

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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Date: December 19, 2022

Source of Report: LD 138, Resolve 2021, Chapter 3, Regarding Reading Proficiency Data Analysis

Topic: Requires the Department of Education to conduct an analysis of reading assessment measures, locally established benchmarks for reading proficiency, reading achievement data, and reading instructional programs and resources being used by school administrative units (SAUs) with a focus on which measures, programs, resources, evidence-based practices, and educator supports are yielding student growth. The first required report was submitted in January 2022. This is the second report. Information noted as included in an appendix can be requested but is not included in the body of the report.

Context

In 2015, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) asserted that, “Literacy is a fundamental human right and the foundation for lifelong learning. It is fully essential to social and human development in its ability to transform lives. For individuals, families, and societies alike, it is an instrument of empowerment to improve one’s health, ones’ income, and one’s relationship with the world” (Derby, M. & Ranginui, N., 2018). In fact, found to be so critical to human’s health and well-being, UNESCO included literacy achievement as a key part of its [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). In short, literacy in today’s world is a moral imperative—an issue of equity.

Building strong early literacy skills starts from birth with language and basic conceptual development. Understandably, literacy development is a critical focus in the primary grades when children are learning to read. “Excellent literacy instruction builds a strong foundation for learning and, in turn, equips children to develop their potential, growing into adults who participate fully in their communities and society, enjoying the fullness that continuous learning brings to their lives” (International Literacy Association, 2019). Reading well unlocks doors to the world, and research has clearly demonstrated that students reading proficiently by grade 3 realize advantages well beyond this point in time—they are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to be incarcerated, more likely to find high-paying jobs, and more likely to have longer lifespans (Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2020; Hernandez, 2011). Strong literacy development is a key to a whole student approach—literacy skills are foundational to learning and strongly connected to all domains of children’s development.

The preponderance of scientific evidence related to beginning literacy development points to several important considerations for schools, families/caregivers, and communities as they work to foster strong literacy development among our children.

- The human brain is particularly sensitive to literacy development during the initial decade of children’s lives. While preprogrammed to acquire **oral language** when stimulated, the brains of most

humans **do not automatically or efficiently build the structures to read and write without direct instruction and regular practice.**

- **Systematic** and **explicit** instruction in **foundational literacy skills**, particularly **phonological awareness** (the sounds of language) and **phonics** (the mapping of sounds to visual letters) are critical to brain development and **fluency** with reading and writing.
- Rich **experiences** that build conceptual **knowledge** and **vocabulary** are equally important to building the brain and support strong **comprehension** and **critical thinking** skills.
- Opportunities for children to build **executive function**, **persistence** with tasks, and use of **imagination** during the early childhood years contribute significantly to **reading stamina** and **comprehension**.
- Responsive instructional practices that affirm students' **cultural** and **linguistic backgrounds** and recognize their individual talents and experiences as assets are keys to **engaging learning** and **building understanding**.
- Strong **professional knowledge and skills** related to reading and writing instruction is essential for early elementary educators.

Relatively stagnant reading achievement among Maine students over the past two decades raises concern about the long-term impact of low literacy abilities for Maine students. The reality is that too many students, particularly students who are under resourced, who have diagnosed disabilities, and who represent racial minorities, are not reaching grade 3 with the strong grounding in reading skills necessary to support success in learning, work, and citizenship moving forward (Maine National Assessment of Education Progress Results, 2022, Campaign for Grade Level Reading, 2020). Further, struggling readers are at greater risk for poor mental health outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of helplessness. This data points to issues of equity and the need to better understand and apply neuroscience informed, culturally responsive and asset-based practices that research has determined are essential for supporting strong reading development from the start of children's educational careers. The COVID pandemic has not only underscored this reality, but it has pointed to how precious instructional time is for ensuring success during the initial years of a student's educational journey.

With a goal of identifying practices that support reading development and lead to improved reading achievement among Maine's youth, the Maine Department of Education was charged with conducting an analysis of beginning reading in Maine to better understand which assessment measures, programs, resources, evidence-based practices, and educator supports are yielding student growth. This analysis occurred over the course of a 2-year period. The results of the analysis in year 1 were reported in January 2022. This report contains details about the continued analysis conducted in year 2 as well as a set of recommendations for consideration moving forward.

