



# MONTANA COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN

BIRTH THROUGH  
GRADE 12



NOVEMBER 2012

DENISE JUNEAU, SUPERINTENDENT  
MONTANA OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION



[opi.mt.gov](http://opi.mt.gov)





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*Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak, listen and view in order to communicate with others effectively. Literacy is also the ability to think and respond critically in a wide variety of complex settings. Montana students need to be able to use their literate abilities in multiple ways and for multiple purposes in an ever-changing world.*



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*The Montana Literacy Plan is intended to be an evolving document. As literacy systems and practice evolve, so will the information in this document. Please check the Office of Public Instruction website regularly for updates.*



# MONTANA COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN

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## INTRODUCTION

Montana is a vast, beautiful state with diverse landscapes and populations. It is vital that each of its children, from birth through grade twelve, are afforded the opportunity to develop the literacy skills needed to be college and career-ready. Literacy in the 21st century is not just reading and writing. Literacy requires students to successfully engage with and interpret information from all forms of text and media. Advances in digital tools and the accessibility of immense amounts of information require students to think critically about what they are reading and writing, whether it is online or in print, and apply creativity, collaboration, and communication skills to share what they learn. It is a primary goal of a comprehensive literacy plan that all students effectively access, use, and produce ideas and information. The Montana Literacy Plan provides guidance for districts, schools, and early childhood centers as they plan for comprehensive literacy instruction and assessment. A school's curriculum must be grounded in the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) and delivered with research-based instructional strategies that meet the needs of all learners. Children from birth to school age must have many opportunities to hear and practice language as they develop the foundational skills needed to become readers and writers. Montana's Early Learning Guidelines outline the early language and literacy skills young children need to know, understand, and be able to do by the time they reach kindergarten. Instruction must also be culturally relevant and incorporate the distinct and unique heritage of Montana American Indians as required by Article X of the Montana Constitution and further described in the Montana Code Annotated (20-1-501).



*Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak, listen and view in order to communicate with others effectively. Literacy is also the ability to think and respond critically in a wide variety of complex settings. Montana students need to be able to use their literate abilities in multiple ways and for multiple purposes in an ever-changing world. Literacy enables students to understand, respect and express distinct and unique cultural heritages. To this end, the language processes of reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, and thinking must become integral parts of their lives. By systematically employing these interactive processes, students are able to gather necessary information and to prioritize and organize this material. The skillful use of these language processes provides students with the means of acquiring, constructing, and expressing knowledge in all school content areas and in the human experience as well. In preparation for college and/or career, students must become powerful users of language in educational, occupational, civic, social, and everyday settings.*

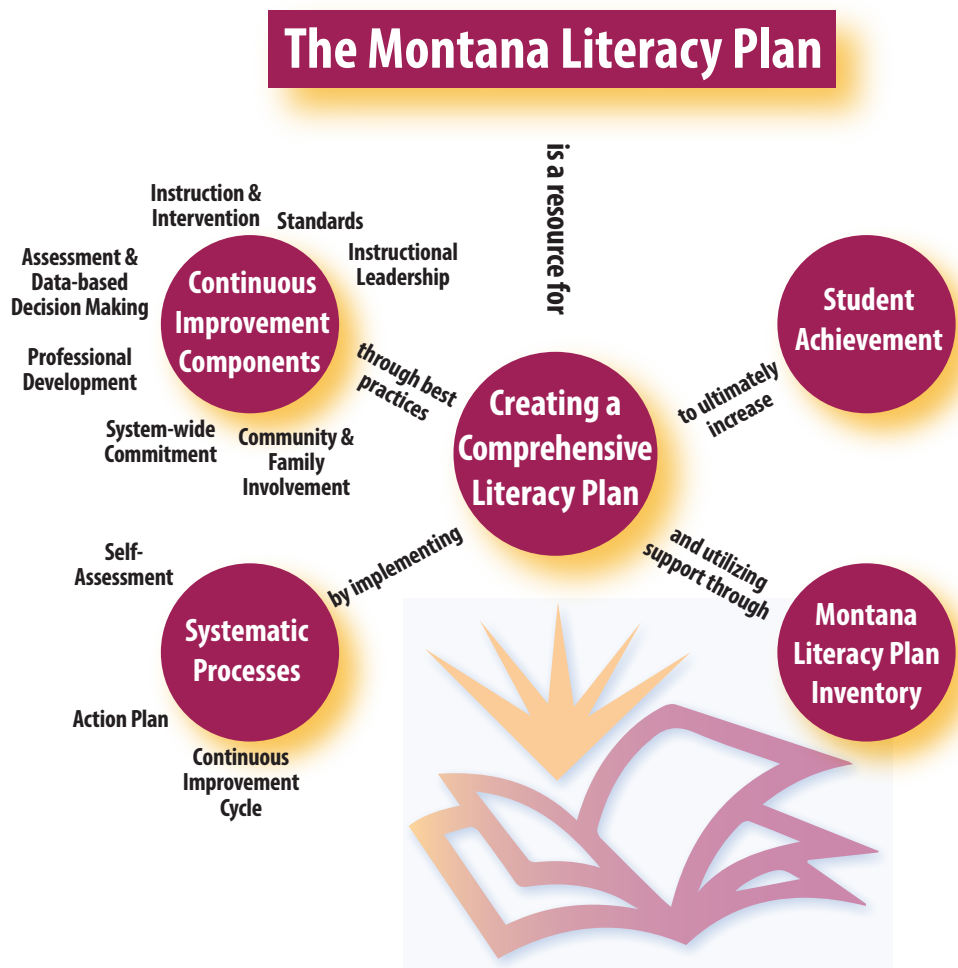
Adapted from New Hampshire PreK-16 Literacy Action Plan for the 21st Century



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT COMPONENTS (CICs)

There are seven Continuous Improvement Components (CICs) that make up the MLP. The CICs reflect best practices that are grounded in evidence and the OPI's experience in implementing the Reading Excellence Act (REA), Reading First (RF), Early Reading First (ERF), The MT Response to Intervention (RTI) Project, School Support, and the Montana Striving Readers Project (MSRP).

- Instructional Leadership
- Standards
- Instruction and Intervention
- Assessment and Data-based Decision Making
- Professional Development
- System-wide Commitment
- Community and Family Involvement



*Visit the Montana Literacy tab on the Instructional Innovations webpage for resources identified within this document and for additional resources.*

[http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/instructional Innovations/index.php](http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/instructional%20Innovations/index.php)



## **Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)**

### **INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**Defined:** An instructional literacy leadership team focuses on helping staff improve literacy instruction and achievement. Administrators, as visible team members, work side by side with a select group of staff members to engage and support them in becoming leaders committed to improving literacy.

#### **Communication of a Shared Responsibility**

Dr. Melvin Phillips (2005), a former principal himself says, “Strong leadership from both administrators and teachers is an essential building block in constructing a successful literacy program, but the role played by the principal is key to determining success or failure of the program.” An administrator is critical in ensuring a literacy culture survives and thrives. Administrators need to communicate a clear and shared focus—a vision of every child meeting the Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and being prepared to enter kindergarten and every K-12 student meeting the MCCS for English Language Arts and Literacy at grade level. Administrators hold fast to the vision; it becomes a guiding force for all educational decisions at every grade level and for every subgroup, including minority students, those living in poverty, English Language Learners and Special Education students.

#### **Continuous Literacy Improvement Planning**

Instructional leaders are responsible for ensuring the provision of rigorous, standards-based instruction. This requires ongoing data-based professional development, including embedded classroom modeling and support, to ensure staff can carry out the targeted instructional goals (Adapted from the Texas State Literacy Plan 2012).

Refer to MLP Action Plan Template (Appendix C) for definition of continuous improvement instructional goals that are driven by data.

#### **Necessary Fiscal Resources**

Successful instructional leadership teams allocate resources including personnel, time, and professional development and develop a clear plan through the use of the continuous improvement cycle for those resources.

#### **Establishment of a Literacy Leadership Team**

The success of any improvement initiative depends on securing buy-in from teachers and requires selecting staff members to serve on a Literacy Leadership Team who:

- Have knowledge of literacy best practices, including evidence-based curriculum and instruction;
- Are highly competent and recognized by peers for their knowledge and skill in the classroom;
- Are willing to share resources and guide other staff members;
- Possess good communication skills;
- Are flexible and respect the opinions of others; and
- Maintain a positive attitude and can inspire others to do the same.

When the entire team (e.g., administrator, staff members, instructional coach, speech-language pathologists, counselors, parent representative) is engaged in exploring, and implementing the fundamental purpose - increasing literacy achievement - the end result is a sustained culture of commitment to that goal (Adapted from Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan, May 2011).

### Instruction and Intervention Expectations

A significant amount of educational research is centered on instructional leadership interpreting best practices in high-performing school districts. Instructional leadership understands best practices and plans implementation of those practices. Best practices are defined as a coherent system of practices that can be easily observed, described, and replicated, and are tied to characteristics of effective, high-performing schools. Principals whose schools outperform other schools visit classrooms regularly, remind teachers of the value of specific instructional practices, promote literacy throughout the school, support family literacy programs, create a business-like atmosphere in the school, and expect improvement at all levels. Research has shown that regular classroom observations by administrators and leadership teams, combined with meaningful dialogue, data analysis, and high-quality professional development, can have a positive impact on instructional quality and student achievement in literacy.

*Adolescent Literacy Walk-Through for Principals* (Rissman, Miller & Torgesen, 2009) identifies four models of classroom walk-throughs.

1. The Three-Minute Classroom Walk-Through: Designed for conducting short, focused observations on curriculum and instruction with a goal of reflective conversation with teachers that leads to professional growth.
2. Three Cs and an E: Designed for conducting walkthroughs looking for Curriculum content being taught, level of expected Cognitive ability according to Bloom's taxonomy, classroom and lesson Context, and evidence of student Engagement. Staff receives feedback that encourages them to think deeply about their teaching. The outcome is a snapshot that informs instructional leadership of the demands and challenges of classrooms.
3. Data Analysis by Walking Around: Designed for a team consisting of teachers, administrators, parents, and educators that form a district - wide focus on expectations for learning, linking classroom practice to what students are expected to learn and the team looks for specific evidence to support the expectations.
4. Data in a Day: Designed for 25-minute classroom observations four times a year that focus on five categories: instructional practices, engagement, levels of thinking, the connection between the teaching and curriculum standards, and the classroom climate. The categories are explicitly defined so that team members can note occurrences with some degree of fidelity.



## **Measurable Goals for Academic Improvement**

*Teaching All Students to Read in Elementary School: A Guide for Principals* (Torgesen et al., 2007) identifies that even though the focus of reading instruction changes dramatically from early childhood through high school, three program elements are critical at any level.

1. Constantly implemented, high-quality initial classroom instruction and follow-up small-group instruction that is well-differentiated according to student needs.
2. Use of student performance data to set goals, to guide instruction and to allocate instructional resources.
3. Resources to provide interventions for struggling students.

Any initiative for improvement needs to have clear goals. Instructional leaders must also make certain that time for literacy instruction during the day is a priority, and that instructional materials are readily available for all instruction and intervention settings.

*Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et al., 2009) recommends making data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement. There are three steps for effectively carrying out this recommendation.

- Collect and prepare a variety of data about student learning.
- Interpret data and develop hypotheses about how to improve student learning.
- Modify instruction to test hypothesis and increase student learning.

After forming hypothesis, teachers may choose to implement one or more of the following actions identified:

- Allocate more time for topics with which students are struggling;
- Reorder the curriculum to shore up essential skills with which students are struggling;
- Designate particular students to receive additional help with particular skills;
- Attempt new ways of teaching difficult or complex concepts, especially based on best practices identified by teaching colleagues;
- Better alignment of performance expectations among classrooms or between grade levels; and/or
- Better alignment of curriculum emphasis among grade levels.

**Analysis of School and Student Data:** *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et al., 2009) recommends establishing a clear vision for school-wide data use. There are four steps for effectively carrying out this recommendation.

1. Establish a school-wide data team that sets the tone for ongoing data use.
  - Team members of the data team should clarify the school's data vision and model the use of data to make instructional decisions, encouraging other school staff to do the same

2. Define critical teaching and learning concepts.
  - Team members need to identify and define a common vocabulary related to data use in particular to minimize conflicted assumptions and misunderstandings. Focus on words like achievement, collaboration, data, evidence, progress and benchmarks.
3. Develop a written plan that articulates activities, roles and responsibilities.
  - Team members should create a written plan that clearly articulates the use of data in achieving goals and ensuring that they are:
    - Attainable, in that they are realistic given existing performance levels;
    - Measurable, in that they clearly express the parameters of achievement and can be supported by data; and
    - Relevant, in that they take into account the specific culture and constraints of the school.
4. Provide ongoing data leadership.
  - Team members should provide support for all staff on how the plan of using data supports the school's vision. Team members can educate staff by having individual or small group meetings focused on these topics.
    - Providing resources and support for data analysis and interpretation;
    - Encouraging educators to use data in their daily work;
    - Creating incentives to motivate staff to analyze data; and
    - Participating in grade and subject level meetings to ensure that structured collaboration time is used effectively.

### **Collaboration Among Staff**

A collaborative culture is created by providing time for staff members to learn, discuss, and reflect on literacy achievement and instruction within the regular school day. Staff members collaborate in a variety of teams including grade level, department, special education and general education. The leadership team works collaboratively with the teams to continually make data-driven decisions for improving literacy achievement. The Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (May 2011, pg. 6), identifies key questions teams are charged with exploring, implementing, and ultimately sustaining.

- What do students need to know and be able to do?
- How are the concepts and skills to be taught, with what strategies and resources?
- What do the data show about student's learning?
- What steps need to be taken (e.g., adjustment in instruction) when students do not reach proficiency?
- What professional development must staff engage in to increase student learning?



It is the responsibility of the instructional leaders at each school to ensure that teacher team meetings occur regularly and are focused on student achievement. Meeting in teams affords staff the opportunity to study state standards, analyze student data and work products, plan instruction, and determine instructional modifications and interventions. Teacher teams raise the level of professional practice from isolation to sharing by reflecting upon, examining, and refining teaching practice, so that all students are learning (Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan, May 2011, pg. 6).

High-performing schools are characterized by the following Instructional Leadership Continuous Literacy Improvement Sub-Components. (See Appendix A, for complete Self-Assessment.)

<b>Instructional Leadership</b>				
1	2	3	4	5
Not Being Implemented-----				Sustained Practice
Administration communicates a shared responsibility for student literacy outcomes.				1 2 3 4 5
Administration engages leaders across the school community in continuous literacy improvement planning.				1 2 3 4 5
Adequate fiscal resources are provided to support literacy improvement efforts.				1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders have established, support, and lead a literacy leadership team.				1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders support and monitor all instruction and intervention expectations.				1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders set measurable goals for academic improvement and monitor progress toward these goals.				1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders meet regularly to analyze school and student data to inform decisions about professional development, instruction, and intervention.				1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders facilitate collaboration among staff, with a focus on literacy achievement and effective literacy instruction.				1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Instructional Leadership:				

## **Additional Information on Instructional Leadership**

Adolescent Literacy Walk-Through for Principals <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/adolescent-literacy-walk-through-for-principals-a-guide-for-instructional-leaders>

Eight Scenarios Illustrating the Adolescent Literacy Walk-Through for Principals <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/adolescent-literacy-walk-through-for-principals-a-guide-for-instructional-leaders>

Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J., & Wayman, J. (2009). *Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making* (NCEE 2009-4067). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications/practiceguides/>.

Improving Literacy Instruction in Middle and High Schools: A Guide for Principals <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/improving-literacy-instruction-in-middle-and-high-schools-a-guide-for-principals>

Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan <http://www.louisianaschools.net/offices/literacy/laclip.html>

Phillips, M. (2005). *Creating a culture of literacy: A guide for middle and high school principals*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals

Principal's Reading Walk-Through: A Kindergarten-Grade 3 Professional Development Module <http://centeroninstruction.org/principals-reading-walk-through-kindergarten-grade-3---professional-development-module>

Rissman, L. M., Miller, D. H., & Torgesen, J. K. (2009). *Adolescent literacy walk-through for principals: A guide for instructional leaders*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Teaching All Students to Read in Elementary School: A Guide for Principals <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/teaching-all-students-to-read-in-elementary-school-a-guide-for-principals>

The Texas State Literacy Plan: A guide for creating comprehensive campus/site-based literacy programs Age 0 to Grade 12 <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index2.aspx?id=2147503221>

Torgesen, J., Houston D., Rissman, L., & Kosanovich, K. (2007). *Teaching all students to read in elementary school: A guide for principals*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction.

Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide.aspx?sid=12>



## **Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)**

### **STANDARDS**

**Defined:** Guskey and Bailey (2010) define standards in education as the goals of teaching and learning. They describe precisely what we want students to know and be able to do as a result of their experiences in school. Standards specify the particular knowledge, skills, abilities, and positions that we hope students will gain through interactions with teachers and fellow students in school learning environments.

Educational standards help teachers ensure their students have the knowledge they need to be successful by providing clear goals for student learning (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012),

#### **Montana Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers**

*The Montana Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers (Birth-36 months)* reflect what infants and toddlers need to know, experience, and are able to do to reach their individual potential.

“The guidelines are meant to assist in understanding children’s growth and development. Keep in mind, however, that these are guidelines; expectations about what infants and toddlers should know and be able to do across different domains of learning. They are not an exhaustive list of skills developed in the first three years of life or a complete picture of growth and development during this time. They are a tool to support understanding of infants and toddlers, and a resource for ideas about ways to enhance their early learning experiences” (Montana Early Childhood Project, [www.mtecp.org](http://www.mtecp.org)).

#### **The Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG)**

*The Montana Early Learning Guidelines* reflect what children need to know, understand, and are able to do by the time they reach kindergarten.

The guidelines are written to address what adults can observe in children ages 3-5, and the ways they can support a child’s individual development. The Guidelines are meant to be inclusive of all children and all of the settings in which they spend time before elementary school, whether that is at home, in a childcare facility, at a Head Start program, in a preschool, or in any other setting. The Guidelines are not a diagnostic tool, an assessment tool, or a mandatory set of regulations (The Montana Early Childhood Project Publications, 2011).

#### **The Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects Grade-Band K-12 (MCCS)**

Montana has adopted the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects. These new standards embrace literacy as everyone’s work. The Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) include standards that set requirements for English Language Arts as well as literacy in the content areas. “Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the Standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines” (MCCS, p.3).

The MCCS provides guidance and a clear structure as to which concepts and skills students are to acquire at each grade level. The shifts of the MCCS for ELA and Literacy have been prioritized as:



- (1) Building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction,
- (2) Reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from both literary and informational text; and
- (3) Regular practice with complex text and its academic language.

Refer to [achievethecore.org](http://achievethecore.org) for a Description of the Common Core Shifts.

The MCCS for English Language Arts and Literacy are the underpinning of the Montana Literacy Plan and address discreet skills, strategies, and tasks within each of the distinct strands. Each strand is headed by a strand-specific set of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards. Grade-specific standards correspond to the anchor standards.

## **MCCS STRANDS**

**Reading:** Literature

**Reading:** Informational Text

**Reading:** Foundational Skills (K-5)

**Writing**

**Speaking and Listening**

**Language**

The MCCS are (1) research and evidence based, (2) align with college and work expectations, (3) rigorous, and (4) internationally benchmarked. The information and research base that is the foundation for this section of the MLP relate directly to the MELG, the MCCS and the stages of MCCS implementation.

For more information, refer to the Montana OPI website, [www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards](http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards)

The MCCS for English Language Arts and Literacy reflect the constitutional mandate that all educators must provide instruction including the distinct and unique heritage and contemporary contributions of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner. The essential understandings are incorporated in the MCCS.

For more information on Indian Education for All and the essential understandings, refer to Appendix F.

The following chart shares the strands and topics of the Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (chart created by the Montana Office of Public Instruction).

## MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERACY

Strands and Topics Progression	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-10	11-12
<b>College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language</b>											
<b>Reading Standards: Foundational Skills</b> <i>Topics</i> Print Concepts K-2 Phonological Awareness K-2											
<b>Reading Standards: Foundational Skills</b> <i>Topics</i> Phonics and Word Recognition K-5 Fluency K-5											
<b>Reading Standards: Literature</b> <b>Reading Standards: Informational Text</b> <i>Topics</i> Key Ideas and Details Craft and Structure Integration of Knowledge and Ideas Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity											
<b>Writing Standards</b> <i>Topics</i> Text Types and Purposes Production and Distribution of Writing Research to Build and Present Knowledge Range of Writing											
<b>Speaking and Listening Standards</b> <i>Topics</i> Comprehension and Collaboration Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas											
<b>Language Standards</b> <i>Topics</i> <u>Conventions of Standard English</u> Knowledge of Language Vocabulary Acquisition and Use											

The following chart shares the strands and topics of the Montana Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects for grades 6-12 (chart created by the Montana Office of Public Instruction).

**MONTANA COMMON CORE STANDARDS**  
**LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE AND TECHNICAL**  
**SUBJECTS, STRANDS AND TOPICS PROGRESSION**

6	7	8	9-10	11-12
<b>College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards for: Reading and Writing</b>				
<b>Reading Standards: Literature Reading Standards: Informational Text</b>				
<i>Topics</i>				
Key Ideas and Details				
Craft and Structure				
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas				
Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity				
<b>Writing Standards</b>				
<i>Topics</i>				
Text Types and Purposes				
Production and Distribution of Writing				
Research to Build and Present Knowledge				
Range of Writing				

The progression of the MCCS for English Language Arts and Literacy focuses on the four strands of the standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language. The Reading strand includes standards for Foundational Skills (K-5), Literature, and Informational Text.

The Reading Foundational Skills for K-5 are essential in providing students with a proper foundation to build and scaffold literacy skills. The areas of print concepts and phonological awareness are targeted in Grades K-1 only. Grades K-5 target the areas of phonics and word recognition and fluency. The standards in the strand of reading for literature and reading informational text span grades K-12. The standards in the strands for writing, speaking and listening, and language span grades K-12 as well. The standards for literacy in history/ social studies, science and technical subjects focus on the strands of reading and writing, spanning grades 6-12.

The Montana Common Core Standards emphasize balancing literature and informational text. The emphasis becomes heavier on informational text as students work through the expectations of the standards in the 11-12 grade-bands. The MCCS expect that students are exposed and engaged in 30 percent literature and 70 percent informational text by Grade 12. The MCCS also has a strong emphasis on text complexity. Standard 10 defines a staircase of increasing complexity across the grade levels as students are exposed to complex text utilizing skills that refer to evidence and analyze details of the text. Finally, the standards focus K-12 writing within three text types; persuasive, informational/explanatory, and narratives. The MCCS writing standards place a special emphasis on argumentative writing. Finally, vocabulary acquisition by using the three-tier system of words is emphasized in the Language strand of the Standards.



## Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) Stages of Implementation Continuum

The Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) Stages of Implementation Continuum includes six stages, which provide comprehensive resources for school districts to self-assess readiness, create action plans, and access targeted resources and processes for aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Montana Common Core Standards Continuum						
	Explore				Implement	Sustain
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6
	Understand MCCS	Align Curriculum and Instruction	Align Student Progress Measures	Implement in classrooms	Implement in schools and districts	Evaluate Assessment Data to make school-wide systematic changes
CCR	All Students Graduate College and Career Ready					
Descriptors	The Montana Common Core Standards for each grade and subject area have been thoroughly studied and are understood.	District Curriculum has been revised or created that aligns with the MCCS at each grade level and provides a common sequencing to facilitate teacher collaboration at the school level.  Educators have identified instructional materials that are coherent, consistent, and comprehensive and support effective learning of the ELA, literacy and Mathematics standards.	Educators establish measurable conceptual learning progressions and how students' understandings of ideas develop, evolve, and progress to establish measurable goals.  Student assessments have been identified to measure the established goals.  A foundation of understanding for formative assessment is established.	Educators design, adapt and use evidence-based best practices and guides to support effective delivery of the curriculum and assessment progress measures to support learning for all students through focused, coherent, and rigorous instruction.	Throughout the school year teachers engage in horizontal (e.g., grade level) and vertical (e.g., cross-grade level) conversations to be sure that every student has multiple learning opportunities and experiences to master standards required for student success at the next grade level.	Educators evaluate data collected from interim and summative assessments. Processes are established to make systematic changes based on data results.

The purpose of the MCCS continuum is to create a continual process and resource, which allows districts, schools and educators to grow their expertise while creating the most appropriate pathway for alignment and implementation of these standards. This continuum design recognizes that the need to move through the stages on a linear or cyclical path. It is encouraged to revisit stages as layers of knowledge, depth, and experience are gained with the MCCS

Refer frequently to Getting Started at <a href="http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards">www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards</a> as new stages and resources are added.
Refer frequently to Getting Started at <a href="http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards">www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards</a> as new stages and resources are added.
You can find these resources at <a href="http://opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/montCAS/MCCS/index.php">http://opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/montCAS/MCCS/index.php</a> to Getting Ready Stages of Implementation. The essential steps and digging deeper activities can be found in the “procedures and resources” document.

**Explore:** The Explore stage encompasses the first three stages of the continuum. These stages are Understanding the Montana Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, Aligning curriculum and instruction to the MCCS, and /or Aligning student progression measures.

**Stage 1: Understand MCCS** expects that The Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for each grade and subject area and have been thoroughly studied and are understood.

The standards were created with a backward design (i.e., the process of creating content through the identification of the results desired and then designing what will make the desired results happen) from college to kindergarten. Experts determined what students needed to know by the time they graduated from high school in order to be college and career ready and then backwards mapped those through kindergarten, setting clear grade level expectations for the end of each grade level. It is essential that educators take time to understand the structure and expectations of the MCCS while focusing on major shifts in English Language Arts and Literacy. Stage 1 sets the foundation on which educators will grow their expertise, increasing rigor with literacy across content.

**Stage 2: Align curriculum and instruction** Curriculum and instructional materials have been aligned with the MELG and /or the MCCS.

This stage provides a process in which educators will review educational publishers’ alignment guides particular to texts being used within individual districts and schools. Educators will look for alignment to the MELG/MCCS and assess the rigor within aligned lessons.

**Stage 3: Align student progress measures** Assessments are aligned with curriculum and with the MELG and/or the MCCS.

A cumulative study of assessments within a district, school, and classroom is carried out so that educators can establish measurable learning progressions that are aligned with the curriculum and expectations of the MCCS.

**Implement:** The Implement stage encompasses stages 4 and 5 of the continuum. These stages are implemented in classrooms, and implemented in schools and districts.



**Stage 4: Implement in classroom** In this stage, educators design, adapt, and use evidence-based best practices to support effective delivery of the curriculum and assessments. A comprehensive scope and sequence is communicated and aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS. A pacing guide is developed that outlines a consistent instructional timeline and is adhered to by all staff. Staff takes aligned curriculum and materials, a deep understanding of the MCCS and implements effective instruction in ELA and literacy across content.

**Stage 5: Implement in schools and districts** Educators engage in horizontal (e.g., grade level) and vertical (e.g., cross-grade level) alignment of curriculum and assessments. Educators utilize aligned curricular materials to instruct and facilitate the concepts and skills set forth by the MCCS. Data from formative and summative assessments are closely analyzed to adjust instruction as necessary balancing the curriculum with students' needs.

**Sustain:** The Sustain stage of the continuum is Stage 6, Evaluate Assessment Data to make school-wide systematic changes.

**Stage 6: Evaluate assessment data to make school-wide systemic changes** Educators have analyzed assessments results (e.g., Smarter Balance, the consortia creating the summative state assessment in 2014-15, curriculum assessment, and independent progress monitoring assessments) and processes are established to make systematic changes based on data results.

Refer frequently to Getting Started at [www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards](http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards) as new stages and resources are added.

High-performing schools are characterized by the following Standards Sub-Components. (See Appendix A, for complete Self-Assessment.)

<p><b>Standards:</b>          The <b>Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) Stages of Implementation Continuum</b> includes six stages, which provide comprehensive resources for school districts to self-assess readiness, create action plans, and access targeted resources and processes for aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment.  <a href="http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards">www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards</a></p>	
Stage 1: The Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and/or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for each grade and subject area have been thoroughly studied and are understood.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 2: Curriculum has been aligned with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 2: Instructional materials are aligned with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 3: Assessments are aligned with curriculum and with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: Educators design, adapt and use evidence-based best practices to support effective delivery of the curriculum and assessments.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: A comprehensive scope and sequence is communicated and aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: A pacing guide outlines a consistent instructional timeline and is adhered to by all staff.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 5: Educators engage in horizontal (e.g., grade level) and vertical (e.g., cross-grade level) alignment of curriculum and assessments.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 6: Educators have analyzed assessment results (e.g., Smarter Balance, curriculum assessments, and independent progress monitoring assessments) and processes are established to make systematic changes based on data results.	1 2 3 4 5
<p>Action Ideas for Standards:</p>	

### Additional Information on Standards

Achieve the Core [www.achievethecore.org](http://www.achievethecore.org)

The Montana Common Core Standards [www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards](http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards)

The Montana Early Learning Guidelines, 2011

[http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs\\_001.pdf](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs_001.pdf)

The Montana Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers, 2009

[http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs\\_001.pdf](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs_001.pdf)

### **References**

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## Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)

### INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION

#### Defined

**Instruction** is the action or process of teaching. Instruction must be focused on appropriate content that aligns with the Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) for children from birth to age 5, or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for students K-12, and should be presented and organized in a way that reflects current educational research.

**Intervention** is additional instruction provided to students that is designed to meet their specific needs while at the same time accelerating their growth toward grade-level benchmarks. An intervention could be an educational practice, strategy, curriculum or program used to support students' needs beyond the basic grade level instruction.

**Response to Intervention** is a tiered approach to meeting the needs of children beginning in preschool. A tiered approach allows for increased intensity of supports and services as the child's needs increase (Coleman et al., 2006).

#### Alignment of Instructional Materials and Content

According to multiple research studies, effective literacy instruction is "developmentally appropriate, explicit, evidence-based, and systematic" (NRP, 2000). Evidenced-based instruction is consistent with the principles of scientific research as defined in Section 200(18) of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

Developing the literacy skills of all learners is a shared responsibility among all educators. All students should receive high-quality core classroom instruction (Tier 1) that utilizes programs and materials that are based on current educational research, and that is designed and differentiated to meet their needs.

For more information on evidence-based instruction visit the Doing What Works website, and/or refer to the resources at the end of this section.

#### Effective Literacy Instruction: Birth through Age 5

Without a doubt, the early years, from birth to age five, are the most extraordinary period of growth and development in a child's lifetime. Communication, language, and literacy are essential for individuals to function in all societies. The acquisition of language and literacy is a complex process that begins when a child is born. In the first few years of life, children rapidly learn the meaning and structure of words, how to use words to convey meaning, and how to make meaning of printed materials (AELG, 2007). [need reference] The Montana Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers, and the Montana Early Learning Guidelines for children 3-5, can assist all early childhood programs and K-12 schools to align the experiences children have before entering school. "They are meant to be inclusive of all children and all of the settings in which they spend time before elementary school, whether that be at home, in a child care facility, at a Head Start program, in a preschool, or in any other setting" (MELG, 2004).



## Montana's Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers

School readiness begins long before a child ever steps foot into a classroom. "The importance of the early years in infant and toddler's growth and development is well documented, as well as their significance for later success in school. There is also ample evidence linking the quality of early care and education programs with the promotion of life-long learning" (MELG, 2009).

On page 11 of the *Montana Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through 36 Months*, in the School Readiness section, it states, "All infants and toddlers should be supported as life-long learners. They must be allowed to develop a disposition and eagerness to learn in order to find success in their learning experiences. Children should be recognized as capable individuals and competent learners. Children come to programs eager and ready to learn. To achieve readiness infants and toddlers need: caregivers that have access to resources that allow them to obtain skills and understanding to support growth and development; access to health care and good nutrition, and; access to quality care programs" (MELG, 2009).

The *Montana Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through 36 Months* are a resource to help provide and plan for infant and toddler's growth and development. They provide information and guidance in ways to support what infants or toddlers need to know, experience and be able to do to reach their individual potential. These guidelines align to the National Early Literacy Panel (2008) findings, and can be used to plan learning experiences that support infant and toddler's growth and development which will in turn provide the physical, social, emotional and cognitive foundations needed for them to be successful in school. These guidelines provide:

- A common framework for developmentally appropriate expectations for infants and to read toddlers
- A common language for use across different settings, programs and services
- Help in aligning curriculum and instruction with expectations of the Montana Common Core Standards (MELG, 2009, pg. 12).

## Montana's Early Learning Guidelines: Ages Three to Five

The MELG, for children ages 3-5 years old, are based on research that shows that foundational reading and writing skills developed in the years from birth through age 5 have a clear and consistently strong relationship with later conventional literacy skills. Below are the early literacy skills that had the strongest predictive relationships for later literacy development, according to *Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel (2008)*.

