate growth of 3 percentage points the first year and 5% annually thereafter on ELA LEAP assessment.

Grade Level	2021	2022 (projected)	2023	2024	2025	2026
3	38%	41%	46%	51%	56%	61%
4	45%	48%	53%	58%	63%	68%
5	54%	57%	62%	67%	72%	77%
6	46%	49%	54%	59%	64%	69%
7	48%	51%	56%	61%	66%	71%
8	32%	35%	40%	45%	50%	55%
9	35%	38%	43%	48%	53%	58%
10	38%	41%	46%	51%	56%	61%

Increase the number of **high schools** reporting an average **ACT score** of 17\* or higher by 3 percentage points annually.

2016-21 Multi-Year Average	2022 (projected)	2023	2024	2025	2026
29%	32%	35%	38%	41%	44%

\*Percentages to be updated in 2022 to reflect a score of 18 or higher on ACT. A score of 18 on the ACT is an average score that enables students to be competitive in college admissions. Data collection is in progress to update this goal.

The pandemic during the 2020-2021 school year caused many challenges for students, families/caregivers, the community and the school system. Lack of access to in-person instruction, technology and resources has contributed to learning loss for many students during that school year. The challenges of that school year also prevented the school district from administering many of the literacy assessments that are given during a typical school year in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System. For those reasons, it is important to closely monitor the literacy assessment data being gathered throughout 2021-2022 to determine the extent of the learning loss that may have occurred during the pandemic and to use the data as a baseline for setting targets over the next five years.

### Progress Monitoring

According to Hanover Research, "Experts advise school districts to draft highly specific plans that focus on what tasks will be accomplished and who will accomplish them" (2014). After setting goals, it is important to have clear checkpoints along the way to determine if the district is on track for meeting those goals. This is called progress monitoring. Progress monitoring gives teachers real-time data that they can use to ensure interventions and extensions specific to each child are given. In other words, progress monitoring helps teachers better support students by letting them know what areas a student has mastered and where they need extra help at different points throughout the year. East Baton Rouge Parish Schools currently uses a variety of assessments throughout the year to monitor whether students are on track to meeting their yearly goals. Current literacy assessments can be found in Appendix A.

### Accountability

An important piece of this keystone is also making sure that stakeholders feel accountable for reaching the goals that have been set and that the district is transparent about their progress toward the goals. There must be buy-in and accountability on the part of the students, teachers, school leaders, parents/caregivers and the community. Part of accountability involves making sure that data about progress is openly shared with stakeholders and that the data is presented in a way that can be easily interpreted by parents/caregivers and other non-educators from the community in order to ensure that everyone feels invested in the goals and progress.

On the school level, it is important to make sure that the literacy goals are incorporated into the School Improvement Plan for each campus and the literacy strategies being implemented are aligned with the district literacy plan. It is also important that schools communicate the goals to families and share progress toward meeting the goals.



## Action Steps

The table below outlines EBR's defined actions steps through 2026 aligned to this Literacy Keystone. For each step, implementation designations of Planned, Implementation and Refinement are also noted to indicate the level of implementation targeted for each year.

LITERACY GOALS  To ensure literacy goals are effectively set and monitored throughout the parish, we will...	Implementation Years				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Align every school's individual School Improvement Plan with district literacy goals.	P	I	I	I	R
Set specific targets in each school for every grade level and outline action steps that will be taken to reach those targets.	P	I	I	R	R
Use a variety of assessments and data sources throughout the year to inform instruction and to identify additional resources and support needed to meet campus and grade-level goals.	I	I	I	R	R
Create consistent systems for examining data in every school and reporting progress.	P	I	I	R	R

P	Planning	I	Implementation	R	Refinement
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## Keystone 2: Instruction and Intervention



*"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."*

*-Mary McLeod Bethune*

### **High-quality literacy instruction together with explicit interventions and extensions will be used to respond to the needs of all students.**

According to the Johns Hopkins Center for Research and Reform in Education, curriculum is deeply important and the district's choice in curriculum can substantially impact student learning (Steiner, 2017). Use of a high-quality and research-based curriculum aligned to Louisiana State Standards for Early Literacy is key to success. [Research-based Instructional Strategies](#) along with the current curriculum are important to ensure all students are learning through rigor and engagement. Using assessment data to identify students who are in need of extra support and providing additional intervention through small group tutoring is also essential. More information about the literacy curriculum currently being used in the East Baton Rouge school district and the intervention programs can be found in Appendix B.



### **Instruction and Intervention**

#### **High Quality Literacy Instruction together with explicit interventions and extensions**

- Consistent implementation of high-quality curriculum
- Data driven response to intervention

Currently, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System is focused on three core actions to ensure excellent literacy instruction for every student. This work centers on building a shared vision for literacy at every level; putting high-quality curricular resources into the hands of teachers; providing opportunities for professional learning; and giving teachers the flexibility to respond to emerging student, teacher and coach feedback and needs. Instructional coaching in literacy classrooms is currently focused on **three core actions**:

- **High-quality Texts at the Center of Instruction**
- **Effective Use of Questions and Tasks**
- **Opportunities for Student Engagement**

“

*Good first instruction is our main goal. That's where 85% of the students should be successful. Targeted small group interventions are for the 15% of students who need additional help after receiving first instruction. Intensive individual intervention is for the 5% of students with the highest needs.*

*-EBRPSS teacher*

”

## Literacy Across the Curriculum

In addition to the rigorous curriculum of our language arts core classes and intervention classes, it is also important that literacy skills are also practiced and reinforced in every classroom across the different subject areas. Every teacher will view themselves as a literacy teacher and will be trained on how to support literacy skills in their content area. For example, math teachers, art teachers and librarians should all be aware of the literacy skills that need to be reinforced for the students they work with every day. Everyone must feel ownership as students become strong readers and writers.

## Rigor, Relevance and Relationships

In order to truly prepare students for successful futures, it is incredibly important that teachers truly understand what rigorous, on-grade-level work should look like for their students, and they must know how to support students to achieve that level of rigor. In other words, **teachers must hold high expectations for all students and provide high levels of support** to help them reach those expectations. Grading practices also need to be aligned to those rigorous expectations so that students and families have an accurate understanding of how their child is doing.

