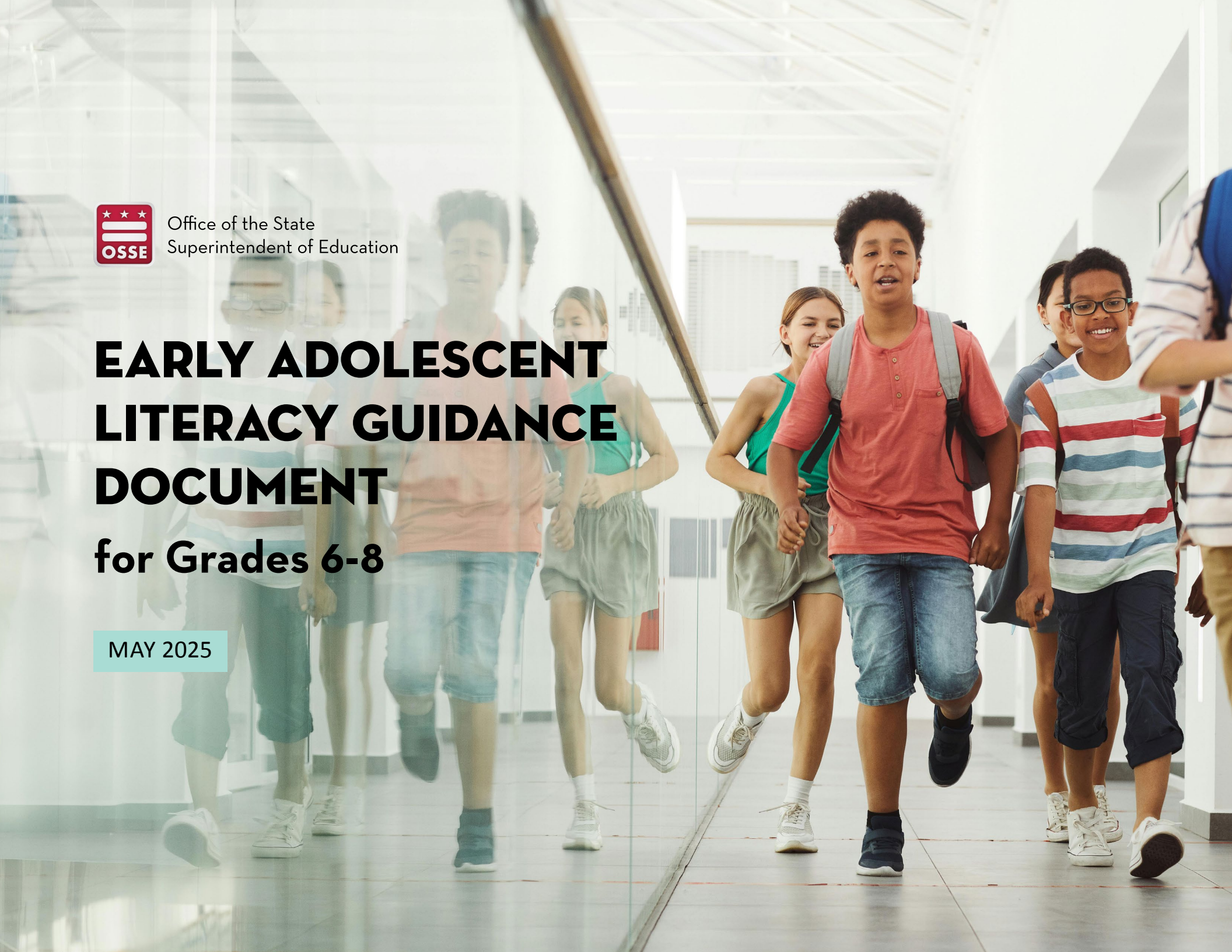




Office of the State  
Superintendent of Education

# EARLY ADOLESCENT LITERACY GUIDANCE DOCUMENT for Grades 6-8

MAY 2025



# Table of Contents

## Introduction

PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS	3
-------------------------	---

---

## **PART 1: Understanding Science-Based Literacy Interventions for Early Adolescent Students.**

- Part 1 contains a synthesis of research on supporting non-proficient readers in middle school.

INTRODUCTION TO EARLY ADOLESCENT LITERACY INTERVENTION	4
ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR SCIENCE-BASED LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS	5
GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING LITERACY INTERVENTION	15

---

## **PART 2: Adopting and Implementing Science-Based Literacy Programs**

- Part 2 contains information for LEAs on adopting science-based literacy programs and submitting compliance to OSSE.

ADOPTING SCIENCE-BASED LITERACY PROGRAMS	16
THE HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTION MATERIALS RUBRIC: ASSESSMENT	17
USING THE HIGH-QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (HQIM) RUBRIC	17
COMPLIANCE TIMELINE	20
RESOURCES AND CONTACT INFORMATION	21

---

## PURPOSE AND DEFINITIONS

The Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE’s) [Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#) (CLP) seeks to move the District toward a reality in which all learners receive the effective literacy instruction and research-based interventions they need to become successful readers. The CLP’s guiding principles for literacy begin with inclusive literacy instruction to help ensure that all learners have access to equitable, culturally and linguistically responsive, high-quality, science-based literacy curriculum. Additionally, [DC Law 23-191 Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020](#), requires that “each LEA shall adopt a science-based reading program.”<sup>1</sup> This document is designed to provide DC local education agencies (LEAs) serving early adolescent students (grades 6-8) with a summary of research on supporting non-proficient adolescent readers and guidance on adopting high-quality, science-based reading intervention programs.

- [Part one](#) of this guide will focus on reviewing research on early adolescent literacy interventions.
- [Part two](#) of this guide will focus on the process for reviewing and adopting a science-based literacy intervention program.

### DEFINITIONS:

- **The science of reading:** The science of reading is a vast, interdisciplinary body of scientifically based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop, why some have difficulty, and how educators can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.<sup>2</sup>
- **Science-based reading programs:** In support of non-proficient early adolescent readers, OSSE defines “science-based reading programs” as a set of school-based systems, curricular materials, and instructional practices that align with established research on improving literacy levels among students in grades 6-8. This includes assessments for identifying and addressing gaps in student literacy skills.
- **High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM):** OSSE defines HQIM as sequential, comprehensive instructional materials that are evidence-based and aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS for English Language Arts, adopted by the District of Columbia in 2010, establishes rigorous guidelines that reflect the skills and knowledge students need to succeed at each grade level. For literacy instruction, HQIM can include core programming, supplemental programming, and intervention programming.
- **Literacy intervention programming:** A set of instructional resources designed to support students in enhancing literacy skills by explicitly and systematically targeting specific skill deficits. Research-based literacy intervention programs are grounded in scientifically validated methods shown to be effective in improving literacy outcomes. Within this context, literacy intervention programming pertains to tier 2 intervention.