- **Oral Language/Vocabulary Development:** Involves both speaking and listening, or expressive and receptive language.
- **Alphabet Knowledge:** Naming the letters of the alphabet.
- **Phonological Awareness:** The awareness of the individual sounds of the spoken word.
- **Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN):** How quickly a child can name aloud objects, pictures, colors, or symbols (letters or digits).
- **Writing or Writing Name:** Being able to write one's own name.

- **Phonological Memory:** The ability to remember sounds and sequences of sounds (MECPP, 2011).

The chart below shows the alignment between the essential early literacy skills as outlined by the National Early Literacy Panel (2008), and the Language and Literacy Guidelines found in the Montana Early Learning Guidelines, beginning on page 19.

<b>NELP Early Literacy Skill</b>	<b>Montana Early Learning Guidelines, 3-5: Language and Literacy</b>
Oral Language/Vocabulary Development	Receptive and Expressive Vocabulary
Alphabet Knowledge	Alphabet Knowledge, Print Awareness
Phonological Awareness	Phonological Awareness
Rapid Automatic Naming (RAN)	Alphabet Knowledge
Writing or Writing Name	Print Awareness, Print Development
Phonological Memory	Phonological Awareness

In alignment with the Montana Early Learning Language and Literacy Guidelines, early language and literacy instruction should consist of evidence-based oral language and vocabulary development (listening and speaking), phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, print awareness, and emergent writing skills. This explicit, intentional, and systematic instruction ought to take place in playful, developmentally appropriate, language and literacy rich environments.

### **Effective Literacy Instruction: Grades K-5**

The Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade. There are three strands for Reading (K-5): Literature (RL), Informational Text (RI), and Foundational Skills (RF). The standards in each of these areas correlate directly to the College and Career Readiness (CCR) Anchor Standards. Together they “define the skills and understandings that all K-5 students must demonstrate.”

The Montana Common Core Standards- K-5 Reading: Foundational Skills “are directed toward fostering student’s understanding and working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic conventions of the English writing system. These foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; rather, they are necessary and important components of an effective, comprehensive reading program designed to develop proficient readers with the capacity to comprehend texts across a range of pieces of a puzzle in each grade that, over time, will form one big picture” (MCCS, pg. 35).

### **Effective Adolescent Literacy Instruction: Grades 6-12**

Adolescent literacy is a complex hierarchy of skills and strategies built from the earliest grades and culminating in highly structured thought processes leading to the comprehension of varied texts and genres. The MCCS Reading Standards 6-12 provide “a focus for instruction each year and help ensure that students gain adequate exposure to a range of texts and tasks. Rigor is also infused through the requirement that students read increasingly complex texts through the grades” (MCCS, pg. 38). The MCCS Standards for 6-12 are outlined in two distinct sections:



- **The Standards for English Language Arts** which include standards for Literature, Informational Text, Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language
- **The Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects** which include specific standards for content instruction such as History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects (e.g., math, health)

According to the *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (Kamil et al., 2008),

“To acquire the skills they need, students must work hard to refine and build upon their initial reading skills, and teachers in upper elementary grades and in middle- and high-school classes should help students acquire more advanced skills once they understand the demands that content area tasks actually present, especially to students who struggle with reading.” The authors recommend practices that support the instruction of literacy in Grades 6-12. The MCCS fully align to and support the recommendations.

**Recommendation: Provide explicit vocabulary instruction**

“The MCCS vocabulary standards (sub-skills of the Language standards) focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases” (MCCS, pg. 10).

**Recommendation: Provide direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction.**

“Whatever they are reading, students must show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts” (MCCS, pg.10).

**Recommendation: Provide opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation.**

“To build a foundation for college and career readiness, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations as part of a whole class, in small groups and with a partner” (MCCS, pg. 24).

**Recommendation: Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning**

“...students become self-directed (motivated) learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers and print and digital reference materials” (MCCS, pg. 10).

**Recommendation: Make available intensive individualized interventions for struggling readers that can be provided by qualified specialists.**

Middle- and high-school level students also need structured and effective interventions, and core classroom instruction that is differentiated to meet the specific needs and skill levels of students. “Instruction should be differentiated: good readers will need much less practice with these concepts than struggling students will. The point is to teach students what they need to learn and not what they already know-to discern when particular children or activities warrant more or less attention (MCCS, pg. 17).

**Literacy in the Content Areas**

The MCC Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects define what students should understand and be able to do by the end of each grade span in the area of discipline-specific

content. The MCCS “set requirements not only for English language arts, but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects... Literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language in their respective fields” (MCCS, pg. 3). All teachers are teachers of reading and writing. This applies to all content areas and specifically to science, history, and math teachers. Specific literacy instruction in the content areas can give all students the skills they need to succeed in the classroom as the demand for reading and writing increases.

According to *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (Kamil et al., 2008), “Because teaching comprehension strategies improves students’ ability to comprehend their textbooks, it is a valuable classroom activity for content-area teachers, not just language arts teachers. Teaching comprehension strategies should expand students’ long-term learning abilities. Although it may take a short time to teach several strategies, that time should pay off in the long term by helping students learn more independently from their textbooks and other source material they are asked to read in their content area classrooms. After all, the goal of using comprehension strategies is improved comprehension—of all text materials that students read” (pg. 19). This directly supports the MCCS which state, “College and career ready reading in these (content area) fields requires an understanding and appreciation of the norms and conventions of each discipline, such as the kinds of evidence used in history and science: an understanding of domain-specific words and phrases; and attention to precise details; and the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information, and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts.”

### **Reading Instruction for Special Education Students**

Every student deserves to be placed in the most inclusive learning situation and every student deserves to receive instruction at his or her highest possible capacity. However, some students, including those with identified disabilities will demonstrate persistent learning difficulties, even though they benefit from a supportive home environment and receive excellent instruction at school. Such students will benefit from Tier II or III small-group, skills-based instruction that is aligned and coordinated with the classroom instruction and based on the MCCS.

“Special education students do not necessarily need instruction that is substantially different from that which everyone else is receiving. Rather, they may need the instruction to be fine-tuned to fit their individual learning needs. What constitutes good special education lies in the intensity and focus of instruction” (Moats, 2002). “There is little evidence that children experiencing difficulties learning to read, even those with identifiable learning disabilities, need radically different sorts of supports than children at low risk, although they may need much more intensive support” (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998, pg. 3).

It is important to include students with disabilities in Tier I whole class instruction as determined by the individual education plan (IEP). With adaptations such as reading aloud, partner reading, digital text display, or books on tape for the visually impaired, all students can learn from the same texts. This access to the general education instructional program lays the foundation for a shared literary heritage and cultural literacy among all learners.

Schools that have a need for special educators and instructional specialists are urged to place high-quality professionals in these positions. The budget may need to be supported, funds may need to be leveraged, to make it possible to provide struggling learners with the specialists they urgently need. Responsibilities must be clearly defined to ensure collaboration between classroom teachers, special educators, and instructional specialists.



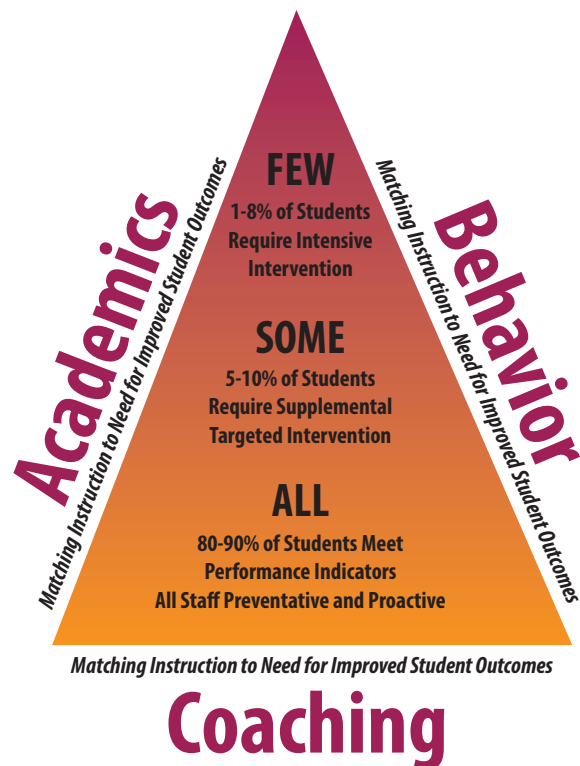
“Effective special educators have a repertoire of strategies to use, making adjustments or changes along the way based on student performance. They also have a wealth of knowledge about the reading process and how students learn so they can fine-tune instruction for individual students. Key to making good instructional decisions is a well-developed assessment routine that provides continuous diagnostic information about student progress. In addition, the special education teacher who serves as an inclusion specialist must artfully work within and around the English Language Arts Instruction of the general education classroom. This may entail blending into the activities that are occurring, assisting the classroom teacher with literacy instruction, consulting with the teacher, and, most importantly, providing specialized instruction for specific students to ensure their learning needs are met” (Haager & Klingner, 2004).

### Reading Instruction for English Language Learners

Research shows that reading failure is especially likely among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students who are members of racial minority groups, and among those whose native language is not English (NRC, 1999). Many of the students in Montana who are at risk for reading failure are members of an American Indian (AI) tribe. While English is often their first language, many children who are AI are raised in homes speaking both a native language and a version of English, influenced by a strong cultural dialect that varies tremendously from standard American English. Often these children arrive in school with little or no exposure or contact with the standard American English, the language of formal education. The MCCS specifically address serving these and other English language learners in culturally responsive classrooms that meet their cognitive and affective needs. “Although it is beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs, at the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and the skills necessary in their post-high school lives. The standards should also be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students” (MCCS, pg. 8).

### **Explicit and Systematic Instruction**

All instructional materials and content should include explicit and systematic instruction in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language in all content areas as identified in the MCCS. In *Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching*, authors Anita Archer and Charles A. Hughes (2011) define explicit and systematic instruction:



“In the quest to maximize students’ academic growth, one of the best tools available to educators is explicit

instruction, a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills. It is called explicit because it is an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures. Explicit instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved. Rosenshine (1987) described this form of instruction as “a systematic method for teaching with emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for student understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all students” (p. 34).

Archer and Charles (2011) also describe 16 elements of explicit instruction (p. 2).

1- Focus instruction on critical content	9- Provide an adequate range of examples and non-examples
2- Sequence skills logically	10- Provide guided supported practice
3- break down complex skills and strategies into smaller instructional units	11- Require frequent responses
4- Design organized and focused lessons	12- Monitor student performance closely
5- Begin lessons with a clear statement of the lesson’s goals and your expectations	13- Provide immediate affirmative and corrective feedback
6- Review prior skills and knowledge before beginning instruction	14- Deliver the lesson at a brisk pace
7- Provide step-by-step demonstrations	15- Help students organize knowledge
8- Use clear and concise language	16- Provide distributed and cumulative practice

### **Tiered Instruction**

Effective core classroom instruction should meet the needs of most students, but a multi-tiered system for providing high-quality intensive intervention is required to meet the needs of all students.

Response to Intervention (RTI) in Montana is a multi-tiered system of support. This system of support provides guidance for delivering comprehensive, quality instruction for all students. RTI is a general education process that provides students with high-quality research-based instruction (Tier 1), and interventions (Tiers 2 and 3) that are matched to the student’s specific needs. Data are used to drive decisions about individual student progress and to determine the appropriate instructional plan necessary for a student to achieve grade-level success. Intervention instruction focuses on one or more key areas of literacy development, is clearly defined, implemented with fidelity, and is delivered daily to maximize instruction and intervention benefits. The goal of intervention is to respond quickly to the needs of students who may be at risk of not meeting standards, and to get them back on track. Montana’s RTI framework is designed to provide evidence-based instruction and targeted interventions that lead to student success. Below is a graphic representation of the Montana RTI Framework.



### **Tier I Core Classroom Instruction**

All students should receive core classroom instruction utilizing evidence - based curriculum and methods to teach critical elements of subjects such as reading, math, and written expression. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of students will have a sufficient response to instruction by demonstrating subject proficiency with effective Tier I instruction. Students who score at the higher level of Tier I should be receiving instruction that will continue to keep them challenged.

### **Tier II Strategic Targeted Instruction**

Some students will receive strategically targeted instruction in addition to core instruction. Strategic Instruction addresses the specific needs of students who do not make sufficient subject progress in Tier I. Tier II interventions are targeted to teach specific skill needs, are evidence based, and align with core classroom instruction. Approximately 5 to 10 percent of students will require Tier II instruction. The duration of this instruction varies based on student assessment results and progress monitoring data that measures student response to intervention.

### **Tier III Intensive Targeted Intervention**

Intensive targeted instruction is provided to the most at-risk students who have not responded sufficiently to Tier I and Tier II instruction. This small percentage (1 to 8 percent of students) usually has severe skill difficulties and requires instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet individual needs. Intensive instruction should take place in addition to Tier I instruction; however, it may, in a few instances, replace core instruction. Students needing targeted Tier III interventions will have additional instruction daily (e.g., 90 minutes of Tier I instruction plus 60-90 minutes of intervention instruction). Tier III interventions may replace Tier II instruction and should be provided by the most qualified teacher within a smaller group of students. The duration of this intervention is extended over a longer period of time and varies based on student assessment and progress monitoring data.

### **Student Movement through the Tiers**

Student movement through the tiers is a fluid process based on student assessment data and collaborative team decisions about students' response to instruction. A goal of the process is to accelerate learning so that students exit intervention. At any time during this process, a student may be referred for consideration for a 504 Plan and/or special education evaluation.

The following charts describe details about Tier II and Tier III Intensified Interventions, Adequate Time for Literacy Instruction and Additional Support for Learners with Tier II and Tier III needs. Specific information is provided for: for Age 3 to Entrance Into Kindergarten, Primary Level K-3, Intermediate Level 4-5, and Secondary Level 6-12.



Age 3 to Entrance Into Kindergarten	<b>Tier I Classroom</b>	<b>Tier II Strategic Instruction</b>	<b>Tier III Intensive Intervention</b>
<b>LEARNERS</b>	ALL students	Children identified through dual discrepancy models. These children score in the bottom quartile on baseline measures as well as display slower growth rates than their peers	Children who do not make sufficient progress in Tier II will be considered for Tier III instruction
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER</b>	Classroom teacher, literacy coach	Classroom reading teacher, specialized reading teacher, or a special education teacher specifically trained in reading intervention	Speech pathologist, occupational therapist, special education teacher  Teachers will reinforce strategies and activities used by specialists for children receiving Tier III services
<b>TIME ALLOCATION FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION</b>	Evidence-based literacy activities identified within the National Early Literacy Panel report are interspersed throughout all parts of the day for developmentally appropriate lengths of time  Evidence-based literacy activities from the variables of the National Early Literacy Panel	Evidence-based literacy activities are interspersed throughout all parts of the day for developmentally appropriate lengths of time.  Tier II-III activities are delivered to individual children or groups of children in their general classroom environment in addition to Tier I activities. In most cases, children will never know that they are receiving anything extra or different from their peers. Interventions are provided during center time for developmentally appropriate lengths of time.	Evidence-based literacy activities are interspersed throughout all parts of the day for developmentally appropriate lengths of time.  Individualized support provided within the context of the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible
<b>GROUPING STRUCTURE</b>	Flexible (whole group, small group, partners)	Small flexible homogeneous groups of three-to-six students per teacher (optimal)	Small homogeneous groups of 2 to 5 students per teacher (optimal)
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM</b>	Early literacy programs grounded in best practice, including the variables identified within the National Early Literacy Panel Report  Instructional materials and spatial arrangements that support the development of children's language and literacy skills	Differentiated instruction based on extensions from the Tier I program  Small-group instruction grounded in best practice, including the variables identified within the National Early Literacy Panel Report  Lessons based on individual instructional need, classroom ecologies, developmentally appropriate practices, and child interests	Lessons based on individual instructional need, classroom ecologies, developmentally appropriate practices, and child interests



