



Implementing a State Literacy Plan at the Local Level



Introduction

A State literacy plan (SLP) is the cornerstone of literacy in a State, defining its approach to comprehensive literacy instruction. An SLP provides a framework for implementing evidence-based instructional practices related to literacy, guides the State's efforts to improve literacy skills, fosters a culture of lifelong learning, and addresses the diverse needs of the State's populace.

There can be several drivers of SLP creation: a need for a unified approach to literacy instruction across the State, a preexisting timeline to revise a past SLP, the passage of literacy-related legislation in the State that mandates an SLP, or some combination of the above.

Although the State educational agency (SEA) will most likely take the lead on writing the SLP, ultimately the specific strategies within the SLP must be implemented in classrooms by the local educational agencies (LEAs) throughout the State. This requires an SEA to carefully plan how the SLP will be disseminated and the types of support that will be provided to LEAs throughout implementation. In many States, local control needs to be considered as part of the implementation process. An SEA in a local control State cannot mandate the adoption of the SLP. The SEA and LEAs should view implementation of the SLP as a partnership.

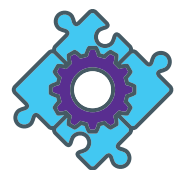
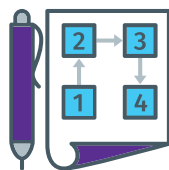
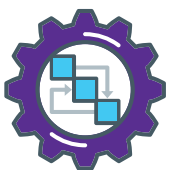
This practice brief provides suggested actions and reflection questions that can help an SEA work with the LEAs within the State to ensure the SLP is implemented successfully.



Suggested Actions for SEAs

To build an ongoing partnership with LEAs around implementation of the SLP, State literacy teams should consider taking the following actions:

- **Engage LEAs early on.** Get feedback from LEAs during the development of the SLP to understand the specific needs and concerns of district and school leaders, as well as instructional staff members.
- **Create a comprehensive dissemination plan.** The dissemination plan should detail how LEA administrators and teachers will be informed about the SLP. Information will most likely be disseminated multiple times through multiple avenues. The dissemination plan can also specify the messaging the SEA would like each stakeholder group within the LEA to hear.
- **Tie implementation to existing initiatives within LEAs.** Familiarize yourself with literacy-related initiatives that already exist within LEAs, and look for ways that the SLP's strategies are already covered by or can reinforce existing initiatives. You may have already addressed this within the SLP, but highlight these points when communicating about the SLP to LEAs.
- **Highlight common goals.** When talking with LEAs, focus on the goals that the SEA and LEAs share and how the SLP supports those goals. For example, these shared goals include improving educational outcomes for all students in the State and preparing new teachers to support students' literacy achievement.
- **Provide technical assistance to LEAs throughout implementation.** Although the technical assistance to be provided may be described in the SLP, make sure LEA staff members understand what technical assistance is available and how to access it. This will help LEAs feel that they are supported in undertaking this work. Technical assistance may include:
 - **Tools for planning implementation.** Tools are a useful way to facilitate LEAs' adoption of the SLP and can be shared through various mechanisms. Examples of tools include:
 - A template for a local literacy plan;
 - A template for a professional learning plan;
 - A rubric for effective literacy-related leadership and instruction;
 - Considerations for LEAs when they are identifying stakeholders, setting goals, and undertaking other planning efforts;
 - A school implementation checklist;
 - A school action plan; and
 - A school data worksheet.





- **Coaching.** Provided by either SEA staff members or expert literacy consultants hired by the SEA, one-on-one or small-group assistance for school administrators or educators can be incredibly helpful when they are implementing the SLP's strategies.
- **Build in continuous improvement.** Work with the LEAs on data collection and analysis for continuous improvement. Be clear on goals and what data should be collected to show progress toward those goals. Establish check-in points, and make sure both administrators and educators are trained on how to incorporate data into decision-making. Share data with all staff members who are implementing the SLP so everyone understands the progress that is occurring and the basis for the decisions being made.
- **Solicit feedback from LEAs.** You should continue to gather feedback from LEAs throughout implementation. Make sure any questions or concerns raised are clearly addressed so LEA staff members feel that their voices are being heard. Use the feedback as one of the data points to continually improve implementation.

Suggested Actions for LEAs

To partner with the SEA to effectively implement an SLP, LEA administrators should consider taking the following actions:

- **Create a local literacy plan.** Although local literacy plans may not be mandated by the State, if each LEA is able to create one, it will help translate the SLP from the State level to the classroom level. LEAs should consider coordinating closely with the SEA while developing their local literacy plans. In addition, the LEAs should consider how to align their local literacy plans with existing strategic plans or improvement plans already in effect within the LEAs or at particular schools. This will help ease implementation and reduce burden on staff members who are implementing the local literacy plans.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

To be most effective, your State literacy team can meet with a representative group of LEA leaders and discuss the following reflection questions together. Or consider having SEA and LEA staff members answer the questions separately and share their responses with each other to facilitate common understanding.

- How can the SEA and LEAs build effective, sustainable relationships around implementation?
- What needs do LEAs have around implementing the SLP?
- What resources can the SEA provide to meet those needs?
- What expectations does the State have around the creation of local literacy plans?
- How can the SEA and LEAs work together to ensure that implementation is tied to existing plans and initiatives and is not burdensome to educators?
- How will ongoing communication be facilitated?
- How will data be used to inform collaborative decision-making?
- What are immediate next steps to begin implementation?



- **Create a dissemination plan.** The LEAs' dissemination plans could cover strategies for communicating information about the SLP to school leaders and educators. Each LEA should consider working with the SEA to ensure its messaging aligns with the SEA's.
- **Seek technical assistance from the SEA.** LEAs should take advantage of available opportunities for support. Each LEA should establish a process by which educators and/or school leaders can notify the LEA's administrators that technical assistance is needed. In turn, LEA administrators should understand how to request assistance from the SEA and should not hesitate to do so.
- **Provide ongoing feedback to the SEA.** Throughout implementation, each LEA should keep the SEA informed on how the process is going and how it could be improved. LEA staff members should ask questions when needed and share ongoing successes and challenges. LEA administrators should gather feedback from classroom teachers so those closest to implementation have their voices heard.
- **Build in continuous improvement.** LEAs can coordinate with the SEA on collecting and reporting outcome data. They may work with the SEA to establish regular check-ins and procedures for data-based decision-making to improve implementation. LEA administrators should consider sharing data with teachers and working with them to incorporate data-based decision-making into instruction.

Conclusion

When it comes to implementing an SLP, open communication and coordination between the SEA and LEAs are key. Approaching SLP implementation as a partnership between the State and local levels can help improve effectiveness. In addition, ongoing feedback shared between the SEA and LEAs can help build continuous improvement, which can inform future iterations of the SLP.

RESOURCES

For more information on the process of creating or revising an SLP, visit the [SLP Tools](#) page on the Comprehensive Literacy State Development National Literacy Center's website. Available resources include:

- The SLP Starter Kit, with phases focusing on:
 - Preparing to develop or revise an SLP;
 - Understanding SLP components;
 - Writing an SLP;
 - Disseminating an SLP; and
 - Implementing an SLP.
- The SLP Self-Assessment Tool and User Guide.