Actions

An internal DOE workgroup composed of specialists from a variety of teams with direct connection to and expertise in beginning reading/literacy (Pre-K to Grade 3) was convened and has been meeting bi-monthly since May 2021. A listing of the membership of this group is provided in Appendix A. This group developed a work plan designed to address the requirements of the resolve, including generation of recommendations by December of 2022.

Year 1 actions of the internal DOE workgroup are detailed in the January 2022 report. During Year 2, the work group:

- Analyzed grade 3 summative reading data and findings from Pre-K to Grade 3 school survey responses to identify and engage in interviews of schools with consistently strong reading achievement from each region of the state to learn more about the practices leading to this sustained achievement.
- Analyzed interview data to identify the commonalities in practice across interviewed schools that are leading to growth as well as challenges.
- Completed interviews with 5 additional states to gather their promising practices and lessons learned.
- Studied the findings from two additional studies related to early reading that were conducted over the past year in Maine: The Dyslexia Survey Project (Flannagan and Will, 2022) and the Intermediate Reading Study (Clarke, 2022).
- Examined the findings of the 4th grade reading results from the 2022 administration of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).
- Collaborated with the State Literacy Team to finalize revisions to the statewide literacy plan, *Literacy for ME 2.0*, and begin plans for launching and implementing.
- Launched the Maine Association for Improving Literacy (MAIL), a network for Maine educators interested in collaborating to study research-based practices and assist with development and dissemination of resources.
- Developed a guidance document articulating basic tenets of beginning literacy/reading instruction to share with Maine schools.
- Crafted recommendations based on the two-year study.

Findings

School Interview Process and Analysis

Following the analysis of state level grade 3 reading data from the NECAP and EMPOWER years, as well as examination of the survey data about beginning literacy practices collected from Maine schools with students in the Pre-k to Grade 3 span in November 2021, the internal LD 138 team sorted schools with consistently strong reading performance and/or steadily improving performance into the 9 superintendent regions of the State for the purpose of inviting them to engage in conversations to better describe the factors leading to their performance. A total of 50 schools were extended invitations with at least 3 schools identified in each region. Additional schools were added to some regions to ensure that schools with higher populations of multilingual learners and under resourced students were considered. In several cases, a school administrative unit had multiple schools represented. In these instances, the multiple schools from the SAU were invited to engage in the conversation collectively. Of the 50 schools extended invitations, 34 accepted and were interviewed. All superintendent regions had at least one school participate. Members of the DOE LD 138 study team conducted the interviews using an interview tool designed to collect information about the practices supporting student reading achievement. A copy of the tool is included in Appendix B. A variety of prompts were included to explore aspects of leadership, instructional programs and practices, assessment practices and benchmarks, professional learning, and family and community engagement. Schools were also asked to identify any innovative practices as well as barriers or needs that could better inform the Maine

DOE. Upon completion of the interviews, the data was provided to a literacy faculty member at the University of New England to analyze for common themes/findings. This analysis was conducted as part of an independent study that the faculty conducted with one of her students.

A detailed overview of the findings from the analysis of the interviews can be found in Appendix C. What follows here is a summary of key takeaways:

Four key themes emerged from the interviews that indicate literacy success depends on:

- Strong communication and collaboration.
- Intentional curriculum considerations and consistency.
- Focus on students and individualized support.
- Support for teachers.

Key findings that support these themes include:

Schools frequently identified the following characteristics as central to the strong literacy programming in their Pre-K to Grade 3 spans:

Characteristic	Examples
Clear Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • common language of instruction • data-focused • collegial interactions
Collaborative Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shared ownership for student learning • spirit of teamwork • shared leadership and goals • intentional relationship building between students, families, and staff
Consistency of Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • instructional approaches • alignment within and across grades/schools • clear targets for student growth
Student-focused Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build knowledge of and relationships with each student • work from student strengths • differentiate instruction to fit needs of each student • hold high expectations for student growth and achievement
Data-Based Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • data examined and used by teachers, literacy coaches, interventionists, and administrators to make instructional decisions—often through grade level team meetings • data used for multiple purposes—guiding tier 1/core instruction, differentiation, selection of interventions, flexible grouping, goal setting • collected through regular screening and progress monitoring for all students, additional diagnostic assessment for students at risk • most schools had established benchmarks for determining achievement of typical achievement for the grade level. Benchmarks were established using

	assessment publisher criteria and, in some cases, were updated by schools using locally collected data every few years.
Broad Community Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • across school community • with families and caregivers • across broader community (libraries, childcares, community partners)