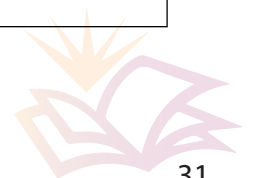
Primary Level K-3	<b>Tier I Classroom</b>	<b>Tier II Strategic Instruction</b>	<b>Tier III Intensive Intervention</b>
<b>LEARNERS</b>	ALL students	Generally 5%-10% of students, who need additional structured support	Generally 1%-8% of students, who have marked difficulties learning to read and have not sufficiently responded to instruction provided at Tiers I & II
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER</b>	Classroom	Classroom reading teacher, specialized reading teacher, or a special education teacher specifically trained in reading intervention	Teacher specifically trained in teaching reading, reading specialist, or special education teacher, trained in reading
<b>TIME ALLOCATION FOR ELA (English Language Arts)</b>	90 minutes daily minimum of grade level MCCS aligned reading Instruction  30-90 minutes daily for writing--spelling, word study, etc.	30 minutes of strategic reading instruction daily, to reinforce skills taught by the classroom teacher and in addition to the core reading program  30-90 minutes daily for writing--spelling, word study, etc.	60 minute session of more intensive, more explicit instruction that supports the core grade level program or 90 minutes of explicit instruction that supplants the core grade level program, based on need as indicated by assessment data  30-90 minutes daily for writing--spelling, word study, etc.
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION</b>	MCCS for English Language Arts	Focus on Foundational Skills within the MCCS for ELA.  Any or all Foundational Skills as indicated by assessment data.	Focus on Foundational Skills within the MCCS for ELA.  Intensive intervention is designed to address individual needs and is guided by assessment data from diagnosis and progress monitoring assessments.
<b>GROUPING STRUCTURE</b>	Flexible (whole group, small group, partners)	Small flexible homogeneous groups of three-to-six students per teacher (optimal)	Small homogeneous groups of 2 to 5 students per teacher
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM</b>	Standards-based and explicit, grade-level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness. All instructional decisions based on assessment	Standards-based, explicit instruction to strengthen specific skills identified as weak in Tier I, using programs proven effective for identified need	Explicit instruction at student's performance level using program with proven effectiveness at quickly teaching at-risk or reading disabled students to read at grade level
<b>ALIGN MATERIALS WITH STATE STANDARDS</b>	Evaluate and align current materials and instruction with the MCCS	Evaluate intervention materials for explicit, systematic instruction of the essential reading components	Evaluate intervention materials for the explicit, systematic instruction aligned with the content of the MCCS

<b>PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Professional development for effective use of assessments, instructional materials, the Essential Understandings for Indian Education for All, and strategies for explicit and differentiated instruction	Professional development before and during the implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective strategic instruction readers	Professional development before and during implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective intervention instruction
<b>ASSESS STUDENTS</b>	-Screening	-Screening	-Screening
<b>Formative</b>	-Diagnostic	-Diagnostic	-Diagnostic
<b>Summative</b>	-Progress Monitoring (minimum three times a year)	-Progress Monitoring (every two to four weeks)	-Progress Monitoring (every week or two)
	-Outcome	-Outcome	-Outcome
<b>IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM</b>	Provide ongoing support to staff, including time for planning and collaboration. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing support to staff, including time for planning and collaboration. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing support to staff, including time for planning and collaboration. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers
<b>ADJUST INSTRUCTION</b>	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative data, analyzed three times per year	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative data, analyzed every 4-6 weeks	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative data, analyzed every two weeks



Intermediate Level 4-5	Tier I		Tier II Strategic Instruction	Tier III Intensive Intervention
	English Language Arts	Content Area		
<b>LEARNERS</b>	All students	All students	Generally 5%-10% of students, who need additional structured support	Generally 1%-8% of students, who have marked difficulties learning to read and have not sufficiently responded to instruction provided at Tiers I & II
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER</b>	English/language arts teachers	Content-area teachers	Classroom reading teacher, specialized reading teacher, or a special education teacher specifically trained in reading intervention	Teacher specifically trained in teaching reading, reading specialist, or special education teachers
<b>TIME ALLOCATION  FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION</b>	Daily 60-minute minimum or one instructional period of explicit instruction using diverse texts  45-90 minutes daily for writing,-spelling, word study, etc.	Provided within scheduled content-area classes	30 minutes of strategic reading instruction daily to reinforce skills taught in Tier I instruction	Supplant core instruction with 90-120 minutes of intensive, explicit instruction designed to meet individual needs, guided by data. Optimal to include students in Tier I literature
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS FOR ELA and CONTENT AREA</b>	MCCS for English Language Arts	Focus on vocabulary and comprehension standards within MCCS ELA that are appropriate for reading and understanding informational text	Phonemic awareness, phonics/ structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, language (any or all components as indicated by assessment data) standards within the MCCS ELA	Phonemic awareness, phonics/structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing, language (any or all components as indicated by assessment data) standards within the MCCS ELA
<b>GROUPING STRUCTURE</b>	Flexible (whole group, small group, partners)	Flexible (whole group, small group, partners)	Homogeneous groups of 3-6 students (optimal)	As recommended by special education or reading teacher, groups of 3-5 students

<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM</b>	Evidence-based, grade-level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness and aligned to the MCCS ELA. All instructional decisions based on assessment	Evidence-based, grade-level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness and aligned to the MCCS ELA. All instructional decisions based on assessment	Evidence-based, explicit instruction to strengthen specific skills identified through Tier I assessments. Instruction uses research-validated strategies which have proven effective for identified need	Explicit instruction at student's performance level, using intervention or replacement program. Decisions based on assessment data
<b>ALIGN MATERIALS WITH STATE STANDARDS</b>	Evaluate and align current materials and instruction with the Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (MCCS)	Evaluate and align current materials and instruction with the Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (MCCS)	Evaluate intervention materials for explicit, systematic instruction with the Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (MCCS)	Evaluate intervention materials for explicit, systematic instruction with the Montana Common Core Standards for English Language Arts (MCCS)
<b>PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Professional development for effective use of assessments, instructional materials, and strategies for explicit and differentiated instruction, the seven Essential Understandings for Indian Education for All, and strategies for explicit and differentiated instruction	Professional development to help teachers provide effective content area instruction, and the seven Essential Understandings for Indian Education for All	Professional development before and during the implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective strategic instruction	Professional development before and during implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective intervention instruction
<b>ASSESS STUDENTS</b> <b>Formative</b>  <b>Summative</b>	-Screening  -Diagnostic  -Progress Monitoring (minimum three times a year)  -Outcome	Monitor progress (in-program assessments, unit tests, daily performance)	-Screening  -Diagnostic  -Progress Monitoring (every 4-6 weeks)  -Outcome	-Screening  -Diagnostic  -Progress Monitoring (every week or two)  -Outcome
<b>IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM</b>	Provide ongoing support to staff with planning and collaboration time. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide emphasis on developing vocabulary and background knowledge	Provide ongoing staff support, including time for planning and collaboration. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing staff support, including time for planning and collaboration. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers
<b>ADJUST INSTRUCTION</b>	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data	Adjust instructional program based on formative and summative data	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data



Secondary Level 6-12	Tier I		Tier II Strategic Instruction	Tier III Intensive Intervention
	English Language Arts	Content Area		
<b>LEARNERS</b>	All students	All students	Generally 5%-10% of students who need additional structured support	Generally 1%-8% of students who have marked difficulties learning to read and have not sufficiently responded to the instruction provided in Tiers I and II
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER</b>	English/language arts teacher	Content-area teacher	Classroom reading teacher, specialized reading teacher, or a special education teacher specifically trained in reading intervention	Teacher specifically trained in teaching reading, reading specialist, or special education teacher
<b>TIME ALLOCATION FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION</b>	One instructional period of explicit English/Language Arts	Instruction provided within scheduled content-area classes	Strategic reading and writing instruction in core and content classes, study hall, and tutoring (before, during, and after school)	Supplant core instruction with one or more instructional periods of intensive, explicit instruction specifically designed to meet individual needs and guided by data (an acceleration program)
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL COMPONENTS</b>	Core content grade-level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness and aligned with the MCCS ELA  All instructional decisions based on assessment	Evidence-based grade level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness and aligned with the MCCS Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. All instructional decisions based on assessment	Evidence-based, explicit instruction to strengthen specific skills identified through Tier I assessments in both ELA and content-area classes	Phonemic awareness, phonics/structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, writing (any or all components as indicated by assessment data) standards within the MCCS ELA and Literacy core content grade-level instruction using programs with proven effectiveness and aligned with the MCCS ELA and Literacy  All instructional decisions based on assessment
<b>GROUPING STRUCTURE</b>	Flexible (whole class, small group, partners)	Flexible (whole class, small group, partners)	Flexible (whole class, small group, partners)	As recommended by intervention program or less than 16 students per teacher

<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM</b>	Evidence-based, grade-level, explicit instruction incorporating the key elements of effective adolescent literacy using research-based practices (MCCS ELA)	Evidence based, grade-level, explicit instruction incorporating the key elements of effective adolescent literacy (MCCS Literacy) using research-based practices	Explicit instruction at student's performance level using intervention or replacement programs	Evidence based, grade-level, explicit instruction incorporating the key elements of effective adolescent literacy (MCCS Literacy) using research-based practices
<b>ALIGN MATERIALS WITH STATE STANDARDS</b>	Evaluate and align current materials and instruction with the MCCS ELA.	Evaluate and align current materials and instruction with the MCCS Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects	Evaluate intervention materials for explicit, systematic instruction of the MCCS ELA and Literacy	Evaluate intervention materials for explicit, systematic instruction of the MCCS ELA and Literacy
<b>PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	Professional development for effective use of assessments, instructional materials, and strategies for explicit and differentiated instruction	Professional development to help teachers provide effective content area instruction that is explicit systematic and differentiated	Professional development before and during the implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective strategic instruction	Professional development before and during implementation of the program to help teachers provide effective intervention instruction
<b>ASSESS STUDENTS</b>	-Screening -Outcome	Monitor progress (in-program assessments, unit tests, daily performance)	Screening -Diagnostic -Progress Monitoring -Outcome	-Screening -Diagnostic -Progress Monitoring (weekly/bimonthly optimal) - Outcome
<b>IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM</b>	Provide ongoing support to staff with planning and collaboration time. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing support to staff with planning and collaboration time. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing support to staff with planning and collaboration time. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers	Provide ongoing support to staff with planning and collaboration time. Provide effective coaching and/or mentoring to teachers
<b>ADJUST INSTRUCTION</b>	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data	Adjust instructional program based on formative and summative data	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data	Adjust instruction and student placement based on progress monitoring assessment data and all formative and summative data



## Technology to Support Student Learning

Research indicates that technology's use in the classroom can have an additional positive influence on student learning when the learning goals are clearly articulated prior to the technology's use (Ringstaff & Kelley, 2002). Applied effectively, technology implementation not only increases student learning, understanding, and achievement but also augments motivation to learn, encourages collaborative learning, and supports the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Schacter & Fagnano, 1999).

Individuals bring a variety of skills, needs, and interests to learning. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all individuals equal opportunities to learn. By considering the what, how, and why of learning, teachers present information and content in different ways, differentiate the ways that students can express what they know, and stimulate interest and motivation for learning. Through the use of technology tools and the principles of UDL, teachers are able to plan for learning opportunities that meet the needs of all students.

In order to put research into practice, schools are encouraged to implement technology through the following processes:

- Website resources;
- Universal design technology resources such as CAST UDL Curriculum resources, UDL Book Builder, UDL Editions, and CAST Strategy Tutor, for all Tiers, but especially Tier II and III for meeting the needs of disadvantaged students;
- Teacher resources such as document cameras for building background knowledge and mobile device labs for making learning relevant for students through real life connections to content; and
- Text-assisted computer reading apps such as eBooks, and voice recognition applications to support student writing.

### High-performing schools are characterized by the following Instruction and Intervention Sub-Components. (See Appendix A for complete self-assessment.)

Instruction and Intervention	1	2	3	4	5
	-----				Sustained Practice
Instructional materials and content are aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional materials and content include explicit and systematic instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all content areas.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders ensure time for literacy instruction during the school day is a priority (e.g., minimum recommended 90 minutes of Tier I literacy instruction in primary grades, use of literacy strategies across subject areas, and additional time for interventions).	1	2	3	4	5
Tiered instruction is clearly defined and implemented with fidelity.	1	2	3	4	5
Additional support is provided for learners with Tier II and Tier III needs through intensified interventions (e.g., smaller group sizes, increased time, or varied instructional materials).	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders ensure that instructional materials are readily available for all instruction and intervention settings.	1	2	3	4	5
Additional support is provided for learners with Tier II and Tier III needs through intensified interventions (e.g., smaller group sizes, increased time, or varied instructional materials).	1	2	3	4	5
Technology is utilized to support student learning (e.g., software or digital devices which students use to learn, access, organize, and communicate information).	1	2	3	4	5
Action Ideas for Instruction and Intervention:					



## Additional Information on Instruction and Intervention

Haager, Diane; Klingner, Janette, & Vaughn, Sharon. (2007) Evidence-Based Reading Practices for Response to Intervention, Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks Publishing

*Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices: A Practice Guide* (NCEE #2008-4027). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved on September 18, 2012 from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc>.

Moats, L.C. & Hall, S. Parenting a struggling reader. New York: Broadway Books.(2002).

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Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Montana Early Childhood Project. (2009). *Montana's Early Learning Guideline for Infants and Toddlers*. Retrieved September 24, 2012, from Department of Health and Human Services: [http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs\\_001.pdf](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/documents/mtelgs_001.pdf)

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National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel. *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Ringstaff, K., & Kelley, L. (2002). *The Learning Return on our Education Technology Investment: A review of findings from research*. San Francisco: WestEd RTEC.

Rosenshine, B. (1987). Explicit teaching and teacher training. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 38 (3), 34-36.

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## Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)

### ASSESSMENT AND DATA-BASED DECISION MAKING

**Defined:** Assessment is the process of collecting data for the purpose of improving learning. Assessment may be formal or informal and may be conducted through an assortment of methods. A comprehensive assessment framework includes regularly scheduled sessions for reviewing data to make informed decisions about instruction.

#### Alignment to Standards

Assessment tools and procedures need to be aligned to the Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and/or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) across all content areas. The MELG and MCCS provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn. Assessments help teachers identify students who are meeting age or grade-level literacy standards and those who are “at risk” for difficulties, so that appropriate instruction and intervention are provided.

#### Comprehensive Assessment System

A comprehensive assessment system provides a framework that defines which assessments should be administered, when they should be administered, to whom they should be administered, and how the assessment results will be used. Multiple evaluation and assessment strategies are used to monitor and modify instruction in order to meet student needs. The results of assessments are used to improve instruction and to increase student achievement. Assessment is often categorized as either formative or summative based on the intended use of the information collected.

**Formative Assessments** guide current and ongoing instruction. The results of formative assessments such as screening, progress monitoring, and diagnostic measures are used to adjust instruction to meet individual and group needs on a continuous basis.

**Summative Assessments** are used to measure students’ overall learning or outcome of the curriculum and standards. Summative assessments are given at the end of units, mid-term and at the end of a course, which are designed to judge the extent of students’ learning of the material in a course, for the purpose of grading, certification, evaluation of progress or even for researching the effectiveness of a curriculum (Bloom et al., 1971, pg. 117).

**Screening** involves all children and is usually done at set benchmark points such as the beginning and middle of the school year or the end of a unit of study. Screenings determine level of mastery of age or grade-level standards.

**Progress Monitoring** involves frequent measurement to determine whether students are making adequate progress toward mastery of age or grade-level standards. These assessments should be administered as part of a regular instructional routine: weekly, biweekly, or monthly depending on student need. The more intense the intervention, the more frequently progress monitoring should occur.

**Diagnostic Assessments** help teachers plan instruction by providing in-depth information about students’ skills and instructional needs. Diagnostic assessments are individually administered to students at risk for failure and provide specific information needed to guide appropriate instruction.

A comprehensive assessment system should provide information on the effectiveness of instructional programs, should identify support and resources that are needed for improvement, and should provide information for individual as well as group needs. Informal assessments provide data from classroom activities, observations, conferencing, student projects, and work samples. Formal assessments provide data using standardized tests or procedures under controlled conditions. A comprehensive assessment system is a balance of formative, summative, formal, and informal assessment procedures that indicate teacher effectiveness and student level of mastery of critical instructional standards.

### **Using Student Data to Inform Instruction**

To maximize the benefits of student achievement, teachers engage in an ongoing problem solving cycle in which multiple data sources inform instructional decisions. Both teachers and students benefit when routine and systemic data is collected and interpreted collaboratively in grade-level or department-specific teams. Through collaboration, teachers share effective practices, develop common expectations, and work toward meeting the most pressing instructional needs.

Dr. Elizabeth City (2009) discusses why it is helpful for teachers to use protocols when talking about data. Protocols provide a framework for exploring the data through structured conversations. Teachers are often drowning in data and become bogged down in it to the point that they don't know where to start. Dr. City suggests that teachers think big about what they would like to accomplish overall, but choose something very small to work on first. Reducing the problem into small actions allows for progress to be achieved quickly and motivates both students and teachers to keep working toward the year end goal.