It is also important to ensure that teachers are helping to **make sure that lessons and classroom materials feel relevant to students and that they understand how the things they are learning connect to their lives**. Providing background information on subject matters helps all students better comprehend what they are reading.

Investing in culturally relevant texts and offering courses that allow students to practice literacy skills while learning about their culture or important issues to them are essential. It is equally important that teachers help students understand how their everyday work connects to their lives in order to help spark a love for reading and writing in our youth.

”

*I am in an AP literature class right now and it has been a really hard transition for me. In elementary and middle school, I received excellent grades and was praised for my work, but I don't think they were preparing me for this level of rigor.*

- EBRPSS student

“

”

*In English class, I'm very frustrated because what we are reading and writing about doesn't resonate in our lives at all. It's frustrating because there are such important things going on in the world right now, but what we are learning about doesn't feel important at all. That being said, I am lucky enough to be in a class on African American literature and we're actually learning about racial literacy on top of being literate in general. I think all students should have an opportunity to learn literacy through classes that are different from the regular curriculum that is being taught.*

- EBRPSS student

“

”

*Teachers need to be connected to the students. They need to build relationships and show us that they care. I've had this experience with teachers two times in my life — in second grade and fifth grade. My teachers took the time to get to know me and my mom, and that helped us come together. When teachers take the time to do this, it really helps students grow.*

- EBRPSS student

“

Lastly, one of the themes that emerged from the comments of almost every student in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System Student Advisory Group pertained to the importance of relationships when it comes to learning. According to a study conducted by the Search Institute, “Developmental relationships strongly predicted academic motivation at both the beginning and end of the school year, and also directly predicted students' sense of belonging and school climate” (Scales, 2020). Students feel that if teachers knew a little more about their lives, their families and what's important to them, they'd find new ways to build common ground and they'd feel more invested and motivated to want to do their best in school. This idea is strongly supported by research. According to a research brief published by the Education Trust, **students who have strong relationships with teachers and other school staff members are more academically engaged, experience more positive behavior and have stronger social skills.**

Unfortunately, many students, especially in middle and high schools, do not feel they have strong relationships with their teachers. A survey of 25,400 students in a large racially diverse school district found that less than a third of middle school students reported having strong relationships with their teachers. The high school numbers were even lower. Only 16% of high school seniors in the study reported having strong relationships with teachers. For students from low-income backgrounds, the numbers were even lower.

So what can districts do to help teachers build better relationships with students? The research suggests that schools should train all school staff on the importance of developmental relationships and the strategies for building them. Schools should also find ways to provide individualized feedback to school staff based on observations of the interactions between the adults and students (Education Trust, 2021).

## College and Career Readiness

As students move through the school system, the main goal is to ultimately prepare them for college readiness or a future in a career of their choosing. The main goal is to set students up for success. The East Baton Rouge Parish School System offers Career and Technical Pathways at several high schools for those students who would like to go directly into the workforce. Although these pathways prepare students for specific careers, the option to fine-tune their area of interest at a technical college or university remains an option. Students will need tools to prepare for the SAT, ACT or college and trade school entrance exams depending on their chosen path after high school.

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*The transition from elementary school to middle school and then high school has been hard. When I took the dual enrollment class at Baton Rouge Community College, I felt like I was checked. I saw the same mistakes. I've done this over and over again. I feel like my professors pointed out to me things I have never seen before.*

- EBRPSS student

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## Action Steps / Commitments

The table below outlines EBR's defined actions steps through 2026 aligned to this Literacy Keystone. For each step, implementation designations of Planned, Implementation and Refinement are also noted to indicate the level of implementation targeted for each year.

INSTRUCTION/ACCELERATION	Implementation Years				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
To ensure high-quality instruction and acceleration/intervention are implemented throughout the parish, we will...					
Implement a common district core curriculum and intervention program in every school so that every child is getting access to high-quality, rigorous literacy instruction.	P	I	I	I	R
Pair rigor with relevance by setting expectations for teachers to build positive relationships with their students and connect daily instruction to students' lives.	P	I	I	I	R
Incorporate 120 minutes of literacy instruction (whole group and small group) for every child in grades PK-2 and 90 minutes of literacy instruction for every child in grades 3-12 into every school's master schedule.	P	I	I	R	R
Implement "high dosage" tutoring to accelerate learning for students across the district.	I	I	I	R	R
Use research-based intervention and enrichment materials and ensure there is adequate staff, time and training.	P	I	I	R	R

P	Planning	I	Implementation	R	Refinement
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## Keystone 3: Equity in Literacy



Access to high-quality literacy is a right for all. This means that every child, regardless of what ZIP code they live in or what school they attend, should be receiving high-quality literacy instruction that is preparing them for a successful future.

What we know, however, is that we have some students, classrooms and schools that have greater needs than others. In order to reach our goals and help every child be successful, we have to make sure that we are giving students, teachers and schools the right support to meet their needs. This means that students and schools don't all need the same things.

### What does equity in literacy look like?

Equity refers to the quality of being fair and impartial. In education, this means that every single school receives the same quality of education and overall experience for every child. Unfortunately, sometimes there are barriers that can be difficult to overcome and affect the abilities of these students. When barriers exist for students, they often need additional support to be able to overcome those barriers in order to achieve the same outcomes as students who are not facing barriers. In a nutshell, equity in education means that we are giving students the support they need to be able to be successful, and that support does not look the same for every student and school. Some students and schools may need more support to reach those high levels of achievement. Educators must provide resources and assessments that quickly provide unbiased data and actionable instructional recommendations for each child.

### Equity in Literacy

**Access to high-quality literacy is a right for all**

- Determine the inequality of instructional practices in lower performing areas
- Develop a plan to close those gaps and increase the capacity of those students
- Extend the initiative to the broader community



**Equality**



**Supporting  
Equity**



**True Equity**

The image above shows a nice visual representation of what equity is. In the first frame, there is an assumption that everyone benefits from the same support provided. This is referred to as “equality.” In the picture, you can see that every child has received a box to stand on (support), but that box isn’t enough for all of the children to see over the fence. Some need more than one box to be able to see.