# PART 1: Understanding Science-Based Literacy Interventions for Early Adolescent Students.

## INTRODUCTION TO EARLY ADOLESCENT LITERACY INTERVENTION

As students transition to middle school, literacy becomes the foundation for success across all subjects.<sup>3</sup> Students who have yet to master essential reading and writing skills are likely to encounter persistent barriers to academic achievement, which can have a direct and enduring impact on school engagement and self-confidence.<sup>4</sup> Supporting early adolescent literacy is critical to providing all students with the skills they need to thrive in middle school and beyond.<sup>5</sup>

**“Enough is already known about adolescent reading—both the nature of the problems of struggling readers and the types of interventions and approaches to address these needs—in order to act immediately on a broad scale.”**

- Biancarosa and Snow, 2006

### Why is Literacy Intervention Important?

- The National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) indicates that many of DC’s early adolescent students have yet to develop the requisite literacy skills to access and meaningfully engage with grade-level content.<sup>6</sup> This can include gaps in basic reading skills and underdeveloped vocabulary and background knowledge.
- Non-proficient early adolescent readers are likely to have multiple skill deficits and may receive limited opportunities to address those deficits throughout the school day,<sup>7</sup> further emphasizing the need for consistent, targeted, and data-driven intervention programming.<sup>8</sup>
- Without intervention, reading difficulties for early adolescent students can have profound academic and emotional impacts, including increased anxiety,<sup>9</sup> social skill deficits,<sup>10</sup> lower confidence,<sup>11</sup> and higher dropout risk.<sup>12</sup> In turn, non-proficient reading can have a significant impact on future employment, earnings, and physical and psychological well-being.<sup>13</sup>
- **Encouragingly, research indicates that early adolescence is not too late to intervene, and that effective literacy are associated with positive academic and social-emotional outcomes.**<sup>14</sup>

### Effective Literacy Intervention

- Non-proficient readers in middle school are most likely to benefit from reading interventions when they involve evidence-based instructional practices that are implemented consistently as part of a comprehensive, school-wide effort.<sup>15</sup> Effective interventions include:
  - **Assessments:** An assessment protocol that allows LEAs to identify students in need of intervention, the specific skills those students need to develop, and a means of routinely monitoring student progress.
  - **Intervention Programs:** A comprehensive multi-component reading intervention program that is aligned with research on what is most likely to improve adolescent students’ literacy skills.<sup>16</sup>
  - **Support Across Content Areas:** Literacy interventions are most effective when they involve all educators who engage with student reading and writing - “within, across, and beyond the core disciplines of English language arts (ELA), history, math, and science.”<sup>17</sup>
- Academic growth for this population of students is likely to be “slow but steady.”<sup>18</sup> There is strong evidence that early adolescent literacy will improve when targeted with appropriate interventions.<sup>19</sup>

## Evidence of Success

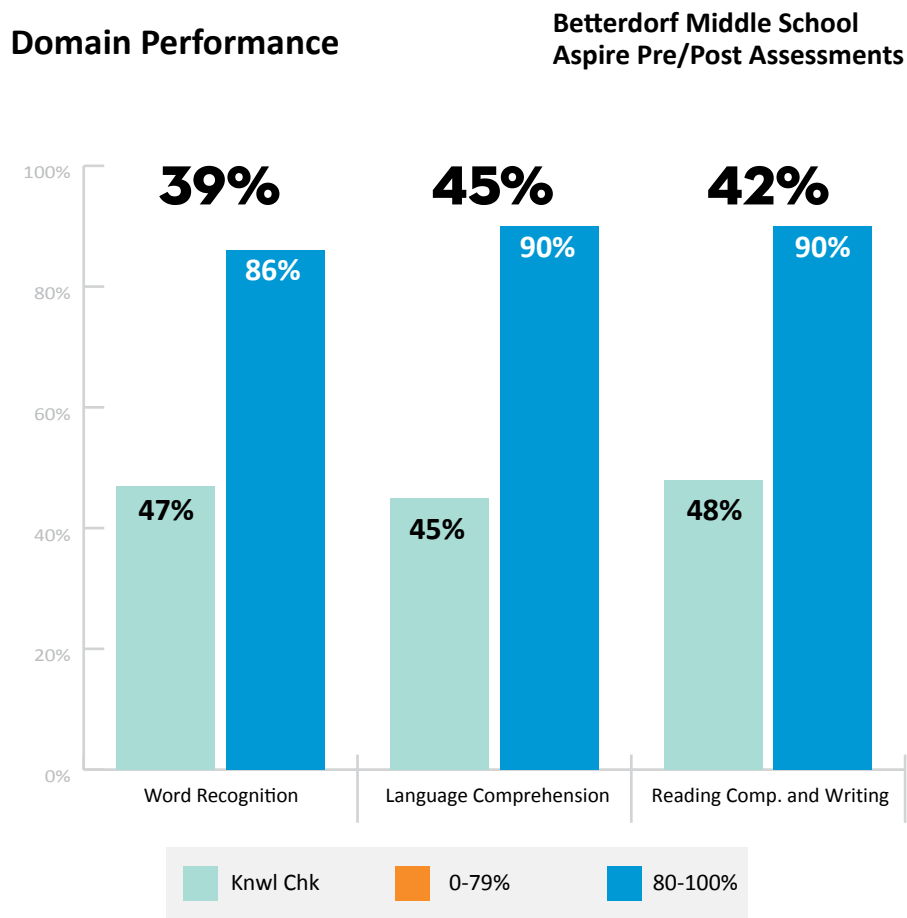
- States and school districts across the country have been investing in improving literacy for middle and high school students. For example, the students of the Rich Township District outside of Chicago [nearly doubled their reading growth in 2023-2024](#) as the result of “a strategic and sustained approach to literacy and professional learning,” while the Bettendorf Middle School in Iowa leveraged a combination of high-quality professional learning with integrating evidence-aligned structured literacy practices to [improve student outcomes](#).

## ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR SCIENCE-BASED LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

Reading is a complex process that involves the effortless and automatic integration of many language and word-reading skills, which are typically mastered over years of continuous development.<sup>21</sup> For example, when a proficient early adolescent reader engages with a text, they are simultaneously activate the following skills:

- Efficient decoding of words,
- Fluent reading of text,
- Knowledge of word meanings,
- Drawing connections between new content to prior knowledge,
- Applying reading comprehension strategies,
- Monitoring their understanding.<sup>22</sup>

Non-proficient readers at the secondary level are likely to need support with several of the skills listed above.<sup>23</sup> To address the full range of students’ instructional needs, literacy intervention programs must be guided by and responsive to data and capable of meaningfully addressing the various components of skilled reading.<sup>24</sup>



OSSE has developed the HQIM rubric for early adolescent intervention programs, which represents a synthesis of evidence-based intervention components and key enabling conditions for supporting non-proficient students. The table below outlines the components that are included in the HQIM rubric and the second part of this guide provides information on using the rubric to evaluate intervention programs as well as the compliance process.

Component	Required for all LEAs	Required for LEAs Evaluating Intervention Programs	Recommended for All LEAs
Assessment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Advanced Word Study		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Fluency		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Vocabulary		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Reading and Language Comprehension		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Writing		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Motivation, Engagement, and Social Emotional Support			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The next section of this guide provides an overview of each of the above-listed components, highlights their unique contribution to supporting non-proficient early adolescent readers, and provides resources for further learning.