An inquiry-based problem solving cycle helps teams organize, prepare, and analyze data to collectively decide what to do next. So, often we use protocols that start with "What do you see? What do you notice? What kinds of questions do you have as you look at these data? What other data might we want to explore to dig into these questions some? Dr. City recommends replacing these protocols with questioning protocols such as, "Why do the data look this way? What are we seeing here? What do you notice? And what are our next steps based on what we are seeing in these data?"

Visual representation of data such as charts, tables, or graphs can help illustrate patterns or trends in the data. Data teams can then ask: What do I see, what are the patterns, what's the story line, what are these data telling me, and now what do I want to know? Dr. City recommends teachers think like scientists and ask questions that help work through data efficiently rather than wasting time discussing why something won't work or hasn't worked in the past. Asking the question why five times is one simple protocol that could be used to analyze data.

*For example: A group of second grader students is struggling with drawing inference when they are reading. So the grade level team asks why some students are struggling with drawing inferences from what they are reading. One teacher responds, "Well, I'm not sure I know how to explicitly teach inference." Okay next question, why aren't we teaching inference? Another teacher responds, "What exactly is inference?" The discussions continue with: "Hmm, why don't we share a common definition of what inference is? Well, we haven't really done professional development on inference. Why? We have been really focused on comprehension, but we think inference might be different. All right, why haven't we done professional development on inference? Because we haven't allocated our time to that, and maybe if we focus on that, we could allocate our professional development time to it." The team continued to ask "why" and then stopped when they got to something actionable. They will create an action goal for professional development on explicitly teaching drawing inference from text.*



*The Continuous Improvement Cycle (Appendix D) outlines scheduling recommendations for the continual review of data through an inquiry-based problem solving model. The leadership section of this document outlines these four instructional decision making steps.*

### **Grouping and the Effective Use of Data**

Effective use of data for informing instruction needs to be done in a timely and efficient manner. Disaggregation, or separation of students into groups, is important for identifying specific needs. Student movement from group to group should be based on which skills have been mastered and which skills still require additional instruction and practice. Resources and support for teachers should be provided for data analysis and interpretation. Universal screening should be used to group students based on similar needs, diagnostic assessments allow teachers to dig deeper to be more informed about grouping needs, and progress monitoring probes are used to continually assess student progress toward mastery of critical literacy skills defined by the standards. As Stiggins (2007) has suggested, "Changing schools from places that merely sort pupils based on achievement into places that assure that all pupils meet the standards bring with it the challenge of rethinking the dynamics of assessment." Ultimately teachers should be able to use formal and informal assessment within their day-to-day interactions with students to immediately inform their next steps for instruction.

*For example, Mrs. Smith's third grade reading group is made up of students with strategic needs in the area of fluency. She has met with her grade level team and discussed their difficulties decoding multisyllabic words. The team has shared ideas and helped her plan instruction for this particular group this week. She has just administered a progress monitoring probe and three out of the four students were on track for meeting the upcoming benchmark goal. She noticed that the one student who was not on track for meeting the upcoming benchmark goal either dropped the ending or said the wrong ending on the multisyllabic words. Mrs. Smith plans to use the information she just gathered from the progress monitoring assessments to inform instruction the next day. She is going to choose multisyllabic words from the story they are currently reading and write them on index cards. When the students arrive to the group the next day she will have the three students who were on track whisper read the story to get extra fluency practice during the first three minutes of the group while she works individually with the student who is still struggling with the multisyllabic words and suffixes. She used the data she collected to immediately inform instruction. She will move this student to a more appropriate group if the rest of the group continues to make progress so she accelerates their learning and provides extra practice for the student struggling.*

### **Assessing the Effectiveness of Instructional Programs**

A comprehensive assessment system requires a **school-level** management plan that assesses the effectiveness and quality of instructional programs to guide improvement. The plan should include a description of the program being evaluated, evaluation questions or objectives, data sources, data gathering methods, and data analysis methods. Program strengths and weaknesses and recommendations for the future should result from the assessments.

*The Continuous Improvement Cycle (Appendix D) outlines the processes for continually improving literacy programs within a school or district.*

## **Regularly Scheduled Data Analysis Discussions**

An ongoing Continuous Improvement Cycle provides a structure for regularly scheduled data analysis discussions that inform ongoing learning. These discussions may take place among school leadership teams, grade-level teams, department or content teams, or mixed data teams. Through these discussions team members make informed decisions about allocating more time for instruction of essential skills, which skills to target, implementing different teaching techniques and strategies, and adjusting student placement within instructional groups.

The Continuous Improvement Cycle (Appendix D) outlines scheduling recommendations for the continual review of data to use for this purpose. The leadership section of this document also outlines the role that collaborative teams play in ongoing discussions for continuous literacy improvement.

## **Data Collection System**

In order to use assessment data effectively, a comprehensive assessment system requires a school-level data collection system. A number of Web-based data management resources allow schools to enter data locally and produce data summaries and individual student charting that are helpful in interpreting results. Data management resources allow for easy disaggregation of data into specific groups of students (e.g., gender, free and reduced lunch, ethnicity, instructional recommendations). These services significantly ease the ability to manipulate student data for timely use for guiding efficient classroom and school-level decision-making so investing in an efficient data management tool is critical to the long-term success of a comprehensive assessment plan.

## **Valid and Reliable Assessment Administration**

Data generated by assessments are only as reliable as the extent to which the assessments are implemented in a consistent and standardized way. Student test results depend upon assessments being implemented and scored correctly and in the same manner. A test's reliability is the degree to which it provides a dependable, consistent measurement of a specific trait or ability. The reliability of a test refers to stability of measurement over time. A reliable measure is likely to produce similar results regardless of who the test administrator is. The validity of a test is the extent to which it measures what it is meant to measure. In discussing a test's validity it is important to keep its purpose in mind. In order for schools to produce valid and reliable test results test administrators should be trained extensively on standard test administration. Training for an assessment instrument should include practice to competency in administering the assessment. Periodic "booster sessions" where assessors are retrained on assessments are an important way to prevent "drift" in the way assessments are administered and scored. Most assessments include administration checklists that can be used for integrity checks to verify the fidelity or integrity of assessment implementation.

**High-performing schools are characterized by the following Assessment and Data-based Decision Making Continuous Improvement Sub-Components. (See Appendix A, for complete Self-Assessment.)**

<b>Assessment and Data-based Decision Making</b>						
	1	2	3	4	5	
	Not Being Implemented-----				Sustained Practice	
Assessment tools and procedures align to the MELG and/or the MCCS.					1 2 3 4 5	
Comprehensive assessment system includes both formative and summative assessments.					1 2 3 4 5	
Collaborative teams use a specific protocol for examining student data and making instructional and intervention decisions (e.g., universal screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome measures are defined by when, who, and where).					1 2 3 4 5	
Data is disaggregated by subgroups and provided to educators for instructional decision making in a timely and efficient manner.					1 2 3 4 5	
A comprehensive plan assesses the effectiveness of the instructional program and guides adjustments for improvement.					1 2 3 4 5	
Regularly scheduled data analysis discussions occur to assess and adjust ongoing learning (e.g., bi-weekly grade level meetings or data meetings).					1 2 3 4 5	
A data collection system is in place and technology support is available for continuous access of the data system.					1 2 3 4 5	
Assessors receive professional development on valid and reliable assessment administration and fidelity of assessment administration is verified (e.g., checklists, observations).					1 2 3 4 5	
Action Ideas for Data-based Decision Making:						

**Additional Information on Assessment and Data-based Decision Making**

All Things PLC: [http://www.allthingsplc.info/pdf/articles/make\\_time\\_for\\_collaboration.pdf](http://www.allthingsplc.info/pdf/articles/make_time_for_collaboration.pdf)

Bloom, B. S., Hastings, J. T., & Madaus, G. F. (1971). *Handbook on formative and summative evaluation of student learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

City, E. A. (Performer) (2009). *What do you see in these data?* [http://dww.ed.gov/Data-Driven-Instructional-Decision-Making/Cycle-of-Improvement/learn/?T\\_ID=30&P\\_ID=79&intID=1503&t=1#learn](http://dww.ed.gov/Data-Driven-Instructional-Decision-Making/Cycle-of-Improvement/learn/?T_ID=30&P_ID=79&intID=1503&t=1#learn) (Dufour R., Dufour R., & Eaker, R. 2005. Recurring themes of professional learning communities and the assumptions they challenge. In R. DuFour, Dufour R., & Eaker, R (Eds.), *On common ground: The power of professional learning communities*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Services.

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Montana Office of Public Instruction: <http://www.opi.mt.gov>

Stiggins, R. (2007). Assessment through the student's eye. *Educational Leadership* May 2007, Vol. 64 Issue 8, p22-26, 5p.

Teaching All Students to Read in Elementary School: A Guide for Principals <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/teaching-all-students-to-read-in-elementary-school-a-guide-for-principals>

## Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Defined:** Professional development refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal development and career advancement. Professional development that improves teaching (for both pre-service and in-service teachers) is based on understanding the principles and practices of effective professional learning.

#### Alignment of Professional Development to Standards

Professional development needs to be aligned to the Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and/or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) and should be provided for staff across all content areas. The goal of professional learning is to increase educator effectiveness and achievement for all students. Research has shown a direct connection between teacher preparedness and children's success in learning to read and write (Dillon, 2010). Supporting the literacy development of students requires teachers and administrators to be learners themselves, constantly developing and refining their own knowledge base about literacy. Reading proficiency is fundamental to student achievement across all subjects and grades.

The MCCS set requirements not only for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects; therefore, a focused professional development plan is needed to prepare all educators to teach reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language effectively. School districts should provide annual professional development for effective use of assessments, instructional materials, and strategies for explicit, systematic, and differentiated instruction, including the seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indian Education for All.

For more information about the Essential Understandings, refer to Indian Education for All (Appendix F)

#### Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning is provided in many ways to meet varying staff needs. Increasing the effectiveness of professional learning is the leverage point with the greatest potential for strengthening and refining the day-to-day performance of educators (Learning Forward, 2012). Organizational structures that support ongoing professional learning provide and protect adequate time for teachers to meet and collaborate as part of the regular work-day. Research shows that the benefits of participating in collaborative professional learning include building shared knowledge, intellectual purpose, and collective responsibility for student learning (Calkins et al., 2007). In addition, teachers who collaborate with peers have more opportunities to learn from one another and a greater desire of continuous development of effective practices. Ongoing, job-embedded professional development can be provided in various ways. Some examples include professional learning communities (PLCs), coaching, peer mentoring and technology-based professional learning.

*Professional Learning Communities:* Hoard and Sommers (2008) define professional learning communities (PLCs) as "communities of professionals working to improve student learning together, by engaging in continuous collective learning of their own" (p. ix). Effective PLCs are implemented in various ways; however, "clear shared values and norms, collectively reinforced, increase the likelihood of teachers' success" (Louis, Kruse, and Marks, 1996, p. 181). Collective learning and ongoing



analysis of student data provides teachers the opportunity to openly discuss problems and concerns and share ideas about how to address those problems and concerns.

*Coaching:* Joyce and Showers (2002) have proven that transfer of practice rarely occurs without the use of coaching within the classroom environment. Effective coaching offers teachers opportunities to practice new strategies more often and with greater skill. Teachers who have had experience with classroom coaching are able to adapt new strategies more appropriately to their own goals and contexts, retain and increase skills over time, and are more likely to explain the teaching strategies to their students ensuring that students understand what is expected of them. Coaching provides educators opportunities to learn from and with one another within the classroom and can increase the instructional capacity of schools and teachers and, in turn, increase student learning.

*Peer Mentoring:* Since teachers naturally turn to each other for help, more often than to an administrator, teachers helping teachers has become a formalized and well-received way of ensuring direct assistance to every staff member. Successful peer mentoring includes discussions among teachers to focus instruction to the school or district's instructional goals (Little, Galagaran, and O'Neal, 1984). Mentoring is often provided by a more experienced teacher to a beginning teacher. Preparations for teachers would include training on understanding the purpose and procedures of peer mentoring, conducting conferencing and observation protocols, and action protocols. Some districts use collaborative approaches that are not as direct; however, if there is a lack of direction in peer-mentoring programs, well-intentioned teachers will have a vague sense of having done something pleasant but little sense of accomplishment. Peer mentoring most often results in trusting relationships that provides beginning teachers a successful entrance to the profession. Student assessment results are discussed and shared as teachers work together to plan instruction, share ideas, and engage in joint problem solving. Effective peer-mentoring is achieved when an administrator helps select and prepare mentors, assists with matching of mentors, and provides ongoing support.

*Technology-based Learning:* Technology offers numerous opportunities for staff to engage in ongoing professional learning. There are endless ways to participate including e-mail, Web conferencing, social networking, online classes, blogs and wikis. As teachers become comfortable with new technologies and practices, administrators are able to offer various professional learning opportunities targeted to specific staff needs. Through technology-based professional learning, teachers have the opportunity to create networks within their building, district, and across the world to share information, concerns, accomplishments, and engage in common learning. These networks help teachers develop partnerships in which partners consider themselves equal, have mutual rights and responsibilities, make contributions, and receive mutual benefits evolving professional learning to new heights (Moore and Seeger, 2004).

To access on-line professional development for literacy, visit the Instructional Innovations Webpage

[http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional\\_Innovations/index.php](http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional_Innovations/index.php)



## **Data-Based Professional Development**

Professional development is more effective when it is an integral part of the school's larger standards-based reform effort and linked to content, curriculum, texts, and assessment practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Instructional leaders need to use multiple sources of student and school data when planning and implementing professional development. The leadership team uses student assessment results to identify student needs and to guide both the instructional plan for students and the professional development plan for teachers. As a result, data-driven professional learning is an integral part of the total school improvement effort, with the ultimate measure of success being student achievement. It is essential that professional development is provided for administrators to increase their knowledge about literacy to strengthen instructional leadership.

## **Individual, Professional Growth Plans for Staff Members**

Self-reflection is an important part of ongoing professional learning for teachers and staff. Providing a structured professional growth plan based on observation data and individual staff needs helps with increasing student outcomes. Professional growth plans need to be aligned to the district and program literacy plans. Student outcomes should be documented and included in teacher portfolios. Teacher professional growth plans follow the continuous improvement cycle process in which self-assessment data is gathered (e.g., video tapes of lessons, student achievement data, peer or coaching observations), then the data is analyzed and an individualized professional development plan is developed. The plan includes objectives or goals, learning activities, needed resources and plans for self-evaluation. Teachers implement the plan, which includes participation in professional learning opportunities, observing other teachers, coaching, and other activities that help them meet their objectives. The implementation of the plan is monitored, data is reviewed periodically, and the plan is revised and refined as needed. Data is gathered on the teacher's professional growth as well as changes in student learning. Evaluation data might include the teacher's reflective writing about their own learning, classroom observation documentation, student achievement data, and artifacts of student work. Administrators conduct portfolio conferences when teachers believe they have completed their goal. During the conference, the teacher reflects on activities completed, learning that has taken place, and future directions for professional growth.

## **Professional Development for New Staff Members**

Coordinating support for new staff must include resources, strategies, and practices for understanding the operational infrastructure of the school community. Although teacher ability is not the only factor that plays into students' success in school, studies have shown that students with more experienced and better-trained teachers tend to score better on standardized tests. Schools who have mentoring and peer network processes for new teachers to engage in discussion, self-reflection, and planning with experienced teachers improve teacher performance as well as the new teachers' professional well-being.

**High-performing schools are characterized by the following Professional Development Sub-Components. (See Appendix A for complete self-assessment.)**

<b>Professional Development</b>	
	1                      2                      3                      4                      5
	Not Being Implemented----- Sustained Practice
Professional development is aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS and is provided for staff across all content areas on explicit and systematic instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.	1 2 3 4 5
Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning is provided in many ways to meet varying staff needs (e.g., coaching, professional learning communities, peer mentoring, Web-based).	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders use multiple sources of student and school data when planning and implementing professional development.	1 2 3 4 5
Individual, targeted professional growth plan structures are in place for staff based on observation data and staff needs.	1 2 3 4 5
Structures are in place for providing professional development for new staff members.	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Professional Development:	

## Additional Information on Professional Development

Anderson, R. H. and Snyder, K. J. 1993. *Clinical supervision: Coaching for higher performance*. Lancaster, PA: Technomic

Calkins, A., Guenther, W., & Belfiore, G. 2007. *The Turnaround Challenge*. Boston, MA: Mass Insight.