### Equity Example

#### Equality - Frame 1

Imagine that a school district makes a policy in which every elementary school will receive funding to run after-school tutoring from January through May. In this scenario, every school is getting the same funding to offer the same things to students. The tutoring offerings are equal across all schools. The problem with this scenario is that **schools have students at different achievement levels who don’t all learn at the same rate**. This tutoring option might be perfect for a higher-performing school, but there might be schools where the students have larger learning gaps which would require tutoring to start much earlier than January if they want to close those gaps. In this scenario, the lower-performing school might need additional funding to be able to offer tutoring earlier in the year to ensure that students are able to get the support they need to close those gaps and achieve at high levels.

#### Supporting Equity - Frame 2

In this frame, **everyone is getting the support they need to achieve at the same level**. The child who can already see above the fence doesn’t need extra support. The two students who can’t see are given the level of support they need to be able to see at the same level. In our education scenario, this would mean that some schools with higher needs might receive additional funding and resources to meet the increased needs of their students so that all students could achieve at the same level.

#### True Equity - Frame 3

Lastly, there is the final frame. This is the true vision of equity where the causes of the inequality have been systematically addressed so they no longer exist. In the picture, you can see that **no child is needing a box to stand on because all the barriers have been removed for all of them to see**. In our education scenario, there would be ways to systemically address barriers to learning. Students will be provided with the support and learning experiences they need outside of school so that every child enters school “kindergarten-ready.” Every child has the support they need so that gaps are decreased in achievement for some groups of students.

## Equity in Instruction

There needs to be a level of consistency with the quality of literacy instruction that students are receiving from school to school. Regardless of what part of town you live in or what type of school you attend, you should have a strong literacy teacher who is trained in best practices for literacy instruction and knows how to meet the needs of all students, including students who are English language learners, those who are in the Exceptional Student Services program and those who are in the gifted and talented program. This also means that there should be consistent expectations with accountability for teachers and schools and that fewer exceptions are made to ensure that everyone is using the same tools consistently.

## Equity in Resources

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My children have attended both private and public schools, and I've noticed a huge difference in what the kids in different schools/ZIP codes get. Some schools have the materials and resources to give kids hands-on learning opportunities, and other schools don't have those things.

- EBRPSS parent

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There must also be equity in the resources that are provided to schools, regardless of ZIP code. Some schools need more support than others, so we need to think creatively about how to ensure that schools have the time, money and staff positions needed to create rigorous learning opportunities for all students and to ensure that they have the support they need to help every child be successful in those rigorous opportunities. We must ensure that the same high-quality, research-based curriculum and programs should be offered at every campus, but there also must be some flexibility for teachers to be able to tailor learning experiences in a way that takes advantage of their professional expertise and makes sense for the students they are serving.

Access to books and reading materials that grasp student interest and reflect the rich diversity of our country is another important thing that schools need to ensure access for our students. Every school must have opportunities for students to check out books from classroom libraries or school libraries. The school system must also partner with outside organizations, including the public library, to ensure that students and families know how to access these types of books outside of school.

## Action Steps / Commitments

The table below outlines EBR's defined actions steps through 2026 aligned to this Literacy Keystone. For each step, implementation designations of Planned, Implementation and Refinement are also noted to indicate the level of implementation targeted for each year.

EQUITY AND LITERACY  To ensure equity and literacy throughout the parish, we will ...	Implementation Years				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Review school-level data and audit instructional practices; and identify schools that could benefit from additional resources or support.	P	I	I	I	R
Audit curriculum to ensure a variety of resources and experiences are used that reflect ALL students of EBR.	P	I	I	I	R
Evaluate access to resources and intervention/acceleration activities to ensure ALL students get exactly the support they need.	P	I	I	I	R
Allocate resources and funding to support extra needs in the budget cycle.	P	I	I	I	R
Regularly reevaluate the needs of schools to identify any adjustments to funding, resources and support over time.	P	I	I	R	R

P	Planning	I	Implementation	R	Refinement
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## Keystone 4: Professional Growth



Teachers in the East Baton Rouge Parish School System are expected to implement rigorous literacy curricula, teach using a variety of instructional methods, assess students regularly and use data to adjust instruction. In order to do that effectively, it is important for all teachers, including early childhood, special education and ELL teachers, to receive regular professional development opportunities to grow their knowledge base and to receive job-embedded coaching to help them improve. It is also important to ensure that other school-based staff members who support literacy are included in professional development opportunities. The East Baton Rouge Parish School System is committed to also providing additional training opportunities for paraprofessionals, literacy coaches and school administrators.

The curriculum and instruction department will continue to offer the following professional learning opportunities that are intended to be connected and support each other:

- **Teacher Professional Development Week** - Held at the beginning of the school year. The Curriculum Department host a week of teacher PD to set the vision for the year and to train teachers in new curricular initiatives.
- **After-school PD sessions for teachers twice/month** - Various departments offer after-school PD courses twice a month which teachers can sign up to attend. Teachers also attend a school-based after-school PD session once/month.
- **Curriculum implementation training** - New teachers participate in vendor-led training at the start of the school year to learn how to teach literacy using the district-purchased curriculum for core instruction and intervention. Although this is primarily offered to new teachers, some seats are set aside for current teachers to receive refresher training.

### Professional Growth

#### Essential component of effective teaching

- Monthly trainings for literacy coaches
- Walkthroughs to determine high-yield instructional practices
- Necessary training for literacy teachers

### What is professional development?

Professional development refers to the ongoing training that occurs throughout a person's career to help them develop new skills, stay up to date with best practices and enhance their careers. This is typically done through attending workshops and receiving on-the-job coaching.

- **Job-embedded coaching** - Most schools have a campus-based literacy coach who provides coaching to teachers on their literacy instruction. For schools that do not have a literacy coach, teachers receive coaching from their school administrators or other members of the district literacy team.

Most typical professional development programs do not currently provide training for teachers of older students who have foundational gaps in literacy. Training in foundational skills is an important component of training for elementary school teachers, but those skills are not typically taught to teachers who work with middle and high school students. Unfortunately, there are situations where students really struggle with the rigor of their middle and high school literacy courses because they have gaps in their foundational skills. In these situations, it is important that schools have strong Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) programs, but we also must ensure that the teachers who work with those students have received training in how to close those gaps.

**Collaboration time with peers** is another important piece of professional growth for teachers. It allows them to develop lesson plans with their peers, learn best practices and gain a deeper understanding of the content they are teaching as well as best strategies to use. For this reason, it is important that schools find ways to give teachers collaboration time to work with their grade-level or content-area peers in addition to the individual planning time in their schedules.