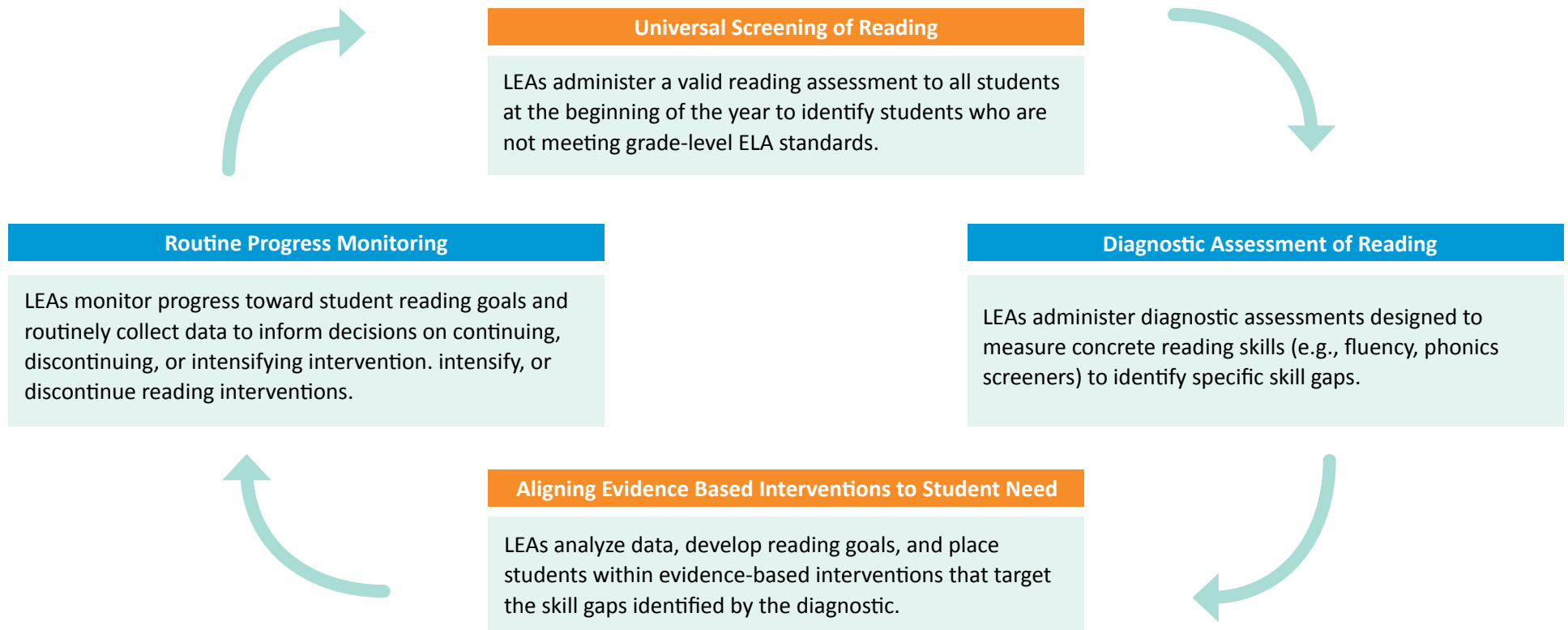
## 1 | Assessment Overview

Assessments are a key enabling condition of effective literacy intervention for early adolescent students.<sup>25</sup> “The need for accurate assessments arises because of the enormous diversity in the rate of learning and level of literacy skills among adolescents. Accurate assessments allow teachers and schools to differentiate instruction according to individual students’ needs.”<sup>26</sup>

To support early adolescent students, **an LEA’s system of assessment must include:**

- A universal screening measure to identify students in need of intervention (e.g., MAP, Fastbridge, iReady)
- A diagnostic assessment or set of assessments to pinpoint specific reading deficits (e.g., oral reading fluency tests, phonics screeners)
- Tools for monitoring student progress within interventions.

The following graphic represents how these assessments contribute to a cycle of data gathering and review:



## The HQIM Rubric: Assessments

The HQIM rubric outlines the prerequisites of an effective assessment system, including screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring measures.

- **All LEAs must complete and provide evidence for the assessment section of the HQIM rubric, regardless of whether their intervention program is represented on OSSE’s HQIM List. For information about completing the assessment component of the HQIM rubric, see part 2 of this document.**

## Steps for Implementing Assessments

The following table outlines recommended steps for establishing a successful assessment system at the school level.

<b>Staff Designations</b>	The LEA identifies staff to administer assessments and coordinate data-based decision making.
<b>Assessment Schedule</b>	The LEA develops an assessment schedule that centers on beginning-of-year screening and diagnostic measures to ensure that intervention begins early in the school year.
<b>Data Trackers/ Platforms</b>	The LEA develops, selects, or integrates student assessment data into data trackers/platforms.
<b>Protocol for Data-Based Decision Making</b>	The LEA establishes or expands a protocol for data-based decision making based on student screening and diagnostic assessment data.
<b>Intervention Calendar</b>	The LEA develops an intervention calendar outlining when student progress will be reviewed and whether intervention needs to continue, be discontinued, or intensified.
<b>Master Schedules</b>	The LEA develops a master schedule that designates the consistent and ongoing time of student intervention during the school day.

## Resources for Assessment

- [Marshall Street’s Assessment Implementation Checklist](#) (page 53)
- [Assessment Model for Grades 5-12 \(Keys to Literacy\)](#)
- [Adolescent Assessment of Literacy \(AAL\) Screener](#)
- [Assessments to Guide Adolescent Literacy Instruction \(Center on Instruction\)](#)
- [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy Session 6: Literacy Assessment for Adolescent Learners](#)

## 2 | Word Study Overview

Adequate word-reading skills are essential for engaging with the increasingly complex texts that early adolescent students will encounter in middle school.<sup>27</sup> In the absence of adequate word-reading skills, non-proficient students are likely to rely upon inefficient and inaccurate strategies<sup>28</sup> for decoding and analyzing unfamiliar words, which can greatly inhibit comprehension<sup>29</sup> and can cause their overall academic growth to plateau indefinitely.<sup>30</sup>

The following chart represents how proficient early adolescent readers engage with a text and how non-proficient readers might struggle:

PROFICIENT READERS	NON-PROFICIENT READERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read multisyllabic words and use strategies to figure out unknown words.</li><li>• Make connections between letter patterns and sounds and use this understanding to read words.</li><li>• Break unknown words into syllables during reading</li><li>• Use word analysis strategies to break difficult or long words into meaningful parts such as inflectional endings, prefixes, suffixes, and roots.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May read single-syllable words effortlessly but have difficulty decoding longer multisyllabic words.</li><li>• May lack knowledge of the ways in which sounds map to print.</li><li>• Have difficulty breaking words into syllables.</li><li>• Often do not use word analysis strategies to break words into syllables.</li></ul>

Adapted from Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Nagy, Berringer, & Abbott, 2006)<sup>31</sup>

**Advanced word study** instruction is an evidence-based practice that addresses non-proficient word-reading skills. It consists of teaching word analysis skills and building morphological awareness.