Center on Instruction and Learning: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/>

Darling-Hammond, L., Chung Wei, R., Andree, A., Richardson, N., and Orphanos, S. 2009. *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*. Palo Alto: Stanford University, National Staff Development Council.

Dillon, D. R., O'Brien, D. G., Sato, M., & Kelly, C. M. (2010). Professional development and teacher education for reading instruction. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook Of Reading Research* (Vol. 4, pp. 629-659). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers

Doing What Works: <http://dww.ed.gov/>

Hord, S. M., and Sommers, W. A. 2008. *Leading professional learning communities*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, p. 78.

*Learning forward*. (2012). Retrieved from <http://learningforward.org>

Little, J. W., Galagaran, P., and O'Neal, R. 1984. *Professional development roles and relationships: Principles and skills of "advising"* San Francisco: Far West Laboratory.

Louis, K. S., Kruse S. D., and Marks, H. M. 1996. Schoolwide professional community. In F. M. Newman and Associates (Eds.), *Authentic achievement: Restructuring schools for intellectual quality* ( p. 181). San Francisco: Joddey-Bass.

Moore, R., and Seeger, V. 2004. Validating teaching and learning communities for teacher education reform. *The Teacher Educator*, 40 (2), 116-132.

OPI Instructional Innovations: [http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional\\_Innovations/index.php](http://opi.mt.gov/Streamer/Instructional_Innovations/index.php)

## **Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)**

### **SYSTEM-WIDE COMMITMENT**

**Defined:** System-wide commitment refers to the commitment for working with all partners within a system to create local capacity for professional support and professionalism and build capacity for continuous improvement.

#### **Instructional Leaders Set Measurable Goals**

Long-term improvements in student achievement and school improvement depend on strategic planning and goal-setting at the system level. Strong collaborative leadership at all levels of schooling—Birth through Grade 12—is perhaps the single most important determining factor in successfully implementing and sustaining educational changes (Alabama’s Action Plan for Literacy).

#### **Community-based, Collaborative Partnerships Support Literacy Development**

A system-wide commitment requires a shared responsibility through building partnerships. These partnerships are built within the system, across schools, and with parents, communities, and other organizations and agencies to build shared involvement in, and responsibilities for, supporting student learning (Fullan, 2006). Strong partnerships are built through clear communication. Clear communication with a consistent message is essential when communicating about raising student achievement. This communication needs to occur widely, frequently, and with a sense of urgency.

#### **Common Learning Opportunities for All Literacy Stakeholders**

Smooth transitions are essential to student achievement. An integrated professional development system of preparation and ongoing development and support that crosses sectors (e.g., childcare, Head Start, and public schools) provides learning opportunities for all literacy stakeholders. With an integrated, cross-sector approach to learning opportunities, staff members are adequately prepared to support all students for transitions from one literacy setting to the next.

#### **Collaboration with Literacy Stakeholders Includes Sharing Assessment Results**

Collaboration with all literacy stakeholders includes sharing of individual assessment results as students transition from one literacy setting to the next. Systematically using student achievement data from formative and summative assessments at the class, center, school, district, and state level helps staff focus instructional improvement decisions for targeting intervention support.

In order to use assessment data most effectively, a comprehensive assessment system needs a management plan at the school or center level. Finding an efficient way to manage and use the data is as essential as gathering the data in the first place. Once a management plan is in place, student data is easily accessed and used for support and during transition periods. Suggestions for sharing individual assessment data for smooth transition are as follows:

- Formative and summative data should be kept in individual cumulative student files that move from one year to the next. This data is used by teachers, data-teams, and intervention teams to make instructional decisions for student placement and intervention.

- Cumulative data information is passed on during the important transition stages of students' education. These transition times are likely to be:
  - Transition from preschool to kindergarten
  - Transition from primary grades to intermediate grades
  - Transition from intermediate grades to middle school
  - Transition from middle school to high school
  - Transition from high school to post-secondary, as necessary

### **Collaboration with Literacy Stakeholders Includes Communication about Intervention Services**

Through a system-wide commitment, coordinated supports are achievable. Coordinated supports are the resources, strategies, and practices that schools, families, and communities provide to enable all students to have an equal opportunity for success at school. When instructional efforts and interventions are integrated with coordinated supports, barriers to teaching and learning are broken down. Coordinated support and adequate resources are essential to ensure high-quality classroom instruction occurs in every classroom, resulting in increased achievement for all students.

Long-term improvements in student achievement and school improvement depend on strategic planning and goal-setting at the system level.



**High-performing schools are characterized by the following System-wide Commitment Sub-Components. (See Appendix A for complete self-assessment.)**

<b>System-wide Commitment</b>						
	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Being Implemented-----					Sustained Practice	
Instructional leaders set measurable goals for systemic academic improvement and monitor progress toward these goals annually.						1 2 3 4 5
Community-based, collaborative partnerships coordinate services from Early Childhood to Higher Education to support literacy development of students (e.g. participate on literacy leadership team, plan shared professional development, and jointly participate in state-provided professional development).						1 2 3 4 5
Common learning opportunities are provided for all literacy stakeholders to ensure smooth transitions as students move from one literacy setting to the next.						1 2 3 4 5
Collaboration with all literacy stakeholders includes sharing of individual assessment results as students transition from one literacy setting to the next.						1 2 3 4 5
Collaboration with all literacy stakeholders includes communication about children who are likely to need intervention services when they transition from one literacy setting to the next.						1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for System-wide Commitment:						

**Additional Information on System-Wide Commitment**

Alabama’s Action Plan for Literacy: [http://www.alsde.edu/general/al\\_literacy\\_plan.pdf](http://www.alsde.edu/general/al_literacy_plan.pdf)

Fullan, M. A. (2006). *Unlocking the Potential for District-Wide Reform*. Ontario: Ministry of Education.

Learning Forward: <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm>

Literacy First: <http://www.literacyfirst.com/process/development.shtml>

Louisiana’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan: <http://www.louisianaschools.net/lde/uploads/18417.pdf>

## Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)

### COMMUNITY AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

#### Defined

**Community and family involvement** serves to promote and support the social, emotional, physical, academic, and occupational growth of children. Successful community and family involvement requires meaningful collaboration among youth, families, schools, employers, and agencies.

**Community Stakeholders:** In order for a school community partnership to work, it is essential to build strong communication among all the participants and those who will be affected by the partnership. Stakeholders might include: educators, families, community organizations, businesses, early childhood, local education agencies, higher education, and/or unions. The levels of communication may vary among these stakeholders, depending on the circumstances and purpose of the message. The highest level of communication is achieved through collaboration toward solving school/community issues and the sharing of expertise and resources.

#### Communication and Collaboration

Studies show that school and community relationships have positive results on students from all racial, socioeconomic, and education backgrounds. Due to a wide range of barriers and individual differences, schools and communities should allow for participation in various ways, at different levels of commitment, and at different frequencies (Louisiana Department of Education, 2011). It is important that school and district administration and staff members communicate literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders, and collaborate to meet desired outcomes.

#### Collaborative Partnerships to Ensure Supportive Transitions

It is the responsibility of all community-based, collaborative partnerships to ensure supportive transitions for students from one literacy setting to the next (e.g., local library supports school literacy events; school encourages participation in library summer reading programs). Community-based partnerships and local resources should be recognized and encourage to be actively involved in all local and school literacy activities. Schools should strive to create a coordinated system of support that links families with local community resources and provides greater support for students in achieving literacy skills for college and career readiness.

#### Culturally and Linguistically Sensitive Partnerships

Parents and families also need to be engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive. A family's involvement in their child's education is recognized by many as the single most important factor in school success and achievement. Research has shown that not only does family involvement increase academic achievement, as reflected in higher test scores and graduation rates, but it also increases the likelihood that youth will pursue higher education (Henderson & Berla, 1994). Yet, many families need assistance to be able to actively participate in their child's education. Successful schools help families become active participants by supporting families in feeling welcomed, valued, and connected to each other, to the staff, and to what their child is doing in school.



## Shared Information about Literacy Expectations

Parents and families should be informed of the literacy expectations as outlined in the M CCS and the MELG, and updated regularly on their child's progress toward meeting those expectations.

## Updates on Individual Student Progress

Parents and families of students receiving Tier II and III Interventions should receive updates on their child's progress toward meeting those expectations at least six times a year.

For a more detailed description of these interventions, refer to the Instruction and Intervention section of the Montana Literacy Plan.

## Community Literacy Resources Must Be Available to Families

The nation's schools must improve education for all children, but schools cannot do this alone. More will be accomplished if schools, families, and communities work together to promote successful students (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Clark-Salinas, Rodriquez-Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002).

The Epstein model of Six Types of Involvement emphasizes three overlapping spheres of influence on student development: family, school, and community. These spheres can collaborate in six key ways to foster a caring community that children need to maximize their potential in school and in later life:

1. **Parenting:** Assist families with parenting and child-rearing skills, understanding child and adolescent development, and setting home conditions that support children as students at each age and grade level. Assist schools in understanding families. This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *"A coordinated system of support links families with local community resources to provide greater support for students in achieving literacy skills for career and college readiness."*
2. **Communicating:** Communicate with families about school programs and student progress through effective school-to-home and home-to-school communications. This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *"Administration communicates literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders and collaborates to meet desired outcomes."*
3. **Volunteering:** Improve recruitment, training, work, and schedules to involve families and community members as volunteers and audiences at the school or in other locations to support students and school programs. (Henderson & Berla, 2001) This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *"Families are welcomed as volunteers."*
4. **Learning at home:** Involve families with their children in learning activities at home, including homework and other curriculum-linked activities and decisions. Administration communicates literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders and collaborates to meet desired outcomes. This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *"Administration communicates literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders and collaborates to meet desired outcomes."*
5. **School decision-making:** Include families as participants in school decisions, governance, and advocacy through PTA/PTO, school councils, committees, and other parent organizations. This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *"Parents and families are engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive."*



6. **Collaborating with the community:** Coordinate resources and services for families, students, and the school with businesses, agencies, and other groups, and provide services to the community. This type of involvement ties to the sub-component, *“Local resources that support literacy activities are recognized and encouraged.”*

Students of all ages, genders, socioeconomic status, and abilities do better in school when their families are actively involved. These students typically earn better grades, enroll in higher-level programs, have higher graduation rates, and are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education. Middle- and high-school students whose families are involved make better transitions, maintain the quality of their work, develop realistic plans for the future, and are less likely to drop out (Epstein 2010).

**High-performing schools are characterized by the following Community and Family Involvement Sub-Components. (See Appendix A for complete self-assessment.)**

<b>Community and Family Involvement</b>				
1	2	3	4	5
Not Being Implemented-----				Sustained Practice
Administration communicates literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders and collaborates to meet desired outcomes (e.g., stakeholders might include: educators, families, community organizations, businesses, early childhood, local education agencies, higher education, and unions).				1 2 3 4 5
Community-based, collaborative partnerships ensure supportive transitions from one literacy setting to the next.				1 2 3 4 5
Parents and families are engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive.				1 2 3 4 5
A coordinated system of support links families with local community resources to provide greater support for students in achieving literacy skills for career and college readiness.				1 2 3 4 5
Families and community members are welcomed as volunteers to maximize student literacy learning.				1 2 3 4 5
Local resources that support local literacy activities are recognized and encouraged.				1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Community and Family Involvement:				



## **Additional Information on Community and Family Involvement**

Center on Instruction <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/index.cfm>

Epstein, J. L. (2010). *Center on School, Family and Community Partnerships*. Retrieved April 20, 2011, from National Network of Partnership Schools-Johns Hopkins University: <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/center.htm>

Epstein, J. L., Sanders, M. G., Simon, B. S., Clark-Salinas, K., Rodriguez-Jansorn, N., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2002). *School, Family, and Community Partnerships*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, Inc. Harvard Graduate School of Education <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news-impact/2008/11/schools-families-and-community-partnerships/>

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (2001). *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington D.C Center for Law and Education.

Learning Forward Education Association <http://www.learningforward.org/standards/index.cfm>

Literacy First <http://www.literacyfirst.com/process/development.shtml>

Louisiana Department of Education. (2011). *Louisiana's Comprehensive Literacy Plan*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Education.

National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition <http://www.nasetalliance.org/family/index.htm>

Suite 101: Educational Issues <http://suite101.com/article/school-community-partnerships-that-work-a93195>

## Continuous Improvement Component (CIC)

### SYSTEMIC PROCESSES FOR IMPROVING LITERACY OUTCOMES

A comprehensive literacy plan should outline systemic processes for improving student literacy outcomes and must include a comprehensive assessment system to inform the decision-making and action goal setting. It's important to understand that continuous literacy improvement is a multifaceted system that combines infrastructure with intentionality that promotes responsibility and commitment for supporting literacy development. To ensure the successful implementation of the Continuous Improvement Components (CICs) it is recommended that districts, schools and early childhood centers implement a variety of systemic processes. These processes are designed to mirror the student assessments (outcomes, screening, benchmark, and progress monitoring) identified in the assessment section of the MLP. The self-assessment serves as the screening and benchmark measures, the action plan, continuous improvement cycle, and inventory serve as the progress monitoring measures and the end of year cumulative action plan and completed continuous improvement cycle serve as the outcome measures. The systemic processes will ensure the staff is working together to explore and implement the CICs in order to increase student achievement and ensure a sustainable comprehensive literacy plan.

#### Process of Self-Assessment

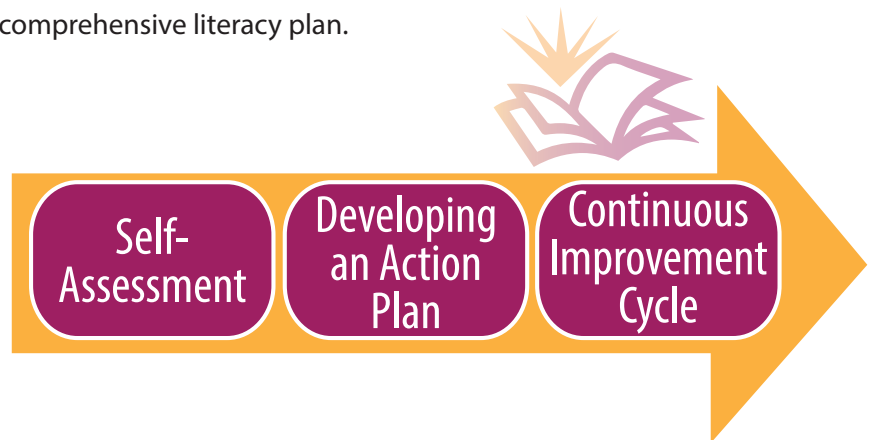
The Self-Assessment instrument (Appendix A) outlines the key CIC sub-components that are proven to be effective indicators for increasing student literacy outcomes. It is designed to be used by district, school, and early childhood program personnel to assess the literacy

processes used for increasing student literacy outcomes. Information gathered through the Self-Assessment will help leadership teams determine the current phase: exploring, implementing, or sustaining.

The Self-Assessment helps districts, schools, and early childhood programs identify strengths and weaknesses for each CIC sub-component. It is recommended that the school and early childhood program **1) Complete a Self-Assessment, 2) Determine next steps and requirements needed to implement an effective literacy action plan, 3) Share the results with the staff and community to obtain buy-in to ensure capacity for implementation, and 4) Use the Self-Assessment as a framework for the school and early childhood centers' literacy plan.**

Self-Assessments serve to identify what a model implementation looks like and what needs should be put into action. This systemic process will be valuable for all districts, schools and early childhood programs because the Self-Assessment will provide a clear description of differences between existing practices and the CIC sub-components. The CIC sub-components are evidence-based exemplars.

Staff will rate the extent of the implementation of the CIC sub-components that help achieve increased student literacy outcomes. Districts and early childhood programs may find themselves at various phases of a CIC sub-component. These phases begin with **exploring**, then move toward **implementing** and then finally reach **sustaining**, a phase in which the CIC sub-component is firmly embedded into daily practice within the district or program.



**Exploring:** A CIC sub-component that is in the exploring stage is still in the planning stages of execution. These CIC sub-components are just being investigated by personnel and further action is needed. A rating of 1 indicates the CIC sub-component is not being implemented, but might possibly be being explored at this time.

**Implementing:** A CIC sub-component that has been introduced and is being utilized in many ways across the system may be in this implementing phase. These CIC sub-components are sometimes being implemented by some staff, but not by all staff, and further action is needed.

**Sustaining:** A CIC sub-component that is at the sustaining phase has become part of the regular routine, but protocols have been embraced by all educational stakeholders involved within the educational system. A rating of 5 indicates sustained consistent implementation of the CIC sub-component.