Daily literacy instruction included the following components:

Components	Examples
Systematic and explicit literacy instruction daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word work—Phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, vocabulary (average 20-30 minutes); nearly every school had an identified phonics program or employed intentional daily phonics instruction • Text reading/comprehension (average 60 minutes) • Writing (average 60 minutes)
Varied grouping strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole group • Small, flexible groups • Independent practice (centers)
Curricular considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional and consistent blocks of time • All students engage in core/tier 1 instruction • Interventions are additional to tier 1 • Instruction occurs at a steady pace • Instruction has clear targets aligned to standards • Targets are reported on at regular intervals
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening employed to determine risk • Progress is monitored over time • Foundational skills and text reading levels are monitored through assessments

Teachers were well supported to continuously build their abilities:

Supports	Examples
Professional Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent opportunities tied to instruction and assessment • Dedicated plan for onboarding new staff • Job embedded and external
Team Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly/monthly grade level planning • Professional learning communities (PLCs)
Literacy Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaching cycles to improve practice • Focused on data • Connected to student support
Support Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to engage with specialists (special educators, ESOL teachers, literacy interventionists) • Administrative support

Schools stay focused on core instruction (Tier 1) but also collaborate around and provide additional intervention supports as they are needed to support individualized needs:

Interventions	Characteristics
Multi-tiered Systems of Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interventions are informed by screening and progress monitoring assessments (data-based decision making) • Interventions are differentiated and flexible • Clear goals are set for student growth with high expectations • A variety of staff is available to support individualized programming (e.g., interventionists, educational technicians, literacy coaches,
Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of programs and approaches (pull out/push in) utilized • Coordination with general education is an asset in some schools and a need in others
Multilingual Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools with ESOL teachers viewed them as an asset, appreciate the coordinated support for students, families, and teachers • Schools are seeing a rise in multilingual populations but may not have the necessary resources (teachers, books, etc.) to fully support these learners

Schools provide a wide array of broad supports that engage families and contribute to students’ beginning reading/literacy development:

Broad Supports	Examples
Activities at School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Houses • Parent Teacher Organization activities • End of the Year Celebrations
Parent Involvement Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Nights • Home reading Connections • Book Sharing • Family Readers • Book Fairs • Reading Incentives
Information Sharing Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Parent/Teacher Conferences • Tech Tools • Report Cards • Parent University

Additionally, schools noted several areas of need that would require more professional learning, personnel, and/or time to schedule:

- Professional learning for all educators/administrators related to multilingual learners; additional support personnel for working with multilingual learners; more culturally responsive materials for multilingual instruction and assessment
- Professional learning related to:
 - Science of Reading
 - Phonics instruction
 - Culturally and linguistically responsive practices
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and inclusive practices

- Integration of content/interdisciplinary approaches, including project-based learning
- Developmentally appropriate practices (balancing student agency with direct instruction; utilizing structured play)
- Greater access to literacy coaching support for educators
- Costs related to onboarding new teachers—building skills related to beginning literacy and/or building capacity with school’s instructional programming/assessments
- More opportunity for coordination between regular education and special education (team teaching)

Interviews with States

Over the 2-year study, the work group reached out to 12 states based on demographics, geography, student populations, and performance and growth as evidenced by the past 10 years of NAEP assessment data. Eleven states agreed to be interviewed (Comparison summary of findings included in Appendix D): Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Wyoming, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, and Ohio. Six states were interviewed in year 1 and those findings were included in the previous report. Similar trends continued to emerge from the interviews conducted with the five additional states interviewed during year 2:

- All the states allow local control for the selection of curriculum and instructional materials; however, most states do have a list of recommended high-quality programs and instructional practices and/or have instituted incentives to schools that select evidence-based programs.
- Screening is required by most of the states for K-2 students, however only a few require that scores from these screenings be reported to the state level. Dyslexia screening for students is mandated in most states or being considered through pending legislation, but results of these screenings are not submitted to the state. In at least one state, schools identified for Tier 3 supports are required to submit early literacy screening data to the state.
- Details shared about pre-service training and certification demonstrated that the states place high importance on teacher training and teacher quality. There are a range of expectations around required course work specific to foundations in reading/literacy instruction and the science of reading. States are approaching teacher training in a variety of ways including coursework requirements for licensure, required professional learning for all educators working in Pre-K to 3, provision of foundational professional learning by educational specialists in the state departments, PK-3 teacher knowledge screening, instructional partnerships with professional organizations and/or companies, partnerships with higher education institutions, and incentivized professional learning connected to coaching support.
- All states indicated that there are gaps in performance across student groups. Even the highest performing states and districts reported that there are purposeful reviews and actions being planned to address the gaps in student performance. States frequently noted achievement gaps for economically disadvantaged students, various racial and ethnic populations, students experiencing homelessness and multilingual learners. Professional learning in culturally responsive and inclusive practices, Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and family engagement as well as state led literacy coaching programs focused on supporting schools with significant achievement gaps are some of the strategies states are employing to address student achievement gaps.

- All states stressed there is still a great deal of work to be done to address student needs and to capitalize on successes related to early reading proficiency. They will be working to improve the quality of classroom instruction, review and recommend high quality materials, improve teacher training, and examine additional methods to address gaps in performance for student groups.

Complementary Research Studies: Dyslexia Survey and Intermediate Readers

In addition to the LD 138 Beginning Reading study, two other related studies were conducted in Maine during the same period. One focused on the preparation of teachers to teach reading, specifically to students with dyslexia. The other focused on reading intervention practices for intermediate grade readers (grades 3-5) not yet reading on grade level. Both studies and their preliminary findings are outlined below.

Dyslexia Survey (Flanagan and Will, 2022)

During the 2021-2022 school year, 346 K-5 teachers completed a survey of their reading instruction and assessment practices, needs, knowledge, and other related factors. Additionally, 45 teachers were interviewed in more depth about their instructional decision making and use of assessment. The data from this study are preliminary and still being analyzed, but what follows are some of the initial findings and key takeaways.

Initial Findings

- A portion of surveyed teachers reported that pre-service coursework and/or in-service professional learning related to teaching reading and teaching children with dyslexia included content on the following topics:
 - reading intervention and assessment (75.3%),
 - teaching phonics (60.9%), and
 - dyslexia (49%).
- While teachers reported exposure to content on the above topics, topics were often only a focus of 1-2 sessions in a course with many other topics included.
- 81% of the teachers reported having had no professional development from their school or district specific to dyslexia.
- Teachers were confident about teaching reading overall (86.5%) and less so for students with dyslexia (33.5%).
- When rating knowledge of the Science of Reading (SOR) on a 0 (unsure of term) to 10 (expert) scale, teachers had a mean rating of 4.81. Teachers reported their knowledge of the SOR was predominately from self-learning (e.g., Facebook group, webinars, conference, books) and not from in-service professional learning or preservice preparation.

Key Takeaways:

- Teachers may not universally be using practices/curriculum aligned to the SOR for students with or without dyslexia but want to learn more and want to support their students using the most effective means of instruction possible.
- The content of coursework and ongoing professional development in preparing and strengthening educator capacity for providing beginning reading instruction, intervention, and assessment should be carefully considered and include research related to the SOR and dyslexia.

- State-level clarification and clear guidance is needed on the role of schools/teachers for screening and identifying students with dyslexia.
- Collaboration of general education, special education teachers, and other intervention providers is needed to foster a “our students” not “your students” culture.

Intermediate Readers Study (Clarke, 2022)

A great deal of research highlights the importance of high-quality early instruction in foundational literacy skills. Yet, expanding research and implications for reading instruction in the intermediate grades (grades 3, 4, & 5) is also a critical topic. Dr. Lane W. Clarke, University of New England professor, recently completed a sabbatical research project to investigate students in the intermediate grades who are not yet reading proficiently. Core instructional practices and interventions, as well as the needs of educators teaching at this level, were examined through student achievement data analysis, teacher surveys, classroom observations and focus groups in 5 Maine school systems.

Findings:

- Struggling intermediate readers face barriers directly related to weak phonics (decoding) skills, poor comprehension, and low motivation.
- Intermediate core instruction practices and materials are selected by schools to support small group work and differentiation but there is variation in programs and approaches to Tier 1 instruction.
- Intervention decisions are based on common data points from reading assessment, but design and implementation of Tier II intervention supports varies from school to school and student to student.
- Teachers overwhelmingly indicated (74%) need for additional professional learning in instructional practices related to foundational skills, supporting students with low reading skills, and how to support phonics and word work for intermediate students.