- **Word analysis** consists of teaching strategies for breaking down and blending multisyllabic words.<sup>32</sup> Explicitly teaching students how to decode complex words has been shown to improve their ability to read and understand texts, build their confidence, and improve their interest and motivation to read.<sup>33</sup>
- **Morphological awareness** consists of instruction that helps students “unpack complex words”<sup>34</sup> by focusing on the pronunciation, spelling, and meaning of the smallest units of meaning in language, which are called morphemes.<sup>35</sup> Explicit instruction in morphology has been shown to improve student word reading accuracy,<sup>36</sup> vocabulary knowledge,<sup>37</sup> spelling,<sup>38</sup> and reading comprehension.<sup>39</sup> Morphology instruction is especially helpful for multilingual learners<sup>40</sup> and students with disabilities,<sup>41</sup> including students with dyslexia.<sup>42</sup>

### HQIM Rubric: Advanced Word Study

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for advanced word study instruction. LEAs who are evaluating their programs using the HQIM rubric must complete the advanced word study component of the rubric and submit evidence to OSSE.

### Resources for Advanced Word Study

- [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy Session 3: Multisyllabic Words and Fluency](#)
- [Developing Multisyllabic Word Reading Skills in Adolescent Readers](#)
- [Explicit Morphology Instruction to Improve Overall Literacy Skills in Secondary Students](#)
- [Morphology Instruction Webinar](#) and [demonstration videos](#) (CALI Reads)
- [Morphology Matters: Building Vocabulary Through Word Parts \(includes lesson outlines\).](#)
- [Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9](#)

### 3 | Fluency Overview

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately and effortlessly with appropriate expression and pacing.<sup>43</sup> Fluency is a critical bridge from word reading to comprehension<sup>44</sup> as fluent readers shift their attention from decoding to making meaning from text.<sup>45</sup> The following chart represents how proficient early adolescent readers engage with text and how non-proficient readers may struggle:

PROFICIENT READERS	NON-PROFICIENT READERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read 100-160 words per minute (at the middle school level), depending on the nature and difficulty of the text.</li><li>• Decode words accurately and automatically.</li><li>• Group words into meaningful chunks and phrases.</li><li>• Combine multiple tasks while reading (e.g., decoding, phrasing, understanding, and interpreting).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read slowly and laboriously.</li><li>• May continue to struggle with decoding or may decode correctly but slowly.</li><li>• Often lack voice or articulation of emotion while reading.</li><li>• May lack proficiency in individual skills that results in dysfluent reading and limit comprehension.</li></ul>

46

**Repeated oral reading** has been shown to be the most effective intervention for improving reading fluency in students with disabilities.<sup>47</sup> The practice consists of setting a purpose and having students reread the same passage three to four times. Purposes for rereading can vary depending on the reading ability of the students receiving the intervention<sup>48</sup> but can include answering questions, reading with expression, and facilitating related discussions between student groups.<sup>49</sup>

- Strategies for increasing the effectiveness of repeated reading include pre-teaching difficult words, explicitly teaching students to read with prosody, and checking for understanding after reading.<sup>50</sup>
- Reading fluency activities have been shown to be most effective when they are paired with targeted word-study instruction.<sup>51</sup>
- Other evidence-based oral reading fluency activities include partner reading,<sup>52</sup> and goal setting/progress monitoring procedures that actively involve students in the process.<sup>53</sup>

#### HQIM Rubric: Fluency

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for effective fluency instruction. LEAs evaluating programs using the HQIM rubric must complete the fluency component and submit the corresponding evidence to OSSE.

#### Resources for Fluency

- [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy Session 3: Multisyllabic Words and Fluency](#)
- [Unbound Ed's Fluency Guide](#)
- [Repeated Reading Protocol for Developing Oral Reading Fluency](#)
- [What Adolescent Learners Need for Good Reading Comprehension That Is Often Ignored: Fluency](#)

## 4 | Vocabulary Overview

Knowing a breadth and depth of vocabulary and having strategies for figuring out unknown words is strongly related to reading comprehension and overall academic success for students of all ages.<sup>54</sup> “This is particularly true for secondary readers who are tasked with learning through content-area texts in which specialized vocabulary represents much of the text’s meaning.”<sup>55</sup>

Most vocabulary is learned through reading diverse texts, engaging in rich conversations, and direct experiences.<sup>56</sup> Non-proficient readers may have an underdeveloped vocabulary, greatly inhibiting reading comprehension.<sup>57</sup> The following chart represents a proficient early adolescent readers’ vocabulary and how non-proficient readers might struggle:

PROFICIENT READERS	NON-PROFICIENT READERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are exposed to a breadth of vocabulary words in conversations and print at school from a very early age</li><li>• Have word consciousness</li><li>• Understand most words when they are reading (at least 90%) and can make sense of unknown words to build their vocabulary knowledge.</li><li>• Learn words incrementally, through multiple exposures to new words.</li><li>• Have content-specific prior knowledge that helps them understand how words are used in a particular context.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have limited exposure to new words.</li><li>• May not enjoy reading, and therefore do not select reading as an independent activity.</li><li>• May lack word consciousness, including an awareness of the complex and varied nature of words in written and oral language.</li><li>• Are unable to comprehend consistently what they read or to learn new words from reading.</li><li>• Lack the variety of experiences and exposures necessary to gain deep understanding of new words.</li><li>• Often have limited content-specific prior knowledge that is insufficient to support word learning.</li></ul>

**Explicit vocabulary instruction** has been shown to improve student reading outcomes for upper elementary, middle, and high schools from diverse geographic regions and socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>59</sup> Evidence-based vocabulary instruction includes strategically selecting and directly teaching words, teaching how words relate to one another supported by morphology instruction, and teaching strategies for students to use when figuring out the meaning of unknown words.<sup>60</sup>

Providing students with a consistent and uniform approach to explicit vocabulary instruction across content areas (e.g., within science and social studies) has been shown to enhance students’ ability to acquire academic vocabulary.<sup>61</sup>

### HQIM rubric: Vocabulary

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for effective vocabulary instruction. LEAs evaluating programs using the HQIM rubric must complete the vocabulary component and submit the corresponding evidence to OSSE.