Using the Self-Assessment as a screening instrument will allow schools and early childhood centers to more effectively write an action plan to determine the exact support needed. It is recommended that the Self-Assessment be administered during three benchmark periods (fall, winter, spring) to determine how much progress each school and early childhood center is making in reaching the sustaining phase.

### Process of Developing an Action Plan

Appendix C provides an MLP Action Planning Template for districts and education programs to utilize. Leadership teams are encouraged to identify the current phase of the CIC sub-components and decide which areas are in further need of action.

Consider the following questions when planning action steps for the continuous literacy improvement CIC sub-components for improving student literacy outcomes.

1. What current practices or processes will be adjusted and how?
2. What new practices, processes, or strategies will strengthen our current implementation?

Leadership teams will identify three to five action goals and decide on specific action steps that define what is to be done, who will be responsible for each action step, and delineate a timeframe for completion of the goal.

Action Plans serve as progress monitoring for schools and early childhood centers. Paul Schlechty (2001) states “Two things sustain change: one is a leader or leadership group that acts as a change agent; the other is a system or group of systems that supports change” (p. 40). This explains why, when the school culture does not have the capacity to sustain a change effort, “the change rarely outlasts the tenure of the change agent” (p. 40). A key leadership task, then, is to study and create system conditions that will support and sustain change through systemic sustainable processes. It’s important to understand that continuous literacy improvement is a multifaceted system that combines infrastructure with intentionality that promotes responsibility and commitment for supporting literacy development. These suggestions are meant to provide guidance for leadership teams in the development or continued implementation of a comprehensive literacy plan; however each educational setting is unique so working through this process should be a starting point for important conversations for capitalizing on the resources distinctive to your educational setting.

## Process of Problem Solving: Continuous Improvement Cycle

The Continuous Improvement Cycle (Appendix D) is a problem-solving model that translates decisions into data-informed action steps. Although the process is conceptualized as a sequential pattern because each step serves as a logical basis for the next, the process is also cyclical. The cyclical pattern begins with the development of a decision strategy, which includes deliberate, purposeful action goals, and moves through implementation and ongoing monitoring of results (Litchfield, 1956). Many decision-making action cycles may be occurring simultaneously. The cycle includes the following steps:

- 1) Assess the current situation
- 2) Develop a plan of change
- 3) Implement the plan
- 4) Monitor the plan
- 5) Monitor the impact of the plan
- 6) Review new data
- 7) Revise and refine the plan

As part of the Continuous Improvement Cycle, leadership teams will continually monitor the progress of the action goals utilizing data to inform additional decision making. The Action Plan document can serve as the guide as well as a record of what has been planned and what has been accomplished toward each component of the Montana Literacy Plan. This will allow districts, schools and early childhood programs to continually reassess their next steps as part of the continuous school improvement cycle. The Action Plan can continually be addressed by re-examining needs and accomplishments. Then, next steps can be created with accountability (what, who, when). It is important to continually evaluate Action Plans to assure that programs are making progress toward meeting goals and to provide support in the continuous school improvement cycle.

Visit the Instructional Innovations Web page for additional resources including an on-line self-assessment, action plan examples, and additional resources.

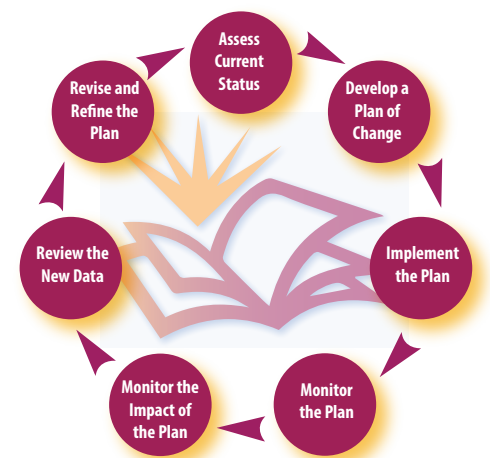
## **Process of Outside Evaluation: Montana Literacy Plan Inventory**

The Montana Literacy Plan Inventory (Appendix B) is a tool for districts, schools, and early childhood programs to evaluate the literacy processes used for increasing student literacy outcomes and to determine accurate phases and next steps of implementation. For best results, it is recommended that an outside consultant or specialist support districts, schools, and early childhood programs in using this tool.

The consultant or specialist will collaborate with the district to:

1. Evaluate implementation of the CICs outlined in the MLP,
2. Determine the current level of implementation of each CIC,
3. Establish goals and action steps toward continuous literacy improvement, and
4. Determine professional development needs.

See Appendix B for additional information on the Montana Literacy Plan Inventory.



## APPENDIX A

### CONTINUOUS LITERACY IMPROVEMENT SELF-ASSESSMENT

The self-assessment instrument is designed to be used by education programs and school districts to assess the literacy processes used for increasing student literacy outcomes. Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in order to communicate with others effectively. A comprehensive literacy plan should outline the school's systemic processes for improving student literacy outcomes and should include a comprehensive assessment system.

The Montana Literacy Plan (MLP) outlines specific continuous improvement sub-components (CIC) proven to be effective indicators for increasing student literacy outcomes. Rate the extent of the implementation of the sub-components that help achieve increased student literacy outcomes in your education setting. A rating of 1 indicates the sub-component is not being implemented but might possibly be being explored at this time and a rating of 5 indicates sustained consistent implementation of the sub-component.

<b>Instructional Leadership</b>	1	2	3	4	5
Not Being Implemented-----					Sustained Practice
Administration communicates a shared responsibility for student literacy outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5
Administration engages leaders across the school community in continuous literacy improvement planning.	1	2	3	4	5
Adequate fiscal resources are provided to support literacy improvement efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders have established, support, and lead a literacy leadership team.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders support and monitor all instruction and intervention expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders set measurable goals for academic improvement and monitor progress toward these goals.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders meet regularly to analyze school and student data to inform decisions about professional development, instruction, and intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
Instructional leaders facilitate collaboration among staff, with a focus on literacy achievement and effective literacy instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
Action Ideas for Leadership:					
<b>Standards</b> <b>The Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) Stages of Implementation Continuum</b> includes six stages, which provide comprehensive resources for school districts to self-assess readiness, create action plans, and access targeted resources and processes for aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment. <a href="http://www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards">www.opi.mt.gov/MontanaCommonCoreStandards</a>					
Stage 1: The Montana Early Learning Guidelines (MELG) and/or the Montana Common Core Standards (MCCS) for each grade and subject area have been thoroughly studied and are understood.	1	2	3	4	5
Stage 2: Curriculum has been aligned with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1	2	3	4	5

Stage 2: Instructional materials are aligned with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 3: Assessments are aligned with curriculum and with the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: Educators design, adapt and use evidence-based best practices to support effective delivery of the curriculum and assessments.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: A comprehensive scope and sequence is communicated and aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 4: A pacing guide outlines a consistent instructional timeline and is adhered to by all staff.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 5: Educators engage in horizontal (e.g., grade level) and vertical (e.g., cross-grade level) alignment of curriculum and assessments.	1 2 3 4 5
Stage 6: Educators have analyzed assessment results (e.g. Smarter Balance, curriculum assessments, and independent progress monitoring assessments) and processes are established to make systematic changes based on data results.	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Standards:	
<b>Instruction and Intervention</b>	
Instructional materials and content are aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional materials and content include explicit and systematic instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in all content areas.	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders ensure time for literacy instruction during the school day is a priority (e.g., minimum recommended 90 minutes of Tier I literacy instruction in primary grades, use of literacy strategies across subject areas, and additional time for interventions).	1 2 3 4 5
Tiered instruction is clearly defined and implemented with fidelity.	1 2 3 4 5
Additional support is provided for learners with Tier 2 and Tier 3 needs through intensified interventions (e.g., smaller groups sizes, increased time, or varied instructional materials).	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional leaders ensure that instructional materials are readily available for all instruction and intervention settings.	1 2 3 4 5
Technology is utilized to support student learning (e.g., software or digital devices which students use to learn, access, organize, and communicate information).	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Instruction and Intervention:	
<b>Assessment and Data-based Decision Making</b>	
Assessment tools and procedures align to the MELG and/or the MCCS.	1 2 3 4 5
Comprehensive assessment system includes both formative and summative assessments.	1 2 3 4 5



Collaborative teams use a specific protocol for examining student data and making instructional and intervention decisions (e.g., universal screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome measures are defined by when, who, and where).	1 2 3 4 5
Data is disaggregated by subgroups and provided to educators for instructional decision making in a timely and efficient manner.	1 2 3 4 5
A comprehensive plan assesses the effectiveness of the instructional program and guides adjustments for improvement.	1 2 3 4 5
Regularly scheduled data analysis discussions occur to assess and adjust ongoing learning (e.g., bi-weekly grade level meetings or data meetings).	1 2 3 4 5
A data collection system is in place and technology support is available for continuous access of the data system.	1 2 3 4 5
Assessors receive professional development on valid and reliable assessment administration and fidelity of assessment administration is verified (e.g., checklists, observations).	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Data-based Decision Making:	
<b>Professional Development</b>	
Professional development is aligned to the MELG and/or the MCCS and is provided for staff across all content areas on explicit and systematic instruction in reading, writing, listening, and speaking.	1 2 3 4 5
Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning is provided in many ways to meet varying staff needs (e.g., coaching, professional learning communities, peer mentoring, web-based).	1 2 3 4 5
Instructional Leaders use multiple sources of student and school data when planning and implementing professional development.	1 2 3 4 5
Individual, targeted professional growth plan structures are in place for staff based on observation data and staff needs.	1 2 3 4 5
Structures are in place for providing professional development for new staff members.	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Professional Development:	
<b>System-wide Commitment</b>	
Instructional leaders set measurable goals for systemic academic improvement and monitor progress toward these goals annually.	1 2 3 4 5
Community-based, collaborative partnerships coordinate services from Early Childhood to Higher Education to support literacy development of students (e.g., participate on literacy leadership team, plan shared professional development, jointly participate in state-provided professional development).	1 2 3 4 5



Common learning opportunities are provided for all literacy stakeholders to ensure smooth transitions as students move from one literacy setting to the next (e.g., preschool to kindergarten and school to school).	1 2 3 4 5
Collaboration with all literacy stakeholders includes sharing of individual assessment results as students transition from one literacy setting to the next.	1 2 3 4 5
Collaboration with all literacy stakeholders includes communication about children who are likely to need intervention services when they transition from one literacy setting to the next.	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for System-wide Commitment:	
<b>Community and Family Involvement</b>	
Administration communicates literacy goals and expectations to stakeholders and collaborates to meet desired outcomes (e.g., stakeholders might include: educators, families, community organizations, businesses, early childhood, local education agencies, higher education, and unions).	1 2 3 4 5
Community-based, collaborative partnerships ensure supportive transitions from one literacy setting to the next.	1 2 3 4 5
Parents and families are engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive.	1 2 3 4 5
Parents and families are informed of literacy expectations outlined in the MELG and/or the MCCS and are updated on individual student progress toward meeting those expectations a minimum of three times per year.	1 2 3 4 5
Parents and families with students receiving Tier II and III interventions are updated on individual student progress toward meeting expectations outlined in the MELG and/or the MCCS a minimum of six times per year.	1 2 3 4 5
A coordinated system of support links families with local community resources to provide greater support for students in achieving literacy skills for career and college readiness.	1 2 3 4 5
Families and community members are welcomed as volunteers to maximize student literacy learning.	1 2 3 4 5
Local resources that support local literacy activities are recognized and encouraged.	1 2 3 4 5
Action Ideas for Community and Family Involvement:	



## APPENDIX B

### MONTANA LITERACY PLAN (MLP) INVENTORY

#### Purpose of the MLP Inventory

The Montana Literacy Plan (MLP) Inventory is a tool for consultants and specialists outside of the education program or school district to evaluate the literacy processes used for increasing student literacy outcomes. Literacy is defined as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in order to communicate with others effectively.

The consultant or specialist will collaborate with the district to:

1. evaluate implementation of the continuous improvement components outlined in the MLP,
2. determine current level of implementation of each component,
3. establish goals and action steps toward continuous literacy improvement, and
4. determine professional development needs.

Information necessary for this evaluation tool is gathered through multiple sources. The consultant or specialist will examine a school's comprehensive literacy plan. The comprehensive literacy plan should outline the school's systemic processes for improving student literacy outcomes and should include a comprehensive assessment system. This careful process will include a review of data and records, instructional observations, staff interviews, and participation in various meetings. The following protocol outlines the steps required to conduct the MLP inventory. 1) Contact the Administrator; 2) Request documentation below be available during the inventory process; 3) Request that staff complete the Continuous Literacy Improvement Self-Assessment; 4) Schedule time to interview administrator, staff members, classroom observations, and meetings; and 5) Schedule meeting with the leadership team to go over findings and determine next steps.

#### Documentation Needed

1. \_\_\_\_\_ List of literacy programs, interventions, and schedule
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Data (benchmark and progress monitoring)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment cut scores
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Current Literacy Plan, Action Plan, or Goals
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Self Assessment Information
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Other related information as necessary

## Using MLP Inventory

The results of the MLP Inventory will provide schools with a realistic measure of the implementation level of the continuous improvement components. The person conducting the inventory will meet with the leadership team and go over each of the components to report whether they are 1) not in place, 2) in the exploring or planning phase, 3) in the implementation phases of development, 4) or if the component is consistently implemented and a sustained school-wide process.

Date of the MLP Inventory \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Date of the Leadership Meeting to Discuss Findings \_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_

## MLP Inventory Protocol

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

Specialist Conducting Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1: Make Initial Contact

A. Identify school contact person & give overview of MLP Inventory with the list of documentation needed.

B. Get name(s), phone #'s, email address & record below.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

#### Products to Collect

1. \_\_\_\_\_ List of literacy programs, interventions, and schedule
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment Data (benchmark and progress monitoring)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Assessment cut scores
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Current Literacy Plan, Action Plan, or Goals
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Assessment Information
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Other related information as necessary

[Steps 2-4  
continue on  
following page.](#)



**Step 2: Confirm the Date to Conduct the MLP Inventory**

- A. Confirm meeting date with the contact person for conducting an administrator interview, taking a tour of the school while conducting staff interviews, & for reviewing the documentation.

Meeting date & time: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3: Conduct the MLP Inventory**

- A. Conduct administrator interview.
- B. Tour school to conduct observations and interview (minimum of 10).
- C. Review documentation & summarize inventory findings.