Key Takeaways:

- Intervention programs should put the student at the center by attending to both skill development and student affect (engagement/motivation).
- Phonics/Word Decoding needs to be targeted more systematically in the upper grades for struggling readers, including teacher training and professional learning.
- Schools need to continue to strengthen Tier One (core) instruction for all readers but work to make sure that there is consistency, support, and continued opportunity for foundational skill development in the upper grades for students who are not yet reading proficiently.
- Tier Two instructional practices need to be more clearly identified regarding instructional expectations, alignment with curriculum, push in/pull out approaches, and skill of educators providing the interventions (e.g., training for education technicians).
- Data-based decision making should be a top priority. It should occur in PLCs and schools should develop consistent data points for tracking student growth and determining interventions. Teachers also need training in how to use data effectively.

Additional Literacy Education Efforts Underway

In the time since the work on LD 138 began, the Maine DOE, with input from the DOE’s State Literacy Team and other stakeholder groups, has moved forward with several bodies of work that have informed the recommendations and/or are connected to them.

State Literacy Plan, *Literacy for ME 2.0*

Between January 2022 and June 2022, the Maine DOE’s State Literacy Team completed its update of the state literacy plan, [*Literacy for ME 2.0*](#). The plan provides guidance for both Maine DOE and Maine’s education community regarding the status of literacy achievement across the birth to adult population, outlines essential components of literacy education that should be considered when planning for and providing literacy instruction, and makes recommendations for key strategies in which the Maine DOE should engage to improve literacy outcomes. Organized around 6 essential components, *Literacy for ME 2.0* provides a roadmap for the professional learning efforts of the Maine DOE and offers guidance to local school systems for improving the quality of literacy education. *Literacy for ME 2.0* is now posted on the Maine DOE website. The State Literacy Team will continue to serve in an advisory capacity to help the Maine DOE implement priorities. One of the priorities is already underway—the formation of a literacy network, the Maine Association for Improving Literacy, which is further described below.

Maine Association for Improving Literacy

As noted previously, shared and strength-based leadership along with embedded professional learning has a strong impact on the development of solid literacy education systems. In its *Literacy for ME 2.0* recommendations for state level activities, the State Literacy Team recommended developing a network for Maine educators focused on improving literacy learning. As described in last year’s report, interest in this network was gathered with a soft launch in May 2022. A more formal launch occurred in October 2022. Currently, 86 educators have joined the free network that will be facilitated by the Maine DOE but is intended to build on the collaborative efforts of educators across the state who can work together to improve literacy efforts and outcomes.

In the coming year, the network, titled the Maine Association for Improving Literacy (MAIL), will meet monthly through virtual meetings to allow for participation without the barriers of geography. MAIL participants will engage in a visioning process to identify initial goals for improving literacy efforts and will engage in collaborative text studies to build share knowledge. As noted in the recommendations that follow, the network will work to design resources and professional learning opportunities for Maine educators.

Literacy Tenets

Throughout the two-year study, numerous conversations, interviews, and inquiries have pointed to the desire of local school systems to maintain instructional decision-making authority but to ensure those decisions are informed by guidance about effective reading/literacy practices grounded in scientific evidence. Maine school systems are deeply concerned about ensuring students have equitable access to high-quality and culturally responsive instruction, particularly in literacy. To more clearly advise SAUs, the Maine DOE has developed a Literacy Tenets document (Appendix E) to articulate the essential components of early literacy instruction across the Pre-K to Grade 3 span. As outlined in the recommendations that follow, this tool is only one in a multi-pronged approach to improving beginning reading/literacy programming in Maine.

Recommendations

Over the past 30 years, scientific study of brain development has begun to better inform pedagogical practices that will support effective and efficient literacy learning by building and linking neurological neighborhoods. This work points to a few foundational understandings:

- **Literacy learning takes a village**—from caring families/caregivers to skilled educators to supportive community partners--this adage holds great truth. We can all play a role in helping to ensure our young learners benefit from the experiences that build strong neural networks. Although parents, caregivers, tutors, and the larger community can contribute to children’s literacy success, the most significant factor in preventing reading problems is intentional classroom instruction (Foorman, et al, 2016).
- **There is no quick fix**--wiring the human brain’s neurological networks takes sustained and deliberate interactions. Learning to read and write proficiently starts with a strong foundation of oral language and conceptual knowledge development built through conversations, book reading, and engaging experiences. As children enter the early elementary years, systematic and explicit instruction that helps them connect the sounds of language to the visual print (phonemic awareness and phonics) is essential while continuing to immerse them in opportunities to build vocabulary and knowledge across disciplines as they build fluency with increasingly complex text.
- **Time of the essence**—when children are not immersed in rich and intentional experiences throughout the years when brain development is so sensitive, closing the gaps that develop becomes increasingly more challenging and expensive.

The recommendations listed below are intentionally offered as a starting point, recognizing more work will be needed over time to continuously strengthen early reading/literacy development. They will require resources—financial and human. More than anything—they are achievable if we embrace a collaborative spirit and a firm commitment.

1). Build the capacity of the Maine DOE to lead early literacy improvement efforts (Pre-K through Grade 3), including but not limited to:

- Developing sustainable programming, guidance (e.g., Literacy Tenets), and professional learning/networking opportunities (e.g., MAIL, Coaching Network) to build stakeholder knowledge and workforce capacity to implement high-quality early literacy pedagogy grounded in science and which promote the DOE’s whole student approach, including but not limited to:
 - Brain development associated with literacy and language development
 - Developmental progressions that support literacy learning (e.g., executive functioning, fine motor development, oral language, social and emotional development, etc.)
 - Foundational reading/literacy skill development and instruction (e.g., phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, writing)
 - Universal design for learning
 - Play-based/interdisciplinary/project-based practices that support literacy development
 - Early literacy screening and assessment practices
 - Culturally and linguistically responsive literacy instruction and assessment practices

- Early literacy interventions for a multi-tiered system of support, including those that address dyslexia
 - Literacy leadership and instructional coaching
 - Strategies for supporting summer and afterschool literacy learning opportunities
- Analyzing sources of early elementary literacy data to inform continuous improvement efforts.
 - Developing and disseminating guidance to support SAUs in establishing grade level benchmarks/targets for tracking students' literacy growth and monitoring foundational skill development.
 - Fostering collaboration with institutions of higher education and other Maine-based professional learning organizations to cultivate continuous improvement of pre-service and in-service professional learning that leads to an elementary workforce highly skilled in early literacy pedagogy.
 - Seeking out and applying for early literacy funding sources that will support the Maine DOE's ongoing efforts as well as SAU implementation of early literacy pedagogy.
 - Evaluating and reporting out on the Maine DOE's efforts related to early elementary literacy and the impact on teachers' practice and students' learning.

2). Direct the Department of Education (DOE) to establish and manage a grant/incentive program to strengthen early literacy programming (Pre-K through Grade 3) with special consideration given to SAUs serving populations of students with identified achievement gaps (e.g., race, income, etc.). The grant/incentive program would support SAU implementation of Tier 1 (core) early literacy improvement efforts grounded in science and whole student approaches including but not limited to:

- formation of literacy leadership teams that develop, communicate, and cultivate a culture of shared responsibility for children's reading/literacy development
- development of onboarding tools/strategies to support beginning educators in teaching reading/literacy across the Pre-K to Grade 3 span
- provision of professional learning in early reading/literacy pedagogy
- implementation of systematic and explicit instructional approaches for supporting foundational reading/literacy development
- implementation of early literacy screening and progress monitoring tools
- provision of early literacy instructional coaching models

3). Direct the Maine DOE to explore and outline potential options, including financial costs, for ensuring that all teachers working in grades pre-k to 3 have access to and regular support of literacy/instructional coaches with expertise in early reading/literacy pedagogy based in science and aligned to Maine's whole student approach to strengthen teaching practices related to beginning reading/literacy.

4). Leverage the early literacy related components of the Preschool Development Renewal Grant as additional tools for improving early literacy programming in Maine schools, including:

- Completion of open-source, interdisciplinary instructional programs for Pre-K to Grade 2 that address evidence-based early literacy instruction
- Development of a kindergarten entry inventory to document whole student development and inform strengths-based whole student learning opportunities
- Engaging in coordinated efforts and public service campaigns to strengthen early language and literacy development across the early childhood (birth to age 8) span

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