### Resources for Vocabulary

- [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy Session 4: Vocabulary Learning and Instruction](#)
- [Teaching Vocabulary and Comprehension in the Content Areas](#)
- [Vocabulary Maps Course](#) and [Webinar](#) (CALI Reads)
- [Essential Words Course](#)

## 5 | Language and Reading Comprehension Overview

Actively constructing meaning from text requires the orchestration of several linguistic and cognitive processes.<sup>62</sup> For early adolescent readers, the need to learn from text increases significantly as they progress through school, this places greater pressure on a student’s ability to efficiently monitor their understanding and apply effective strategies when their understanding breaks down.<sup>63</sup> The following chart represents a proficient early adolescent reader’s approach to reading comprehension and how non-proficient readers might struggle:

PROFICIENT READERS	NON-PROFICIENT READERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monitor reading for understanding. Consider the writing from the author’s view, interacting with text during and after reading.</li><li>• Link content with their prior knowledge.</li><li>• Use a variety of effective reading strategies before, during, and after reading.</li><li>• Set a purpose for reading and adjust their rate and strategy use depending on the text and content.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fail to use metacognitive strategies as they read.</li><li>• May not be aware when understanding breaks down.</li><li>• Do not question or interact with the text during or after reading.</li><li>• May lack subject-specific prior knowledge.</li><li>• Do not readily make connections between what they are learning and what they already know.</li><li>• Have limited knowledge and use of strategies for gaining information from text</li><li>• May fail to read with purpose or goals.</li><li>• Often do not enjoy reading and lack understanding of the utility of reading.</li></ul>

Adapted from Denton, Bryan, Wexler, Vaughn, & Reed, 2007, Pressley, 2006.<sup>64</sup>

Explicit instruction in reading comprehension strategies can improve students’ strategy use and overall reading comprehension.<sup>65</sup> Evidence-based instruction that supports reading comprehension includes, but is not limited to, activating prior knowledge, explicit instruction on the use of graphic organizers, teaching comprehension monitoring strategies, and systematically teaching students to summarize and get the gist of what they are reading. Multicomponent comprehension strategy instruction combines several strategies for reading, such as previewing, questioning, and summarizing.<sup>66</sup>

Providing students with a consistent and uniform set of comprehension strategies across content areas (e.g., science, social studies) is critical for reinforcing how meaning is derived from text reading.<sup>67</sup>

### HQIM Rubric:

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for effective comprehension instruction. LEAs evaluating programs using the HQIM rubric must complete the comprehension component and submit the corresponding evidence to OSSE.

### Resources

- [Critical Reading \(Get the Gist\) Course](#)
  - [Get the Gist Graphic Organizer](#)
- [AdLit: Direct, Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction](#)
- [Meadows Center: Generating Questions](#)
- [PACT Reading Research Recap on Developing Background Knowledge](#)

## 6 | Writing

Writing and reading are “both vital aspects of literacy” that require “their own dedicated instruction.”<sup>68</sup> Many evidence-based supports for early adolescent writing (planning, pre-writing, revising, editing, process writing/writing workshops) are expected within a tier 1, general education setting and are not typically addressed by commercial literacy intervention programs. This section outlines the integration of specific evidence-based writing practices with the other essential components of effective intervention.

- **Spelling Instruction:** Embedding spelling instruction within word study and providing students with many opportunities to practice word analysis skills during independent reading can increase the impact of word study instruction.<sup>69</sup>
- **Summarization:** Explicitly teaching students how to summarize texts and providing opportunities for students to write summaries in response to fluency or comprehension activities can consistently have a strong, positive effect on their ability to write good summaries.<sup>70</sup>
- **Sentence Combining:** Sentence combining guides students in building more complex and sophisticated sentences. Students writing summaries or responses to questions can be taught to combine two or more basic sentences into a single sentence.

### HQIM Rubric

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for effectively integrating writing instruction with the other intervention components. LEAs evaluating programs using the HQIM rubric are not required to complete the writing component or submit corresponding evidence to OSSE. This section outlines best practices for improving existing programming.

### Resources

- [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy Session 6: Writing Instruction and Writing Assessment](#)

## 7 | Motivation and Engagement

Research shows that non-proficient early adolescent readers may lack motivation to read,<sup>71</sup> resulting in fewer opportunities to practice reading comprehension strategies, build background knowledge, and expand vocabulary.<sup>72</sup> A lack of motivation to read can become increasingly difficult for early adolescent readers as content reading becomes more complex and classroom environments expect a degree of reading proficiency.<sup>73</sup> The table below represents the features of proficient and non-proficient readers in relation to reading motivation:

PROFICIENT READERS	NON-PROFICIENT READERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interact with text in a motivated and strategic way.</li><li>• Have improved comprehension reading outcomes when engaged with text.</li><li>• Read more and thus more access to a variety of topics and text types.</li><li>• Are interested and curious about topics and content in texts and read to find out more.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May engage in reading as passive process without giving effortful attention to activating prior knowledge, using reading strategies, or employing other strategic thought processes.</li><li>• Often have low comprehension or text.</li><li>• Fail to access a variety of wide reading opportunities. Given the choice, prefer not to read.</li><li>• May not be interested in or curious about exploring topics or content through reading.</li></ul>

Adopted from Guthria & Wingfield, 2000.<sup>74</sup>

Educators can influence students' motivation to learn by using strategies to increase student engagement.<sup>75</sup> A summary of evidence-based practices for fostering reading motivation among nonproficient adolescent readers includes<sup>76</sup>

- **Providing goals for reading:** Students can be motivated by performance goals established around student progress (e.g. data tracking of oral reading fluency)<sup>77</sup> and content goals, which emphasize the “importance of and increase interest in learning from reading.”<sup>78</sup>
- **Providing student choice:** Giving students a choice in what they read, where they read within the intervention space, with whom they work, and how they engage in reading response activities (e.g. responding to a text with a poem, or song) is associated with an investment in learning.
- **Aligning text with student interests:** Providing students with high-interest text/texts about which they have existing background knowledge can increase motivation to read as well as comprehension<sup>79</sup>
- **Increasing social interactions related to reading:** Adolescents are motivated by working and learning collaboratively.<sup>80</sup> Having students work in collaborative groups increases their opportunities to share information, ask questions, and explain their reasoning. Further, peer collaboration can foster a sense of belonging for students within an intervention group.<sup>81</sup> Research shows that secondary readers benefit more from socially and cognitively engaging instruction than from additional reading periods or technology.<sup>82</sup>

## HQIM Rubric

The HQIM rubric represents the key criteria for integrating evidence-based motivational practices in an intervention class. LEAs evaluating programs using the HQIM rubric are not required to complete the motivation component. This section outlines best practices for reviewing and improving existing programming.

## Resources

- [How Can Instruction Help Adolescent Students with Motivation?](#)
- [PALS](#)
- [Motivating Adolescents to Read](#)
- [Student Motivation and Engagement in Literacy Learning](#)
- [Use Strategies to Promote Active Student Engagement](#)

## School-wide Supports for Early Adolescent Readers

Literacy supports are most effective when they involve all educators who engage with student reading and writing. Aligning content area teachers with the same evidence-based practices that are being used within intervention provides students with a cohesive approach to literacy development and significantly increases their opportunities to engage with those practices. Many of the key components outlined in this guidance document can be implemented within content area classrooms. The following resources provide content-teacher specific training, planning, and instructional materials.