**Step 4: Summarize and Report the Results**

- A. Summarize surveys & complete inventory results.
- B. Meet with leadership team to review results.
- C. Review and update Action Plan to reflect new goals and action steps

Meeting date & time: \_\_\_\_\_

**MLP Inventory**

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Administrator \_\_\_\_\_ District \_\_\_\_\_

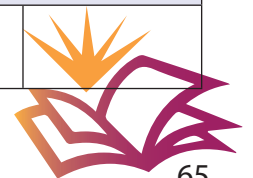
Specialist Conducting Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

	<b>Evaluation Question</b>	<b>Data Source</b> D=document; I= interview; O= observation	<b>Score</b> 0-2	<b>Actual Phase</b>
<b>Instructional Leadership</b>				
	Can 90% of staff asked report that there is a school-wide leadership team that meets regularly working toward specific actions for increasing student literacy outcomes? (0= no; 2=yes)			
	Is the administrator an active member of the leadership team? (0= no; 2=yes)			
	Do regularly scheduled leadership teams meetings occur at least monthly? (0= no; 2=yes)			
	Does the RTI team include teacher representatives from appropriate departments (e.g., grade level, special ed.)? (0= no; 2=yes)			
<b>Standards</b>				
	Can 90% of staff asked report that they have a copy of the MELG and/or the MCCS and have studied them thoroughly? (0=no; 2=yes)			
	Is there documentation of a clear alignment of grade level curriculum and assessments to the MELG and/or the MCCS including a comprehensive scope and sequence and pacing guide? (0=no; 2=yes)			
	Is there evidence that educators have designed, adapted and used evidence-based best practices to support effective delivery of grade level curriculum and assessments? (0=no; 2=yes)			
	Is there documentation of a clear school-wide vertical alignment of curriculum and assessments to the MCCS? (0= no; 2=yes)			
<b>Instruction and Intervention</b>				
	Does a comprehensive literacy plan assess the effectiveness of instruction and guide adjustments for improvement. (0= no; 2=yes)			
	Are primary instructional materials evidenced - based? (0= no; 2=yes)			



Are primary instructional materials implemented as intended? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is sufficient time spent on literacy instruction as defined by current research? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are a minimum of 80% of teachers providing core instruction with fidelity as it has been established by the leadership team? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are a minimum of 80% of teachers adhering to pacing guidelines? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is the percent of students achieving proficiency in reading and/or literacy appropriate (e.g., 80% of students are proficient or benchmark in literacy areas of reading, writing, speaking, and listening)? (0=no; 2=yes)			
Are students receiving Tier II or Tier III interventions continuing to participate in Tier I instruction (0=yes; 2=no)			
Are a variety of evidenced based interventions and strategies identified and utilized for a range of student needs? (0=no; 2=yes)			
Are multiple factors considered in matching the intensity of support to student need? (0=yes; 2=no)			
Are both individual and group interventions documented including who, what, where, and when? (0=yes; 2=no)			
Is a clear plan in place for assigning staff to deliver all necessary interventions and strategies? (0=yes; 2=no)			
<b>Assessment and Data-based Decision Making</b>			
Does the leadership team meet to analyze universal screening data each time it is gathered? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Does the leadership team report activities and share school wide data at least three times a year? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are cut scores established to identify high risk, some risk, proficiency and advanced students? (0= no 1; 2= yes)			
Do teams meet at least monthly to analyze screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and formative assessment data at least monthly (e.g., grade level teams, data teams, content area teams)? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are progress monitoring procedures being used to effectively guide instruction? (0=no; 2=yes)			
Are diagnostic measures and protocols in place to determine skill deficiencies for students with Tier II and Tier III needs? (0=no; 2=yes)			

Is a comprehensive plan in place that assesses the effectiveness of the instructional program and guides adjustments for improvement? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is there a system for collecting and summarizing all necessary student outcome data (e.g. electronic system, hard files)? (0=no; 1= data are collected 2= yes)			
Is Outcome evaluation data used to make necessary system changes (e.g., resource allocation and scheduling driven by student data)?(0=no; 2=yes)			
<b>Professional Development</b>			
Does professional development align to MELG and MCCS and the comprehensive literacy plan provided for all staff across all content areas on instructional practices in reading, writing, listening, and speaking? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is professional development provided for all staff across all content areas for effectively teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is professional learning job-embedded and provided in many ways to meet varying staff needs? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are structures in place for providing professional development regarding instructional expectations for new staff members? (0= no; 2=yes)			
<b>System-wide Commitment</b>			
Can 90% of staff identify the literacy goals stated within the comprehensive literacy plan? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is 80% of staff committed to implementing research-based programs, materials, and strategies aligned to standards with integrity? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Is professional development and time for planning based on student achievement data and staff needs? (0=no; 2=yes)			
Does the school budget allocate the appropriate amount of money for supporting the implementation of the comprehensive literacy plan (materials, training)? (0= no; 2= yes)			
Is their collaboration with all literacy stakeholders to ensure smooth transitions as students move from one literacy setting to the next (e.g., preschool to kindergarten, grade to grade, school to school, high school to college or career? (0= no; 2=yes)			
<b>Community and Family Involvement</b>			
Are community members and families involved in identifying literacy goals and expectations? (0= no; 2=yes)			



The leadership team reports external activities and shares school wide data with external stake holders one time a year. (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are parents and families are engaged as partners in ways that are culturally and linguistically sensitive? (0= no; 2=yes)			
Are local resources that support local literacy activities recognized and encouraged to participate in the literacy setting? (0= no; 2=yes)			

Summary Scores:							
A= /8	B= /8	C= /24	D= /18	E= /8	F= /10	G= /8	Mean=

### Administrator Interview Questions

#### **Data Collection Systems**

- 1) Tell me about your comprehensive literacy plan?
- 2) Do you collect and summarize benchmark and progress monitoring data?  Yes  No  
If no, skip to #4.
- 3) What system do you use for collecting and summarizing benchmark and progress monitoring data?
  - a) What data do you collect? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Who collects and enters the data? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What do you do with the benchmark and progress monitoring data?
  - a) Who looks at the data? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) How often do you share it with other staff? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Curriculum and Interventions**

- 5) Do you have an evidenced - based literacy program?  Yes  No If no, skip to # 10.
- 6) How often do you conduct fidelity checks? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7) How often do you assess implementation of effective instructional practices?
- 8) Do you have evidenced - based interventions?
- 9) Tell me about your curriculum and assessments and the process for aligning them to the MELG or MCCS.
- 10) Do you regularly celebrate achievement success with staff?  Yes  No



### Leadership Team

- 11) Is your school-wide team representative of your school staff?  Yes  No
- 12) Are you on the team?  Yes  No
- 13) How often does the team meet? \_\_\_\_\_
- 14) Do you attend team meetings consistently?  Yes  No
- 15) Who is your team leader/facilitator? \_\_\_\_\_
- 16) Does the team provide updates to staff on activities & data summaries?  Yes  No

If yes, how often? \_\_\_\_\_

- 17) Do you have an out-of-school liaison to support you on academic support systems development?  
 Yes  No  
If yes, who? \_\_\_\_\_
- 18) What are your top 3 school improvement goals?
- 19) Tell me about your curriculum and assessments and the process for aligning them to the MELG or MCCS.
- 20) Does your school use student assessment data and fidelity data to determine professional development needs?
- 21) What is your mission statement (does it indicate the expectation that all children can learn)?
- 22) Does the school budget contain an allocated amount of money for building and maintaining school-wide academic support?  Yes  No

### Teacher Interview Questions

- 1) What do you teach?
- 2) Tell me about your comprehensive literacy plan?
- 3) What are your school's literacy goals?
- 4) Is there a school-wide team that supports the implementation of your comprehensive literacy plan?
- 5) Are you on the building leadership team?
- 6) Do you feel your administrator effectively communicates a shared responsibility for student literacy outcomes?
- 7) Do you meet with your grade level team and/or content level team to problem-solve instructional needs for students who are not making adequate progress?
- 8) Tell me about the processes that are used for examining student data and making instructional and intervention decisions.



- 9) Have you reviewed the Montana Common Core Standards? If yes, how do you feel like your curriculum and instruction is in alignment with the MCCS for teaching reading, writing, listening, and speaking?
- 10) Do you utilize research-based materials and programs to teach reading and literacy skills? Does your building leadership team check fidelity of instruction regularly? Explain the process?
- 11) Is time for literacy instruction a priority in your school? Are all teachers following a pacing calendar and aware of what others are teaching?
- 12) How are families and community members involved in literacy at your school?
- 13) Is there anything else you would like to share about literacy instruction and assessment practices at your school?

### **Leadership Team Interview Questions**

- 1) Tell me about your comprehensive literacy plan?
- 2) What are your school's literacy goals?
- 3) Tell me about the school's curriculum and assessments and the process for aligning them to the MELG or MCCS.
- 4) Does your team communicate a shared responsibility for student literacy outcomes?
- 5) Does your team review the benchmarking data with staff at least three times a year?
- 6) Does your team set measurable goals for systemic academic improvement and monitor progress toward these goals?
- 7) Does your team meet regularly to analyze school and student data? How often? Does your administrator attend these meetings regularly? Do you use this information to inform decisions about professional development and instruction?
- 8) What are your meeting protocols (e.g., norms, facilitator, scribe, etc.)?
- 9) Are instructional materials readily available for all instruction and intervention settings?
- 10) Is benchmark data disaggregated by subgroups and shared with teachers in a timely manner so that it can be used for instructional decision making? Who is responsible for this at your school?
- 11) Are families and community members involved in setting literacy goals and expectations?
- 12) Is there anything else you would like to share about literacy instruction and assessment practices at your school?

APPENDIX C  
MLP ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

**Consider the following questions when planning action steps for the continuous improvement components for improving student literacy outcomes.**

1. What current practices or processes will be adjusted and how?
  
2. What new practices, processes, or strategies will strengthen our current implementation?

<u>Continuous Improvement Components</u>		
<u>Goal</u>		
<u>Action Steps</u>		
<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>	<u>Timeline</u>



<b><u>Continuous Improvement Components</u></b>		
<u>Goal</u>		
<u>Action Steps</u>		
<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
<b><u>Continuous Improvement Components:</u></b>		
<u>Goal</u>		
<u>Action Steps</u>		
<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>	<u>Timeline</u>

APPENDIX D  
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE



<b><u>Continuous Improvement Components</u></b>		
<u>Goal</u>		
<u>Action Steps</u>		
<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>	<u>Timeline</u>
<b><u>Continuous Improvement Components</u></b>		
<u>Goal</u>		
<u>Action Steps</u>		
<u>Person(s) Responsible</u>	<u>Resources Needed</u>	<u>Timeline</u>

Sept.-Dec.	State Documentation/ Measurement Tool	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame
Sept.-Dec.	On-site Leadership Team Self-Assessment	On-site Leadership Team	September
	MLP Inventory	Consultant or Specialist	Fall Benchmark
Develop a Plan of Change	Action Plan	On-site Leadership Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
Implementa- tion of the Plan	Action Plan Steps	On-site Leadership Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
	On-site Leadership Team Agendas	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Agendas- Sept.-Dec.
	Team (grade-level, department) Agendas	Teacher Teams	Monthly Agendas Sept.-Dec.
Monitor the Implementa- tion Plan	On-site Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Teams	Monthly Reports Sept.-Dec.
	Team (grade-level, department) Meeting Notes	Grade Level Teacher Teams	Monthly Reports Sept.-Dec.
Monitor the Impact of the Plan	Student Data (ISIP, DIBELS, AIMSweb, MAPS)	On-site Leadership Implementation Team, Grade Level Teacher Teams	Fall Assessment Window
	Student CRT Data and Student ACT Data	On-site Leadership Team	Previous year's data utilized to inform fall instructional groupings
	On-site Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Reports Sept.-Dec.
Review New Data	Progress Monitoring (Independent assessments, Classroom Walk through Data, and program specific data)	On-site Leadership Team, Instructional Consultant Team, OPI Implementation Team	Monthly
Revise and Refine the Plan	Action Plan	On-site Leadership Team, Instructional Consultant Team, and OPI Implementation Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
	On-site Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Reports Sept.-Dec.



## CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Jan.- May	State Documentation/ Measurement Tool	Person(s) Responsible	Time Frame/ Deadlines
Assess Current Status	On-site Leadership Team Self-Assessment	On-site Leadership Team	January
	MLP Inventory	Consultant or Specialist	Winter Benchmark
Develop a Plan of Change	Action Plan	On-site Leadership Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
Implementa- tion of the Plan	Action Plan Steps	On-site Leadership Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
	On-site Leadership Team Agendas	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Agendas- Jan.-May
	Team (grade-level, depart- ment) Agendas	Teacher Teams	Monthly Agendas- Jan.-May
Monitor the Implementa- tion Plan	Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Teams	Monthly Reports- Jan.-May
	Grade-Level Team Meeting Notes	Grade Level Teacher Teams	Monthly Reports Jan.-May
Monitor the Impact of the Plan	Student Data (ISIP, DIBELS, AIMSweb, MAPS)	On-site Leadership Implementation Team, Grade Level Teacher Teams	Winter Assessment Window
	On-site Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Reports Jan.-May
Review New Data	Progress Monitoring (Independent assessments, Classroom Walkthrough Data, and program specific data)	On-site Leadership Team, Instructional Consultant Team, OPI Implementation Team	Monthly
Revise and Re- fine the Plan	Action Plan	On-site Leadership Team, Instructional Consultant Team, and OPI Implementation Team	Continually Updated as Actions are Completed
	On-site Leadership Team Meeting Notes	On-site Leadership Team	Monthly Reports Jan.-May



## APPENDIX E

### GRADUATION MATTERS MONTANA (GMM)

State Superintendent Denise Juneau believes we need to set an expectation for every child in Montana to graduate from high school. In today's global economy, a quality education is the key to economic prosperity for our young people. More than 2,000 Montana students drop out of school each year an average of five every day. We can do better (Graduation Matters Montana Toolkit, August 2011). The Montana Literacy Plan (MLP) is a critical resource for districts, schools, and early childhood centers to use to ensure students' successfully progress toward meeting grade level standards and ultimately being college and career ready. The MLP directly supports the goals of Graduation Matters Montana (GMM), setting an expectation for every child in Montana to graduate from high school. Beginning on page 3, Starting a *Graduation Matters Montana Initiative Toolkit*, identifies a checklist for launching an *I Pledge to Graduate Initiative* in Your Town.



1. Set Your Goal
  - Commit to 100% of your targeted student population signing the pledge
2. Gather Resources
  - Know your graduation data
3. Prepare and Plan
  - Build an *I Pledge to Graduate* team at your school
  - Identify a student population the initiative will target
  - Suggest ways people can stay or become involved in the initiative
  - Get local "celebrity" involvement
4. Take Action
  - Have kick-off, on-going and end-of-year celebrations
  - Invite students to speak to the school and your community about their pledge to graduate
  - Offer incentives to students who pledge to graduate
  - Publicize your efforts
5. Develop Strategies to Sustain Student Engagement
  - Provide continuous support to students who have taken the pledge and might be at-risk of dropping out

6. Evaluate Progress

- Reflect before, during, and after each school year

7. Celebrate and Recognize

- Celebrate successes
- Communicate your successes
- Keep the school and community informed of any outcomes and stories

Schools with GMM initiatives should include at least one member of the instructional leadership team to ensure continuity and support, especially with knowing your data and implementing specific research-based strategies: both critical processes in the Montana Literacy Plan.

The components of the Montana Literacy Plan (leadership, instruction and intervention, assessment and data-based decision making, professional development, system-wide commitment, community and family involvement, and the Montana Common Core Standards) include many of the same components as GMM. For additional information on Graduation Matters Montana, visit the website <http://graduationmatters.mt.gov/>.

## APPENDIX F

### INDIAN EDUCATION FOR ALL (IEFA)

Indian Education for All is an educational mandate derived from Montana’s state constitution, which reads, “It is the intent of the legislature that every Montanan, whether Indian or non-Indian, be encouraged to learn about the distinct and unique heritage of American Indians in a culturally responsive manner ... all school personnel should have an understanding and awareness of Indian tribes to help them relate effectively with Indian students and parents ... educational personnel provide means by which school personnel will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the American Indian people.”



**Indian Education**  
Montana Office of Public Instruction  
Denise Juneau, Superintendent

Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 20-1-501

In order to fulfill this mandate, teachers should carefully plan ways in which to integrate throughout the curriculum the Seven Essential Understandings Regarding Montana Indians.

**Essential Understanding 1:** There is great diversity among the 12 tribal Nations of Montana in their languages, cultures, histories and governments. Each Nation has a distinct and unique cultural heritage that contributes to modern Montana.

**Essential Understanding 2:** There is great diversity among individual American Indians as identity is developed, defined and redefined by many entities, organizations and people.

There is a continuum of Indian identity ranging from assimilated to traditional and is unique to each individual. There is no generic American Indian.

**Essential Understanding 3:** The ideologies of Native traditional beliefs and spirituality persist into modern day life as tribal cultures, traditions, and languages are still practiced by many American Indian people and are incorporated into how tribes govern and manage their affairs. Additionally, each tribe has its own oral history beginning with their origins that are as valid as written histories. These histories pre-date the “discovery” of North America.

**Essential Understanding 4:** Reservations are land that have been reserved by the tribes for their own use through treaties and was not “given” to them. The principle that land should be acquired from the Indians only through their consent with treaties involved three assumptions:

- I. Both parties to treaties were sovereign powers.
- II. Indian tribes had some form of transferable title to the land.
- III. Acquisition of Indian lands was solely a government matter not to be left to individual colonists.

**Essential Understanding 5:** There were many federal policies put into place throughout American history that have impacted Indian people and shaped who they are today. Much of Indian history can be related through several major federal policy periods:

Colonization Period	1492 -
Treaty Period	1789 - 1871



Allotment Period	1887 - 1934
Boarding School Period	1879 - - -
Tribal Reorganization Period	1934 - 1958
Termination Period	1953 - 1988
Self-determination	1975 – current

**Essential Understanding 6:** History is a story and most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. Histories are being rediscovered and revised. History told from an Indian perspective conflicts with what most of mainstream history tells us.

**Essential Understanding 7:** Under the American legal system, Indian tribes have sovereign powers, separate and independent from the federal and state governments. However, the extent and breadth of tribal sovereignty is not the same for each tribe.

For a full description of each understanding, go to: Indian Education for All, Essential Understandings  
Web site: <http://www.opi.mt.gov/PDF/IndianEd/Resources/EssentialUnderstandings.pdf>





## MONTANA COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PLAN

*Design: Ellen Leidl*



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