**Professional development for teachers must be coupled with time to implement the changes.** Teachers will also benefit from resources that are needed for changing practice. Changing practice takes time and mistakes might be made along the way. Administrators will understand and work with teachers. Schools must build positive cultures where it feels safe for teachers to learn and grow in their practice.

“

When it comes to professional development, we need to make sure that we are giving teachers the time needed to really implement what they are learning. Teachers sometimes feel they don't have time to effectively plan for literacy instruction at the level that is needed for our district. We need to find a tangible way to give teachers more time to plan for the instruction needed because students need quality first instruction.

- EBRPSS literacy coach

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## Action Steps / Commitments

The table below outlines EBR's defined actions steps through 2026 aligned to this Literacy Keystone. For each step, implementation designations of Planned, Implementation and Refinement are also noted to indicate the level of implementation targeted for each year.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH  To ensure educators throughout the parish are adequately trained and regularly supported, we will...	Implementation Years				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Align district-wide professional development to the goals outlined in this plan, incorporating differentiated teacher professional development and coaching with actionable next steps focused on improving teacher efficacy.	P	I	I	I	R
Align coaching expectations to literacy goals and prioritize regular literacy coaching in ALL schools.	P	I	I	I	R
Invest in training opportunities for families/caregivers on how to support their children with literacy at home.	P	I	I	I	R
Create joint training with community partners to learn how to best support student literacy in after-school programs, enrichment experiences and through mentoring.	P	I	I	I	R
<div> <div>P</div> <div>Planning</div> <div>I</div> <div>Implementation</div> <div>R</div> <div>Refinement</div> </div>					

## Keystone 5: Family and Community



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*Literacy is everybody's responsibility, and we all have a role to play, whether you are a mom, a dad, a grandparent or a leader. It's all of our responsibility to help our children because every child deserves it.*

-EBRPSS district leader

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Family and community play an integral role in the development of literacy at all ages. The whole city needs to be involved if we want to truly make a difference for our youth. Literacy begins at birth. Everything that families, caregivers and day care facilities can do to accelerate literacy is critical. The brain develops faster than any other time between the ages of 0 and 3. Because of this, it's important to take advantage of building these literacy blocks during the early stages of life and to **ensure that families have access to high-quality, early care programs** to ensure that children start school kindergarten-ready.

### Family and Community

Family and Community plays an integral role in the development of literacy at all ages

- Mayor's Joint Task Force: Reading Across Baton Rouge
- Involve the community in initiatives to drive and grow literacy

The district will work to **empower families and caregivers to reinforce learning at home**. In order to do that, the district will clearly understand the needs of families in order to effectively support them and to link arms with community organizations to address factors that are not school-related. For example, not all of our families/caregivers are able to attend literacy events at the school. Transportation or child care may be barriers to attendance. The timing of the event may not work with the parent/caregiver's schedule. Language and cultural barriers may make the events feel intimidating. The district will recognize those things and find ways to empower families/caregivers in new ways that will make those experiences more accessible. Literacy nights could be held in places like parks and community centers that might be easier for families/caregivers to get to in the evenings or on the weekends. Those events could be paired with other community events where families may have access to child care, meals or other community activities at the same time. Materials and strategies for families should be translated into other languages. Schools should also think about ways to make materials and strategies non-intimidating for families/caregivers to use, even if they don't have strong literacy skills themselves but still want to support their children at home.

Technology has also impacted the way that students are being taught literacy, especially because of the pandemic. It is important to note that this method of learning is new to most of our families/caregivers, and districts need to train them on the new systems for monitoring student progress and for ensuring their child is completing their homework outside of school. Access to technology has been a challenge for some families/caregivers, so helping them to understand what technology resources are available, how to access them and how to be able to monitor their child's progress is also important.

**Building partnerships with the community** can help ensure increased access to local resources, mentors and programming that can help build on the literacy work being done in the schools and homes. It is important to make sure those partnerships also include support for children ages 0-4 to ensure that children are getting access to literacy experiences before they attend school.

**Creating citywide literacy initiatives** is one way that the district and community could work together to ensure that both children and adults are being encouraged to read. In the past, Baton Rouge has had reading incentive programs where students could earn coupons or prizes to use at community businesses. The public library system also offers a number of free resources for families. Having the district work with libraries can help publicize those programs to ensure that all families/caregivers are aware of the opportunities and can access them. For example, every child in East Baton Rouge receives a free public library card, but not all families are aware of this. Working together to publicize that this is available to children and inviting the bookmobile to school events and community events can bring awareness to more families about how to have access to more books for children to read at home.

**Ensuring that children have access to books in their home** is another important piece to making sure that students are working on improving their literacy outside of school. The school district and community will work together to identify organizations that can help do book drives to donate directly to families or to schools to use as incentives. Money can be raised to help scholarship students who do not have money to use at school fairs to help bring more books into the homes of all of our students. Also, ensuring that churches, community centers, after-school programs and doctors' offices have interesting reading materials for children can expose them to more reading opportunities when they are not in school.

## Action Steps / Commitments

The table below outlines EBR's defined actions steps through 2026 aligned to this Literacy Keystone. For each step, implementation designations of Planned, Implementation and Refinement are also noted to indicate the level of implementation targeted for each year.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	Implementation Years				
	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
To empower families/caregivers and the community with literacy skills they need to support children when not in school, we will ...					
Work collaboratively with outside organizations to ensure greater access to books at home and in the community.	P	I	I	I	R
Provide more opportunities to engage entire families in literacy experiences at community events to promote the joy of reading outside of the school.	P	I	I	I	R
Provide professional development for families/caregivers to ensure they are prepared to reinforce literacy in the home.	I	I	I	R	R
Develop the technology infrastructure needed throughout the community to effectively support literacy in and out of school.	P	P	I	I	R

P	Planning	I	Implementation	R	Refinement
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## What Do The Keystones Look Like in Action?

This section shows what the keystones could look like in practice across different grade bands of students. In these examples, you will see how the keystones work together to provide high-quality literacy teaching and learning experiences for all students.

### Early Childhood Example

The students in Ms. Larriviere's class were discussing what is in a community. During whole group, the teacher sat on the floor in close proximity with the students. Ms. Larriviere introduces the book "My Town." Students turn to a partner and talk about what they see on the front cover and what they think the book will be about. They then listen to the story and have conversations throughout. After the story, the students talk about the different places in a community from the story and list them on a thinking map.