## Resources

- [10 Key Reading Practices for All Middle and High Schools with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research](#)
- [Bringing Literacy Strategies into Content Instruction Online Course](#)
- [IRIS: Teaching Vocabulary and Comprehension in the Content Areas Part 1](#) and [2](#)
- [IRIS: Reading Comprehension Strategies for Science and Social Studies](#)
- [Promoting Adolescents' Comprehension of Text \(PACT\) Resources](#)
- [Adolescent Literacy Walk-Through for Principals](#)

## GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PLANNING EARLY ADOLESCENT LITERACY INTERVENTION<sup>83</sup>

<b>Student Selection</b>	How are students identified? (e.g. screener data, previous grade placement; DC CAPE scores, teacher nomination).
	Who reviews and interprets assessment data and other information to identify struggling students?
<b>Assessment Selection and Data</b>	Do the screening and diagnostic assessments at our LEA determine the need for intervention instruction provide information about all the reading components of the rubric?
	Do the progress monitoring assessments adequately measure sufficient progress from instruction that is provided?
	What PD is needed for teachers administering the assessments and reviewing data?
<b>Scheduling and Intervention Instructional Time</b>	Where in the school schedule is time provided for intervention instruction? Is this time in addition to core literacy instruction time?
	Does the length of time for intervention instruction offer enough intensity and duration for literacy growth?
	Are students receiving enough intervention instruction time to meet their needs?
	Who will deliver the intervention instruction, during what time, in what location, for which students, and in what size of group?
	How will students with similar needs be grouped for intervention instruction?
	Is intervention matched to address reading component(s) needs of students?
<b>Staff Selection</b>	Has PD been provided for individuals delivering the intervention program?
	How many school faculty and staff with experience providing intervention instruction are available? Who are they?
<b>Communication</b>	Do the intervention faculty and staff have consistent blocks of time in their daily schedule that enable them to work with one or more intervention groups daily? Can schedules be adjusted to allow them to consistently serve intervention groups?
	Who is responsible for initially organizing the startup (and then facilitating) the school or district's intervention instruction plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overseeing assessment and data analysis</li> <li>• student selection and placement into groups</li> <li>• identifying school personnel who will deliver intervention instruction</li> <li>• identifying PD needs creating intervention instruction schedules?</li> </ul>
	Who is responsible for informing parents when a student is deemed eligible to receive intervention services?

## Part 2: Adopting Science-Based Literacy Programs

### ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING SCIENCE-BASED LITERACY INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

[DC Law 23-191](#) requires that “each LEA shall adopt a science-based reading program.” Within this context, OSSE defines “**adopt**” to mean “acquire, purchase, or develop” and “**implement**” to mean “trained staff and regularly use to drive instruction.” In support of LEA adoption and implementation of science-based reading programs, OSSE has developed the following resources:

- **The Science-Based Interventions List:** a list of programs that meet the definitions of science-based and high-quality instructional materials.
- **The HQIM rubric for early adolescent literacy interventions:** a tool for evaluating whether a program meets the requirements of a high-quality science-based reading program.

<p>If an LEA has adopted or is currently implementing early adolescent intervention program(s) that are <b>included</b> on the Science-Based Literacy Interventions List:</p>	<p>If an LEA has adopted or is currently implementing a core literacy program(s) <b>not included</b> on the Science-Based Reading Programs List:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LEAs will confirm the intervention programs when submitting compliance documents to OSSE every year in October.</li><li>• LEAs will complete the <b>assessment component</b> of the rubric and submit evidence to OSSE in October consistent with the requirements of <a href="#">DC Law 23-191</a>.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LEAs will use the HQIM rubric to analyze and evaluate literacy programs for alignment to the essential components of literacy instruction.</li><li>• LEAs will submit completed rubrics with evidence to OSSE for review and approval. LEAs will submit rubrics in October consistent with the requirements of <a href="#">DC Law 23-191</a>.</li></ul>

### The HQIM Rubric for Early Adolescent Literacy Intervention Programs

The HQIM rubric is a tool to support LEAs in reviewing core literacy program alignment to the essential components and key criteria of a high-quality, science-based literacy program. The HQIM rubric outlines the evidence-based components of effective literacy instruction to support early adolescent literacy for non-proficient readers.

## THE HQIM RUBRIC: ASSESSMENT

All LEAs must complete the assessment section of the HQIM rubric. The criteria of the assessment section represent the key enabling conditions for establishing and sustaining an effective intervention program. This includes:

- **Assessment systems:** This includes an LEA's assessment schedule, protocol for reviewing data and identifying students in need of intervention, personnel to develop intervention plans, and a template for intervention plans. This also includes how LEAs schedule intervention throughout the school day.
  - Evidence for assessment systems can include internal school calendars, role designations, documents outlining the data analysis process, and templates for student intervention plans.
- **Assessment tools:** This includes valid and reliable assessments for identifying students in need of intervention (e.g., MAP, iReady, Fastbridge), and diagnostic tools (e.g., tools to assess oral reading fluency, decoding, encoding) to identify students' specific skill gaps.
  - Evidence for assessment systems can be the names of the assessments used with a brief outline of their use in identifying non-proficient readers at the LEA.
- **Progress monitoring tools:** this includes embedded assessments, data tracking systems, and protocols for evaluating a student's response to intervention. This includes materials for communicating student progress and instructional priorities for teachers and families.
  - Evidence for progress monitoring tools can include the assessments and systems being used to track student progress, templates or systems for sharing instructional priorities with staff, and templates for sharing updates with student families.
- **Linguistic diversity:** English language development data (e.g., WIDA data) are gathered to understanding student instructional profiles and implications for intervention.
  - Evidence can include documents outlining how language development is reflected in student intervention plans.

## Submitting Evidence

All LEAs serving students in grades 6-8 must complete the assessment section of the HQIM rubric and submit evidence to OSSE by the compliance deadline of Oct. 31. LEAs will submit complete rubrics and evidence to OSSE for review via designated Box folders.

## USING THE HQIM RUBRIC TO EVALUATE INTERVENTION PROGRAMS

The HQIM rubric includes each component of effective literacy instruction and describes corresponding criteria. These criteria represent instructional content and practices that directly align with established research on supporting non-proficient early adolescent students. LEAs will use the HQIM rubric to analyze whether a program's instructional materials align with the key criteria for each component. By completing the HQIM rubric, LEAs will thoroughly review programmatic alignments to current reading research. OSSE recommends LEAs take the following steps:

### Establish an intervention program review team

Convene LEA administrators, literacy specialists, academic coaches, and teachers who support literacy instruction in grades 6-8 to collaboratively review literacy programming.

### Gather literacy intervention materials

Instructional materials can include program manuals, teacher guides, digital resources, lesson plans, and student workbooks.

### Evaluate program materials with the HQIM rubric

Review teams analyze and rate instructional materials using the key criteria of each literacy component. LEAs will evaluate whether their instructional materials meet, partially meet, or do not meet these criteria. If the instructional materials meet or partially meet the expectations of the key criteria, the review team fills out the rubric's notes column and documents the evidence.

