



KANSAS BOARD OF REGENTS

Kansas Blueprint on Literacy

Background

Kansas is experiencing unprecedented economic growth. By the year 2030, Kansas will add 54,000 new jobs, eighty percent of which will require a bachelor’s degree or higher, according to a recent analysis completed by the Institute for Policy and Social Research (University of Kansas, 2023). At the same time, we are at a critical moment when many Kansans are questioning whether our education systems are preparing Kansans with the knowledge and skills to benefit from these new opportunities.

The reality is we have more and more jobs requiring high-skilled workers, while performance on national assessments reveal fewer Kansas students are meeting basic levels in literacy. In Kansas, 67% of students are reading at the Basic Level according to the Kansas Assessment, and 60% of fourth graders are reading at the basic level according to the National Assessment of Education Progress. Making literacy a priority is without a doubt one of the most important and impactful investments we can make to help families, support businesses, and continue to advance economic prosperity for all Kansans.

Kansas is not alone in this challenge. Across the nation governors in states such as Mississippi, New Mexico, and New York are recognizing literacy as the number one workforce and economic imperative. In comparison to those states, Kansas has some structural advantages, including a reputation for providing a high-quality education. We have talented educators, nationally ranked Colleges of Education, and nationally recognized literacy researchers. It is imperative we leverage our strengths and ensure we lead the nation in producing the highly literate talent to lead our communities and state forward.

Response

The Kansas Board of Regents’ strategic plan “Building a Future” is focused on helping families, supporting businesses, and advancing economic prosperity. Furthering the knowledge and skills of the educator workforce is essential to building the workforce of today and tomorrow. Beginning in 2022, the Regents established a taskforce charged with developing recommendations to meet the educator workforce needs in our state. The taskforce developed several recommendations and provided priority actions to address the urgent and future educator workforce needs.

Two goals were elevated by the Board as priorities for immediate action:

- A. Support implementation of the Universal Elementary Education Licensure Degree Transfer Program in partnership with A.A. degrees in elementary education; and
- B. Develop and implement a Comprehensive Literacy Plan based on the science of reading (phonetic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), to encompass:
 1. Research-based practices supporting students with dyslexia, to enhance literacy preparation for new and continuing teachers; and
 2. Development of future licensure expectations and university programming in support of those expectations.

The Board charged the Education Deans from our public universities and collaborative partners to expedite execution on those two goals:

- A. The Universal Elementary Education Licensure Degree Transfer program was completed within three months and has been fully implemented across the System of postsecondary institutions.
- B. The Comprehensive Literacy Plan, based on the science of reading and structured literacy, is in the final development stages and is moving toward full implementation during the 2024 calendar year.

Acceleration Opportunity through Alignment and Collaboration

The 2024 Legislative Session is an opportunity to accelerate progress on improving our children's reading skills, which are fundamental to their ability to learn. Included in this Blueprint are recommendations for the 2024 Kansas Legislature and for the State Board of Education and Kansas Board of Regents to develop new policy, as appropriate.

1. Establish a shared and bold vision

- *Proposed – Advance a highly skilled and educated citizenry*

2. Establish a transformational goal

- *Proposed – 100% of Kansas elementary teacher workforce achieves a micro-credential in the Science of Reading/Structured Literacy by 2030 which will lead to:*
- *85% of Kansas fourth graders achieving at the “Basic” level (level 2) or higher on the Kansas state assessment by 2033.*

The following Collaborative Approaches are recommended to attain this transformational goal:

Approach 1 - Align Statutory Framework for Higher Education

- Designate the practices based on the Science of Reading as the official Tier I literacy methodology;
- Prohibit any discredited methodologies to be taught by the public universities;
- Ensure a comprehensive assessment system (universal screening measures, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments) to allow teachers to adjust their instruction to meet the specific needs of students, including the prevention of reading difficulties, and the remediation of skill gaps; and
- Support the State Board of Education in accreditation of unified school districts to officially designate the Science of Reading as the Official Tier 1 literacy methodology, and support schools in eliminating any discredited methodologies to be taught by accredited school districts, and recommend literacy-specific universal screening measures, diagnostic, formative and summative assessments to be utilized by accredited schools and school districts.

Approach 2 - Align Regulatory Framework

The Kansas Board of Regents shall reach out to the State Board of Education and work in collaboration to:

- Jointly approve designated pathways to achieving a micro-credential in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy based on recommendations from the public universities' colleges of education and collaborative partners;
- Jointly designate assessments that will be utilized to award a micro-credential in the Science of Reading;
- Develop and make accessible professional learning systems resulting in attainment of a structured literacy micro-credential for all in-service early childhood, general education, and special education licensed teachers, at no or low cost to the educator;
- Ensure all pre-service teacher preparation programs are based on the Science of Reading/ Structured Literacy;
- Publish standards and course progressions to achieve transparency for the Kansas reading education programs;
- Establish a program to track the training progression of early childhood and elementary classroom teachers, special education teachers and paraprofessionals, reading specialists, and PreK-6 administrators for each unified school district; and
- Support the State Board of Education in establishing policy requiring the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy micro-credential for teacher license renewal.

Approach 3 - Align University Curriculum and Assessment

University Presidents (and Chancellor), Provosts, and College of Education Deans are charged with oversight and supervision of undergraduate and graduate level reading/ literacy courses.

Oversight shall include:

- Ensure explicit courses in the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy, inclusive of the five pillars of reading (National Reading Panel 2000) for all undergraduate early childhood and elementary preparation programs.
- Appoint one representative from each state university and Washburn University to conduct a systemwide analysis of the curriculum maps across all literacy courses annually. The review shall include identifying clear evidence of the core components of reading development (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency) and instructional approaches such as: objectives/standards; instructional hours; application, diagnostic and formative assessments. The results of the analysis will be presented to the Kansas Literacy Advisory Committee, upon request.
- Design and implement two applied application courses (three credit hours each) and implement a common performance-based assessment.
 - These courses shall be included within the approved graduation requirements to earn a degree in elementary education; and
 - The applied courses shall begin in August 2024.
- The common performance-based assessment shall be operational by Fall 2024.
- Develop and implement a Science of Reading Fundamentals micro-credential for practicing early childhood, K-6 general education teachers, reading specialists, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, Pre-K-6 administrators, and others interested in learning about the research-based building blocks of reading instruction.
 - Determine asynchronous online, or synchronous (in person) formats;
 - Recommend credit hours or non-credit continuing education to be issued upon completion.
- Designate members to serve on the Kansas Literacy Advisory Committee.

Approach 4 - Assessments

Kansas pre-service and in-service teachers must be supported by a system of universal screening measures, diagnostic and formative assessments that allow teachers to adjust instruction to meet the specific needs of students, including in the prevention of reading difficulties, and the remediation of skill gaps. The assessment must provide teachers, parents, and students important information on student reading progress and needs.

The Kansas Board of Regents shall support the State Board of Education, in collaboration with university assessment and research experts, to complete a review, revise and/or recommend universal screening measures, diagnostic and formative assessments specifically addressing literacy development by August 2025.

Approach 5 – Centers of Excellence in Reading and Simulation Training Labs

Establish six Centers of Excellence in Reading, regionally located, with oversight by the universities' Colleges of Education, and in consultation with the Center for READING at Pittsburg State University and community-based literacy organizations. The Centers of Excellence shall:

- Provide assessment and diagnosis in reading difficulties and disabilities.
- Work in collaboration with local school districts to develop strategic literacy plans for individual students.
- Work in collaboration with the Kansas Department of Education, Board of Regents, and universities to support pre-service and in-service educator professional learning.
- Support the professional learning and training of school-based instructional coaches.
- Provide structured reading applied learning simulation labs for pre-service and in-service teachers.
- Pilot a Literacy Education Simulation Training Lab for pre-service and in-service elementary teachers as a controlled environment for the application of the science of reading and subsequent awarding of a micro-credential.
- Identify projected cost, staffing, budget impacts to develop, expand, and sustain the Simulation Labs.
- Report and make recommendations to the Literacy Advisory Committee.

Universities shall have direct responsibility and oversight of the Centers which shall be co-located in existing school, community college, university, or community facilities.

Approach 6 – Establish the Kansas Literacy Advisory Committee and Appoint a Director of Literacy Education

A Literacy Advisory Committee shall be established to monitor progress, disseminate best practice, and make recommendations to the Director and appropriate governing bodies.

The Committee shall include one member designated by the Governor, four members designated by legislative leadership, a KNEA representative, three representatives from the Colleges of Education (one is from a regional university, one from a research university, and one representing Washburn University), and one representative from one of the private independent colleges' education programs, the State Commissioner of Education, a member of the State Board of Education or their designee, and a member of the Board of Regents, with *ex-officio* (non-voting) experts identified by the Literacy Education Director. The Director shall serve as Committee Chair. The Committee shall be staffed by the Board of Regents. Members will be paid by their representing authorities.

A Director of Literacy Education shall be appointed by the President and CEO of the Board of Regents. The Director is responsible for executing an implementation plan and shall provide executive leadership to the Literacy Advisory Committee. The Director shall present an annual report to the Board of Regents, State Board of Education, Governor, and relevant legislative committees. The first report shall be delivered by the end of January 2025. The report shall include the implementation plan, established timelines, goals, and benchmarks to monitor progress against the plan.

Fiscal Impact

Estimated Costs for the recommended collaborative approaches:

One-Time Appropriations shall be designated to:

- Develop and Validate of the Literacy Performance Assessment **\$1.0 million**
- Develop the Science of Reading Fundamentals Performance-Based Micro-Credential **\$1.0 million**

In First Two Years Appropriations shall be designated to:

- Offer the **Science of Reading Fundamentals training stipend** to in-service teachers, **\$1.5 million for two years** (3,000 participants at \$500 per participant)
- Offer the **Science of Reading Fundamentals training for paraprofessionals**. Credit hours awarded coursework will articulate into a bachelor’s program (40 clock hours equivalent to three credit hours) **\$250,000 for two years**

Over Seven Years Appropriations shall be designated to:

- Pay Tuition for in-service teachers’ graduate level coursework in **Science of Reading Foundation** for six graduate credit hours at a rate of \$300, for a total of **\$5.4 million**

Recurring Appropriations shall be designated to:

- Establish the **Director of Literacy Education Office** to include a director, administrative and technology support **\$500,000**
- Establish six regionally based **“Centers of Excellence in Reading”** inclusive of a center director, evaluators, training coordinator and trainers; **\$6.8 million** recurring; school based instructional coaches would be paid as in-kind from USDs
- Establish the **Literacy Education Simulation Lab Pilot** within the Centers of Excellence in Reading to enhance pre-service teachers’ applied learning experiences and serve as resource for in-service teachers’ professional learning and development **\$2.0 million** (\$330,000 per Center)

Refer to the table below for amounts by fiscal year. The recurring funds would be adjusted each year with an index tied to the rate of inflation.

	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>FY 2027</u>	<u>FY 2028</u>	<u>FY 2029</u>	<u>FY 2030</u>	<u>FY 2031</u>	<u>FY 2032 and Beyond</u>
Develop/Validate Assessment	\$1,000,000							
Develop Micro-Credential	\$1,000,000							
Training Stipend - In-Service Teachers	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000						
Training Stipend - In-Service Paras	\$250,000	\$250,000						
Science of Reading Foundation Course Tuition	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	\$5,400,000	
Director of Literacy and Support Staff at KBOR	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000
Regional Centers of Excellence in Reading	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000	\$6,800,000
Literacy Education Simulation Lab Pilot	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>	<u>\$2,000,000</u>
Total by Fiscal Year	\$18,450,000	\$16,450,000	\$14,700,000	\$14,700,000	\$14,700,000	\$14,700,000	\$14,700,000	\$9,300,000