The class begins singing "It's Center Time" to transition from whole group. Before going to centers, Ms. Larriviere tells the students about the various community-theme activities in some of the learning centers. Activities such as: build various community places with blocks; draw pictures from the story; dress up and role play community helpers; and create a pattern with community helper vehicles, etc.

Ms. Larriviere went into the block center with a group of students. The students decided they wanted to build a police station. She began assisting with the building and having conversations throughout. She asked questions such as; "What materials do we need to build the police station? What should be inside a police station? Why do you think we need police?" The teacher visited different centers actively engaging with the students, having conversations, scaffolding their learning and providing positive feedback.

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## Elementary School Example

The students in Ms. Bailey's second grade are developing their foundational skills in English Language Arts by working on the sound spellings for long /o/ spelled "oa" and "ow." Ms. Bailey introduced the 15-minute whole group lesson by sorting how the spelling can be placed in the middle of words like coat and at the end of the words like bow. The students worked as a whole group to share silly sentences with the words that were sorted. Students took turns reading aloud the silly sentences. The atmosphere fostered by Ms. Bailey allowed students to support each other and feel success as they read aloud. Ms. Bailey monitored the feedback from students and gave specific feedback to support understanding.

After the whole group lesson, Ms. Bailey transitioned students into foundational skills small groups. The small groups included a group with the teacher that used their Chromebooks in conjunction with the teacher teaching a mini lesson on the student's phase, a technology station working on Amplify Reading, an Accountable Independent Reading group, writing to a prompt, fluency using decodable readers and word work with the long /o/ sound spellings. Each student had a folder with activities that were differentiated for their phase. Each small group lasted 15 minutes and was monitored by the teacher, as well as self-monitored.

Ms. Bailey closed the lesson by bringing everyone together to reflect on the work done in stations, as well as to provide a reflection on the learning that was done for the day. The collaborative participation, level of understanding and collective positivity were evident in the success of the student's understanding of teaching.

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## Middle School Example

Ms. Miller opens up her lesson with a short multimedia video analysis providing background knowledge of the text. While students are watching the video, they are taking notes to complete a K-W-L chart as it relates to the text. The teacher then introduces the reading of "Brown Girl Dreaming." As the teacher reads aloud the first two paragraphs, students are asked specific close reading questions in order to gain an understanding of the lesson. Ms. Miller plays the audio version of the text. As the audio of the text is playing, students are annotating the text for key details, boxing unfamiliar words and making notations for questions about a particular paragraph or sentence. After completing the first read of the text, students are completing basic comprehension check questions to build a foundation of learning. After answering the questions, the class begins to have a discussion about the text and prepare for small groups.

Ms. Miller begins to break the students up into small groups to provide intensive support. Group one is the teacher-led group centered around reading fluency. In this group, students are practicing how to read and pronounce words, while the teacher is guiding them with sounds and comprehension. Group two is centered around vocabulary, focusing on word meaning and word choice. In this group, students are figuring out word meaning by implementing a vocabulary strategy to break down words for understanding. Students can also use supplemental programs such as Achieve 3000, CommonLit or Albert IO to build ACT, AP, phonics and reading comprehension skills. Group three is focused on writing with text analysis or text-dependent questions. In this group, students will have to answer questions that connect to the text and provide supportive evidence or key details to justify their answer. Students can also begin to develop essay writing.

After the small groups have been completed, students will complete an exit ticket that is text-dependent. The teacher will use the answers from this exit ticket to adjust tomorrow's lesson.

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### High School Example

Ms. Sims opens up her lesson with a short multimedia video analysis providing historical background knowledge of the text. While students are watching the video, they are taking notes to complete an inquiry-based webquest as it relates to the text. The teacher then introduces the reading of "Four Freedoms Speech." As the teacher reads aloud the first two paragraphs, students are asked specific close reading questions in order to gain an understanding of the lesson. Ms. Sims plays the audio version of the text. As the audio of the text is playing, students are annotating the text for key details, boxing unfamiliar words and making notations for questions about a particular paragraph or sentence. After completing the first read of the text, students are completing basic comprehension check questions to build a foundation of learning.

Ms. Sims begins to break the students up in small groups to provide intensive support. Group one is the teacher-led group centered around reading fluency and close reading. In this group, students are practicing how to read and pronounce words, while the teacher is guiding them with sounds and comprehension. Group two is centered around vocabulary, focusing on word meaning and word choice. In this group, students are figuring out word meaning by implementing a vocabulary strategy to break down words for understanding. Students can also use supplemental programs such as Achieve 3000, Common Lit or Albert IO to build ACT, AP, phonics and reading comprehension skills. Group three is focused on writing with text analysis or text-dependent questions. In this group, students will have to answer questions that connect to the text and provide supportive evidence or key details to justify their answers. Students can also begin to develop essay writing.

After completing the small groups, the class begins to have a discussion about the text and prepare to check their own understanding. The teacher will use the answers from this exit ticket to adjust tomorrow's lesson.

## Section 3

# Connecting Practices



# Alignment to State and Local Initiatives

Our beliefs about literacy and how important it is will connect our local educational system and the interests of the East Baton Rouge community. We are committed to aligning our plan and approach with state expectations and policies, current district initiatives and the needs of our diverse learners.

## City and State Policies

**Louisiana Senate Bill 216:** requires early literacy professional development for certain teachers.

**Louisiana Steve Carter Literacy Program:** The Department of Education will pay for extra tutoring; reading materials; after-school and summer programs; and mentorship programs, etc., for students in kindergarten through third grade who either read below grade level or are “at risk for reading difficulties.” The program is also designed to help fourth and fifth grade students “who scored below mastery in English language arts on the state assessment in the prior school year” or were “recommended by an English teacher.” The state has set aside \$40 million to improve literacy for students in Louisiana.

**Louisiana Senate Bill 222:** would create one screening process and a report to monitor each student’s reading level.

- Louisiana's ESSA State Academic Plan
- Louisiana State Policy
- Louisiana Academic Standards
- Louisiana Literacy Pillars
- Teacher Evaluation

## Current District Initiatives

- [EBR Strategic Plan for Educating Baton Rouge](#)
- [EBR Pathways to Bright Futures](#)
- Cradle 2 Career Keys to Success
- Transition to Middle School Initiative

# Supporting Literacy Outside of School

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System is filled with hardworking and talented teachers who work tirelessly to provide rigorous and authentic instruction to students. In order for all students to succeed and develop personal and academic success, there is a need for a strong support system outside of school. Families and the community as a whole have a strong influence on children and their learning. It is strongly encouraged that all the residents of East Baton Rouge do their part to nurture literacy. Below, we have provided some suggestions on how family and community members can get involved in growing and changing literacy in EBR. We encourage families and community members to seek out additional resources, such as Reading is Fundamental ([www.rif.org](http://www.rif.org)), the Louisiana Digital Library ([louisianadigitallibrary.org](http://louisianadigitallibrary.org)) and the Education section of Kid Central TN ([www.kidcentraltn.com/](http://www.kidcentraltn.com/)).

## Ideas for Families

The Louisiana Department of Education has several great resources for [family literacy and engagement](#). Below are a few more:

- **Bedtime stories** - End every night by reading a book or a chapter together with your child before bedtime. Ask questions about the story using the five W's (who, what, when, where, why).
- **Share stories with distant relatives virtually.** Google Hangouts, FaceTime, Skype and Zoom can all give children a way to read stories to distant relatives or have the distant relatives read to them.
- **Have older siblings read to younger siblings.** This gives the older children practice reading and explaining the story to others and helps their younger siblings discover a love for reading.
- **Listen to audiobooks.** Families can check out free audiobooks from the public library and download them to their phones or devices. Listen to audiobooks together when riding in the car to run errands or going on road trips.
- **Play board games that involve reading or word activities.** Reading game directions, clues off cards or playing games that require spelling or creating words are fun ways to practice literacy skills in a real-world setting.



- **Plan themed reading nights.** Pick a topic that your child is interested in and check out some books from the library related to the topic. Make the night even more fun by adding in a craft project or a special snack related to the theme of the evening. For example, “Under the Sea” night could involve reading a fiction and nonfiction book about ocean animals, making fish-themed bookmarks and then eating fish-shaped crackers for a snack while watching a show about ocean creatures.
- **Cooking using recipes.** Teach your child how to follow a recipe to cook. Recipes involve reading the ingredients and following the steps outlined. You could also encourage your child to write recipes for foods they are able to prepare at home.
- **Read a book that has been made into a movie.** Read the book first and then schedule a family movie night to see the story come alive on the screen. Discuss how the book and movie were similar and different. Which version did your child like better?
- **Visit the public library together.** In addition to checking out books, find out what other events are happening at your library in the coming months. Many libraries offer story time, classes, workshops, movie nights and other fun events for families to attend. The East Baton Rouge Parish Library offers several resources and activities for [kids](#) and [teens](#).
- **Set up a book exchange in your neighborhood.** To do this, identify a location in your neighborhood where you can place a covered container with books that people can borrow. Some people use a large birdhouse or mailbox to store the books. Hang a sign that says “take a book, leave a book” for your neighbors to share books. You can also visit the Little Free Library [website](#) to find out if there is already a book exchange box in your neighborhood; or you can register the one you set up so it shows up on the map of little free libraries in your city.
- **Have your children write thank-you notes to important people in their lives.** Writing is an important part of literacy and the people who receive the notes from your children will appreciate the gesture.

Additional resources for parents/caregivers can be found on the Louisiana Department of Education website. Click [here](#) to access the Louisiana Family Literacy Engagement Strategic Plan.

## Ideas for Community Members

The Louisiana Department of Education has several great resources for [family literacy and engagement](#). Below are a few more:

- **Volunteer at school literacy events.** Many schools host family literacy nights or do special events to celebrate literacy-themed holidays or months. Reach out to your local schools to find out if they need volunteers for Read Across America Day in March, National Family Literacy Month in November or any other literacy-themed events that the school celebrates.
- **Donate books that you own to a good cause.** If you have books in your home that you are not planning to read again, consider donating them to a school or nonprofit organization that could use extra reading materials.
- **Support East Baton Rouge classroom needs by donating to literacy projects listed on the DonorsChoose website ([www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org)).** Teachers from across the city and state have classroom needs posted through the website. Log on and search for projects in Baton Rouge, and you will see all of the local teachers who need some additional support obtaining books, dictionaries, writing supplies and other classroom items to support the literacy needs of their students.
- **Volunteer as a tutor.** Many nonprofit organizations and schools could use adults to serve as tutors for students during the school day or after school. Reading to students at a young age can help them develop a love of reading.
- **Support adult literacy programs in Baton Rouge by volunteering or donating books and resources.** Adult Literacy Advocates of Greater Baton Rouge and the East Baton Rouge Parish Library both provide literacy programs for adults.
- **Start a Free Little Library in your neighborhood.** To do this, identify a location in your neighborhood where you can place a covered container with books that people can borrow. Some people use a large birdhouse or mailbox to store the books. Hang a sign that says “take a book, leave a book” for your neighbors to share books. Visit the Little Free Library [website](#) to register the little library you set up so it shows up on the map of Little Free Libraries in your city.
- **Work with doctor’s offices to show videos in the waiting room that focus on parenting tips about how to build vocabulary and reading skills in their child.** This could be done in other community settings where families have to wait as well. Donate books that health professionals can give to new parents. Have brochures about effective literacy practices that adults can do with children available as well.

## Conclusion

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System is committed to doing whatever it takes to provide outstanding literacy instruction and support to all students. We will use this plan as **a living document** to guide decisions, but we will also revisit it and revise it over time to reflect current needs and best practices. With all of us working together, we believe that we can ensure that every student in East Baton Rouge graduates prepared for a successful future.

## Section 4

# Resources and References



# Glossary of Terms

*Below are terms used frequently throughout the plan with brief definitions.*

**American College Test (ACT):** standardized tests accepted by most colleges and universities for admissions purposes and used to test students on the information they actually learned in school.

**Benchmarks:** assessments that are used to measure what students should know up to a certain point in their curriculum. Benchmarks can be used to compare against other benchmarks.

**Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR):** school that earned an overall letter grade of D or F for three consecutive years and/or a cohort graduation rate below 67% in the most recent year.

**Curriculum:** the overall content taught in an educational system or a course.

**Differentiation:** the practice of tailoring the amount and type of instruction a student receives during the school day to meet their needs most effectively. The key factors driving differentiation in literacy are time (length of each activity or lesson), type (code-focused or meaning-focused), and dimension (teacher-managed or child-managed in small groups or whole class settings). There is a strong accumulation of evidence that individual child differences and child-by-instruction (CXI) interactions have clearly and causally shown that the effect of instruction – in reading, science, social studies, and math – depends on the constellation or lattice of skills, aptitudes, and abilities children bring to the process of learning (Connor & Morrison, 2016). The implication should be clear: If teachers do not differentiate literacy instruction, a substantial portion the children in their classrooms will not reach their full learning potential.

**English As a Second Language (ESL):** nonnative English speakers of all ages and levels.

**English Language Arts Reading (ELAR):** study and improvement of the arts of language. Language arts instruction typically consists of a combination of reading, writing (composition), speaking and listening.

**Equity:** refers to fairness and justice and is distinguished from equality; whereas equality means providing the same to all, equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances.

**High-dosage:** optimization or any and all instructional time available to provide highly-differentiated instruction for a single child or small group of students. To qualify as high-dosage, this type of instruction must also be sustained for extended amounts of time (ideally 8 weeks or more). The focus of any time labeled high-dosage should be centered on providing differentiated instruction with the intention of accelerating learning (not remediation). The concept of matching the right instruction to the needs of each student or student group is a critical component of this definition and high-dosage support in general.

**High-quality Instruction:** curricula, teaching practices and learning environments are standards-based, evidence-based, engaging, differentiated, culturally responsive and data-driven.

**Interventions:** a set of steps a teacher takes to help a child improve in their area of need by removing educational barriers.

**Literacy:** ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that lets us communicate effectively and make sense of the world.

**Literacy Night:** when a school, library or community center gives parents and their children a time, a place and some helpful guidelines from an experienced teacher to write, read and share their ideas.

**Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS):** helps schools to identify struggling students early so that they may receive assistance quickly.

**Professional Development/Growth:** encourages teachers to be active participants in their own learning, and ensures that students and teachers alike are eager to learn.

**Real-Time Early Access to Literacy (REAL):** provides individualized support for students in pre-K through grade 3 to make progress in their literacy development, with a focus on support for virtual learning.

**Rigor (ous):** lessons that encourage students to question their assumptions and think deeply, rather than lessons that merely demand memorization and information recall.

**Scholastic Aptitude Test:** standardized test widely used for college admissions in the United States and typically taken by high school juniors and seniors.



**School Improvement Plan:** identifies the academic and priority goals along with strategies for each school. Every year, leadership defines its school's targeted work to raise achievement and prepare every student to graduate.

**Special Education (SPED):** a range of services that help kids with disabilities learn and are tailored to meet the needs of individual kids.

**Stakeholders:** anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students.

**Urgent Intervention Required (UIR):** school earned a subgroup score equivalent to an F for two consecutive years; school had an out-of-school suspension rate greater than twice the national average for three consecutive years.

## Resources

*Below are links and a quick description of resources to learn more about effective literacy instructional practices and ways in which to support literacy in the community.*

[Louisiana Department of Education Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#) - This plan outlines the literacy goals and recommended literacy strategies for all schools in Louisiana.

[Louisiana Department of Education Family Literacy Engagement Strategic Plan](#) - This document provides additional resources for what families can do to support their children with literacy at home. It also provides information about what schools can do to support families with at-home literacy activities.

[Save the Children Community Strategies for Supporting Literacy Flipbook](#) - This document was written for community outreach workers and community leaders to provide strategies that can be taught to all families through workshops or community events. The activities are simple, fun and are divided into activities for parents who read and for parents who are not able to read.

[DonorsChoose Website](#) - Teachers who need classroom books, supplies and materials go to this website to list the items needed; and community members can go to this site to donate money to help them purchase those items. You can search for teachers in Baton Rouge or in your ZIP code, and the projects for your neighborhood teachers will show up. Even small donations can go a long way to helping teachers get the literacy materials they need for their classrooms.

[East Baton Rouge Parish Library Website](#) - This website contains information about local library hours and locations; how to obtain a library card; and special events and programming offered by the local library. You can also download e-books; stream music and video; and take online courses through this website.

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## Appendix A: Current EBR Literacy Assessments

The following table lists and describes literacy assessments administered by grade level in EBR. A description of each assessment is included that notes what is measured and dates administered:

PK-3 Assessments		Administered
<b>GOLD</b>	GOLD is an assessment tool used by prekindergarten teachers to track student progress on the early learning standards for pre-K students.	Fall Winter Spring
<b>DRDP-K</b>	DRDP-K (Desired Results Developmental Profile - Kindergarten) is an assessment tool used by kindergarten teachers to track student progress on the learning standards for kindergarten students.	Within first 30 days of school
<b>DIBELS 8 Assessment</b>	DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills) is a set of measures used to assess early literacy skills. They are designed to be quick one-minute fluency assessments that are used to measure early literacy and reading skills for students in kindergarten through third grade.	Within first 30 days of school
<b>District Benchmark Assessments</b>	Comprehensive assessments are designed to measure skill growth from the beginning to the end of each grade, level of mastery of standards taught throughout the year and effectiveness of teacher lessons.	Throughout the school year
<b>ELPT (English Learners Only)</b>	Students who are learning English are assessed using the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) to measure their progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking in English.	February - March

Grades 3-12 Assessments		
<b>LEAP 2025</b>	Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) 2025 is the standardized test administered by the state at the end of the school year to assess student performance in a variety of subject areas, including English/Language Arts. The test is administered to students in grades 3-11.	Fall Spring Summer
<b>District Benchmark Assessments</b>	Comprehensive assessments designed to measure skill growth from the beginning to the end of each grade, level of mastery of standards taught throughout the year and effectiveness of teacher lessons.	Throughout the school year
<b>College Readiness Assessments (High School Only)</b>	High school students also take a variety of college readiness assessments and tests to earn college credit for courses including the ACT, Advanced Placement exam and the CLEP test.	Spring
<b>ELPT (English Learners Only)</b>	Students who are learning English are assessed using the English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) to measure their progress in reading, writing, listening and speaking in English.	February - March

## Appendix B: Current EBR Adopted Curriculum

Using a standardized curriculum such as those currently adopted with fidelity throughout the district will align all schools. At the time of publication, the following curricular resources are approved for use across EBR.

Pre-K-2 Curriculum	
<b>Opening the World of Learning (OWL)</b>	Comprehensive pre-K curriculum that prepares both English- and Spanish-speaking students for kindergarten.
<b>Big Day</b>	Offers learning experiences in eight thematic units that support students' social, emotional, physical and academic development through language development, comprehension and writing centers.
<b>EL Education</b>	Curriculum created by teachers for teachers that align to college readiness standards and focuses on engaging students through real-world content. The content has several different components such as reading, analyzing, comprehension and writing.
In grades pre-K-2, blocks of 120 minutes are set aside for literacy instruction daily. This consists of a 60-minute module lesson and a 60-minute skills lesson. According to an Education Northwest Literacy brief, using blocks of 90 to 120 minutes in literacy instruction not only proves to be the best practice but also meets the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Underwood, 2019).	

Grades 3-5	
<b>Guidebooks</b>	Units of study created by the Louisiana Department of Education in partnership with LearnZillion. They include daily language arts lessons and instructional material including classroom-ready materials, assessments, graphic organizers and texts. Students interact with the reading by way of graphic organizers and expressing their understanding and comprehension of the texts through writing. These texts weave much of Louisiana's rich history as well as relevant topics into daily literacy lessons. Literacy lessons through Guidebooks will be allotted at least 90 minutes daily consisting of an hour-long lesson and 30 minutes of small group instruction.
Literacy lessons through Guidebooks are allotted at least 90 minutes daily consisting of a 60-minute lesson and 30 minutes of small group instruction.	



## Grades 6-12

### My Perspectives

It offers interactive learning using blended print and digital resources. It is student-centered and encourages the high achievement needed to promote college and career readiness. It creates an interactive and engaging learning environment through reading, meaningful activities that measure comprehension and performance writing tasks.

Grades 6-12 literacy lessons provide 90 minutes of instruction, application and intervention/acceleration.

For those students who are struggling, supplemental resources such as **Achieve 3000** are being offered to target their needs. Intervention and acceleration opportunities are provided to Special Education; 504; students with dyslexia; and struggling students through in-school small group tutoring, intervention classes, after-school tutoring and summer school. In order to really target those students with gaps and learning loss, the East Baton Rouge Parish School System would like to ensure that students have access to a wide variety of intervention and acceleration opportunities throughout the entire school year starting in August. Adoption of a research-based dyslexia program is strongly suggested. Identifying dyslexia early allows students to receive the services they need in letter-sound relationships. This is crucial to their overall success. In order to make up for the beginning of the year learning loss, intervention will be offered outside of the school day. The state of Louisiana has also provided funding for Real-time Early Access to Literacy (REAL) tutoring for Comprehensive Intervention Required (CIR) and Urgent Intervention Required (UIR) schools.

For those students in the gifted and talented program, acceleration curricula such as **Wit & Wisdom** provide opportunities to build rich layers of knowledge on a deeper level by encountering wit, wonder, rigor and knowledge, and a clear understanding that all content areas have a place in language arts instruction. There will be at least a 30-minute block built into each day where students receive acceleration opportunities.

# Appendix C: Mayor's Joint Literacy Task Force Members

## East Baton Rouge Parish School System Division of Literacy

Dr. Barbara Lashley — Chief, Division of Literacy  
Shelia Hannah — Project Manager, Division of Literacy  
Brenda Pena — Project Manager, Literacy-ESS/ESL  
Shenoa Warren — Executive Director of Early Childhood  
Susan Gauthier — Director, Library Services  
Kennette Bardell — Literacy Coordinator  
Brigitte Beal — Literacy Coordinator  
Antoinette Pierre — Literacy Coordinator  
Kuala Chambers — Former District Literacy Coach  
Amy Edwards — District Literacy Coach  
Kristin Robair — District Literacy Coach  
Jaleesa Jones — Former District Literacy Coach  
Casey Wells — Former District Literacy Coach  
Courtney Edwards — Administrative Assistant

## Mayor's Office

Helen Frink — Former Special Assistant  
Courtney Scott — Assistant Chief Administrative Officer

## East Baton Rouge Parish School System Board Member

Dadrius Lanus — EBRPSS School Board Member; 100 Black Men, Executive Director

## East Baton Rouge Parish School System Staff

Dr. Sharon Williams — Former EBRPSS Chief of Schools  
Alex Stubbs — Former EBRPSS Chief of Communications and Public Relations  
Christal Aguillard — EBRPSS Executive Director  
Milton Batiste III — EBRPSS Executive Director  
Tamara Johnson — Former EBRPSS Executive Director  
Erin Howard — Principal, Glasgow Middle  
John Hayman — Principal, Tara High School  
Nicole Johnson — Principal, Audubon Elementary  
Dawn Grey — Teacher, Audubon Elementary  
Dr. Patricia Minnis — ESS Program Facilitator  
Marlon Cousin — Community Liaison

## Community Partners

Dr. Dana Hunter — Gov. John Bel Edwards Office of Human Trafficking, Executive Director  
Dr. Pamela Ravare-Jones — Baton Rouge Community College  
Dr. Margaret Mary Sulentic Dowell — LSU Professor  
Mary Stein — East Baton Rouge Parish Library Assistant Director  
Catasha Edwards — Louisiana Department of Education, Education Program Consultant  
Dr. Phaedra Early — Louisiana Department of Education, Literacy Coaching Coordinator  
Dr. Erin Scott-Stewart — Southern University, Assistant Professor  
Michael Adams — 100 Black Men, Chairman of the Board  
Nicole Honore — 100 Black Men, Director of Programs  
Dr. Donald Hunter — New Beginning Baptist Church, Pastor  
Judy Bethly — Volunteers In Public, Executive Director  
Dr. Verjanis Peoples — Southern University, Dean, School of Education  
Emily Jackson-Southern University, Assistant Professor  
Courtney Jarrell — Greater Baton Rouge Pan-Hellenic Council  
John Brown- Blue Cross Blue Shield, Vice President, Chief HR Officer  
Carrie Griffin Monica- Stand for Children Louisiana, Executive Director