### Document and Submit Evidence

Review teams scan and upload evidence of instructional material alignment to the key criteria (e.g., scanned pages from teachers' manuals, program lesson plans, student texts). An example can be found in the HQIM rubric. LEAs will submit evidence for key criteria to OSSE via a designated Box folder

## Rubric Ratings and Definitions

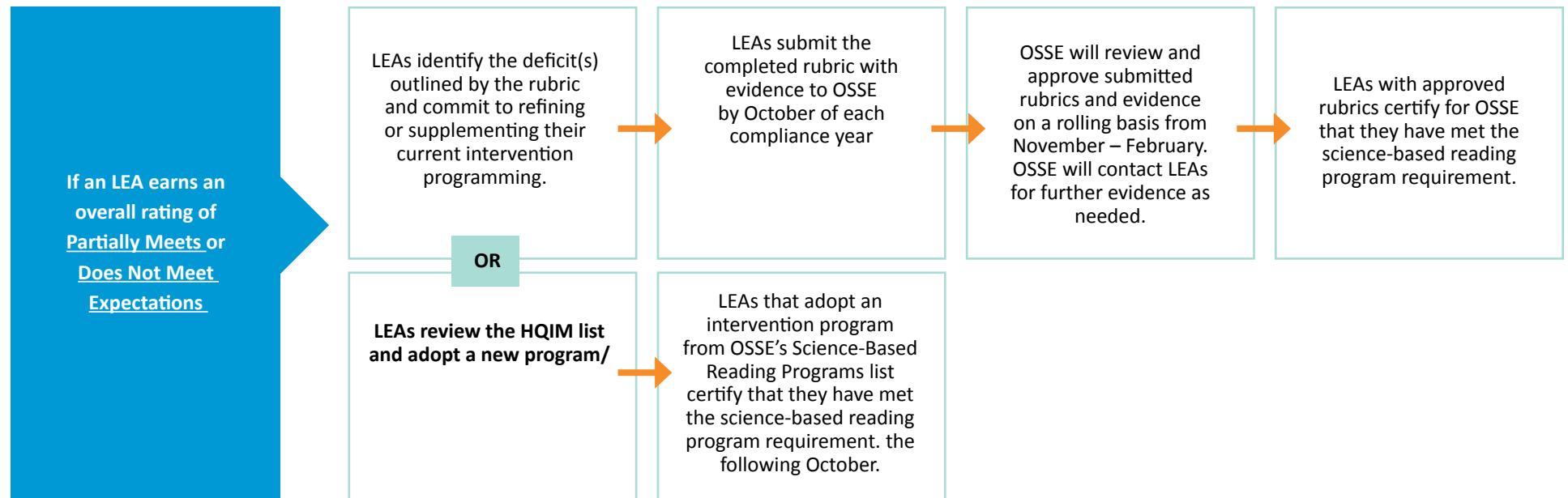
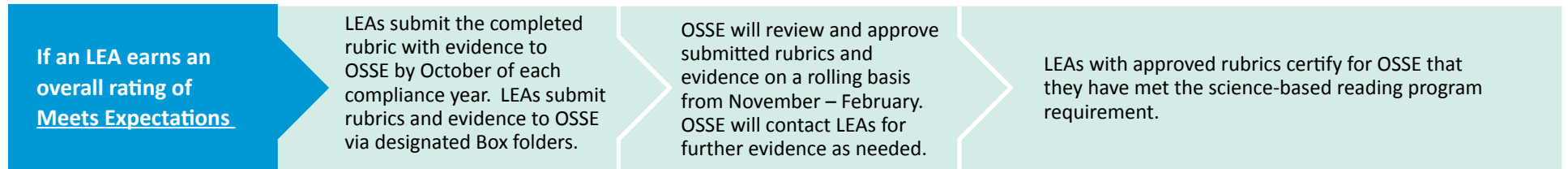
LEAs will use the HQIM rubric to analyze and evaluate literacy intervention programs to determine if they meet, partially meet, or do not meet the criteria for high-quality, science-based literacy instructional materials. The definition of each rating is outlined below.

<b>Meets Expectations</b>	Items marked as “Meets Expectations” demonstrate evidence of the key criteria for each applicable grade band.
<b>Partially Meets Expectations</b>	Items marked as “Partially Meets Expectations” demonstrate partial evidence of the key criteria for each applicable grade band or describe instructional materials for which the criteria are fully met for one grade but not met in other grades within the grade band.
<b>Does Not Meet Expectations</b>	Items marked as “Does Not Meet Expectations” demonstrate limited to no evidence of the key criteria can be found in the program materials.

When a given component’s key criteria have been rated, the rubric will auto-calculate a rating for that component. When all the components have been rated, the rubric will auto-calculate an overall rating that can be found in the HQIM rubric’s ratings tab.

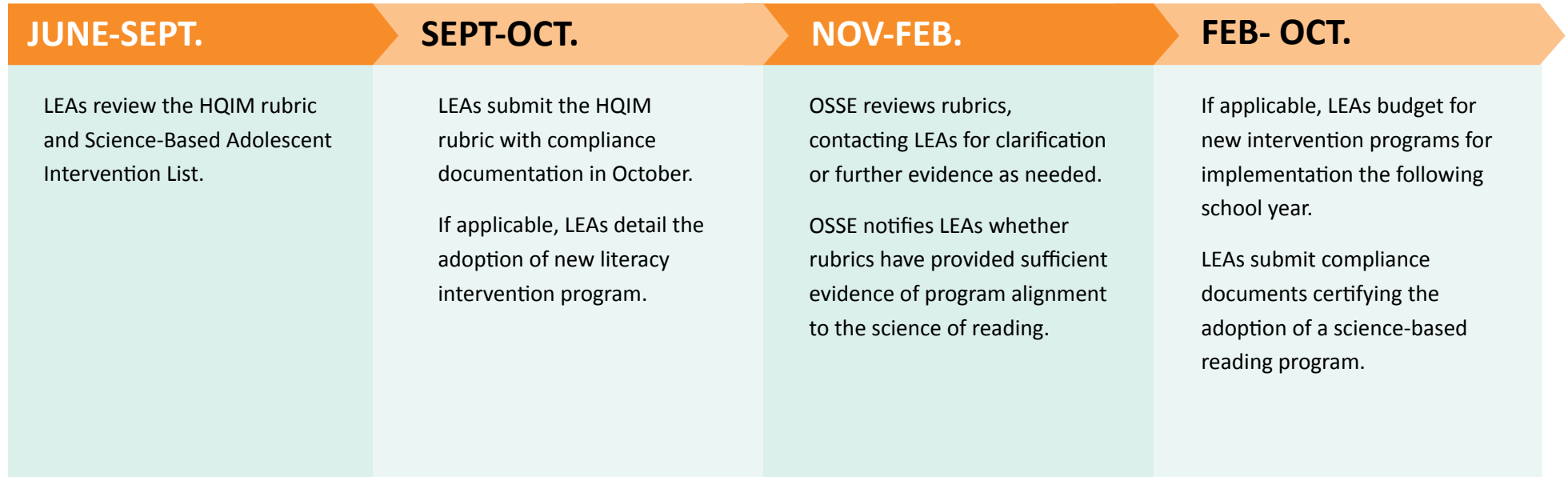
# Completing the Rubric

LEAs must follow the steps below to submit completed HQIM rubrics and evidence to OSSE. LEAs will submit complete rubrics and evidence to OSSE for review via designated Box folders.



## COMPLIANCE TIMELINE

[DC Law 23-191](#) requires LEAs to send a letter to OSSE reporting on whether the LEA has complied with the requirements set forth in the previous school year. The graphic below represents the compliance timeline for the science-based reading program requirement.



## RESOURCES

OSSE will provide LEAs with resources to support the identification and adoption of a high-quality, science-based reading program. The following resources can be found on [the DC Law 23-191 webpage](#)

- HQIM
  - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for [DC Law 23-191](#)
  - The HQIM rubric
  - The High-Quality, Science-Based Interventions Programs List for Early Adolescents
- On the Learning Management System (LMS)
  - [Evidence-Based Practices for Adolescent Literacy](#)
    - This self-paced, eight-module course provides general education teachers, multilingual teachers, special education teachers, instructional coaches, and school leaders with evidence-based literacy strategies for students in grades 5-12, with a focus on culturally and linguistically inclusive practices.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Additional information about how OSSE is supporting literacy in DC can be found here: [Literacy DC | osse](#)

Additional information about the legislation and guidance from OSSE can be found on the Dyslexia DC webpage: [osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia](https://osse.dc.gov/page/Dyslexia)

For questions, contact Dustin Tamsen at [Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov](mailto:Dustin.Tamsen@dc.gov).

## ENDNOTES

- 1 [D.C. Law 23-191. Addressing Dyslexia and Other Reading Difficulties Amendment Act of 2020. | D.C. Law Library \(dccouncil.gov\)](#)
- 2 The Science of Reading: A Defining Guide, The Reading League 2022
- 3 A Synthesis of Quantitative Research on Reading Programs for Secondary Students: Baye et al, 2018
- 4 Galuschka & Schulte-Körne, 2016; Morgan, Farkas, and Wu, 2012
- 5 Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy, Biancarosa and Snow, 2006
- 6 National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2024
- 7 Wexler et al., 2017; Stark et al., 2023
- 8 Filderman et al., 2022; Roberts et al. 2008; Clemens et al. 2017; Biancarosa and Snow 2006.
- 9 Nelson & Harwood, 2011
- 10 Miles & Stipek, 2006
- 11 Galuschka & Schulte-Körne, 2016; Morgan, Farkas, and Wu, 2012
- 12 McArthur and Castles, "Helping Children with Reading Difficulties," 2017
- 13 Mulcahy et al., 2016
- 14 Warmbold-Brann, Burns, Preast, Taylor, and Aguilar, 2017
- 15 Interventions for Adolescent Struggling Readers, Scammacca et al, 2007
- 16 Opatz and Kocherhans, 2024; Filderman et al., 2022
- 17 Lupo et al, 2024
- 18 Scammacca et al., 2015
- 19 Scammacca et al., 2015
- 20 Empowering Secondary Literacy Through Structured Literacy Practices, Bettendorf Community School District, 2025.
- 21 Burns, M. S., Griffin, P., & Snow, C. E., 1998
- 22 Edmonds et al., 2009
- 23 Roberts et al. 2008; Clemens et al. 2017; Biancarosa and Snow 2006
- 24 Boardman et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2008; Vaughn et al. 2022
- 25 St. Martin, K., Vaughn, S., Troia, G., Fien, & H., Coyne, M. (2020). Intensifying literacy instruction: Essential practices
- 26 Assessments to guide adolescent literacy instruction, Torgesen, Miller, 2009
- 27 A. Kim et al., 2006; Toste et al., 2019; Vaughn, Martinez, et al., 2019; Vaughn, Roberts, et al., 2019; Wanzek & Roberts, 2012.
- 28 Seidenberg, 2017.
- 29 A. Kim et al., 2006; Vaughn, Roberts, et al., 2019
- 30 Wang, Z., Sabatini, J., O'Reilly, T., Weeks, J. (in press). Relation between decoding and reading comprehension: a test of the decoding threshold hypothesis. Journal of Educational Psychology
- 31 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 32 Vaughn et al. 2022, Bhattacharya and Ehri, 2004
- 33 A. Kim et al., 2006; Toste et al., 2019
- 34 Uccelli et al, 2015
- 35 Honig et al. 2018
- 36 Carlisle & Katz, 2006; Roman et al., 2009
- 37 Bertram, et al., 2000; Carlisle, 2007
- 38 Deacon et al., 2009
- 39 Carlisle, 1995, 2000; Deacon & Kirby, 2004; Elbro & Arnbak, 1996
- 40 Haager and Osipova 2017; Cárdenas-Hagan 2020; Crosson et al., 2018; Keiffer & DiFelice, 2013
- 41 Harris et al. 2011; Roberts et al. 2008
- 42 Austin et al., 2022, Casalis et al., 2004,
- 43 Toste et al., 2019; Vadasy & Sanders, 2008
- 44 Shinn & Good, 1992
- 45 Torgesen and Hudson, "Reading Fluency: Critical Issues"; Stecker et al., "Toward Understanding Oral Reading Fluency"
- 46 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 47 Stevens et al, The Effects of Reading Fluency Interventions, 2016
- 48 J. Kim et al., 2017; Therrien et al., 2006.
- 49 IES Guide: Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9
- 50 Vaughn et al. 2022
- 51 Roberts et al. 2008
- 52 Honig et al. 2018
- 53 Boardman et al. 2008
- 54 Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; NRP, 2000; Beck et al. 2013
- 55 Turning the Page to Secondary Literacy, Marshall Street; Kamil et al. 2008
- 56 Roberts et al. 2008
- 57 Hirsch, 2003
- 58 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 59 Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9
- 60 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 61 Baumann et al. (2003); Bos and Anders 1990
- 62 Castles et al, 2018
- 63 Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Perfetti, Landi, & Oakhill, 2005
- 64 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 65 Scammacca et al. 2007; Edmonds et al. 2009; Swanson et al. 2017; Sohn et al. 2023
- 66 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2008)
- 67 Baumann et al. (2003); Bos and Anders 1990
- 68 Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools
- 69 Vaughn et al. 2022
- 70 Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools
- 71 Boardman et al. 2008; Roberts et al. 2008
- 72 Morgan & Fuchs, 2007
- 73 Guthrie & Davis, 2003
- 74 Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. 2008
- 75 Kamil et al., 2008
- 76 Kamil et al. 2008; Boardman et al. 2008, Roberts et al. 2008; Biancarosa and Snow 2006
- 77 Boardman et al. 2008
- 78 Guthrie & Humenick, 2004
- 79 Guthrie & Humenick, 2004
- 80 Ivey, 1999; Nichols & Miller, 1994
- 81 Anderman, 1999
- 82 [Baye, A., Lake, C., Inns, A. & Slavin, R. E. \(2019\). Effective reading programs for secondary students. Baltimore, MD: Center for Research and Reform in Education, Johns Hopkins University.](#)
- 83 Keys to Literacy, adapted from IES Self Study Guide for Implementing Literacy Interventions (3-8 guide. Smith et al., 2016.)



Office of the State Superintendent of Education  
1050 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20002

[osse.dc.gov](http://osse.dc.gov)

  @OSSEDC

  @osse.dc

 (202) 727-6436

WE ARE WASHINGTON GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
**DC MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR**