California Department of Education

Executive Office

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# **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** December 10, 2021

**TO:** MEMBERS, State Board of Education

**FROM:** TONY THURMOND, State Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Update: Local Literacy Lead Agencies

## Summary of Key Issues

On August 23, 2021, the California Department of Education (CDE) announced subgrant awards to seven county offices of education (COEs) as part of the federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant. The subgrantees were each named a Literacy Lead Agency (LLA), and began their work on September 1, 2021. This information memorandum details the process of awarding the subgrants, the work done thus far, and the timeline of future grant work.

### Background

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 authorizes the CLSD Program. This five-year competitive grant advances literacy skills through the use of evidence-based reading and writing instructional practices and interventions, including pre-literacy. The grant serves children from birth through grade twelve, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English Learner (EL) students, and children with disabilities. The grant also has two priorities: (1) projects that include evidence-based family literacy strategies, and (2) projects that increase educational options for groups of students who have traditionally been underserved.

California’s $37.5 million award is being used to leverage and expand existing statewide infrastructure, guidance, and expertise to bring coherence to the system of literacy supports to improve student outcomes over a period of five years. No less than 95 percent of the total grant award will go directly to fund the work of the LLAs.

The CDE continues to benefit from established formal partnerships with several organizations within the Statewide System of Support (SoS) to assist in carrying out grant activities across the life of the project. These partnerships include ongoing collaborations with the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, the California Subject Matter Projects, First Five, and WestEd.

### Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Objectives and Commitments

The CDE remains committed to a variety of activities in each of the three grant objectives. The three objectives and updated activities are provided below:

**Objective One: Align local and state literacy initiatives through a coordinated effort to build state and local capacity over the life of the project.**

The CDE continues to build and maintain internal capacity and external partnerships. Activities for this objective include:

* Designating one Education Programs Consultant (EPC) to work full-time on the grant project (funded through CLSD funds), three additional EPCs, and an Associate Governmental Programs Analyst (funded in-kind) to support the grant program
* Hosting monthly Literacy Roundtables for CDE staff to align literacy initiatives by inviting guest presenters from other CDE program offices and external organizations to present on their literacy work, including other state literacy grants (Educator Workforce Investment Grant Programs for the EL Roadmap and Special Education, the California Dyslexia Initiative, the Early Literacy Support Block Grant, and the Readership Project)
* Holding monthly calls with SoS partners for ongoing input and planning
* Distributing a monthly literacy newsletter with CLSD updates

**Objective Two: Develop and implement an evidence-based comprehensive state literacy plan (SLP) that aligns and integrates state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers of students, birth through grade twelve.**

The final draft of the SLP was approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) at the March 2021 meeting as Item 4. Detailed information about the development of the SLP is available in the January and March 2021 memos on the CDE CLSD SBE Agenda Items and Memos web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsdsbeitems.asp>. The SLP publication is available on the CDE CLSD Grant web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsd.asp>.

A Local Literacy Planning Toolkit to accompany the SLP is available in the Literacy Resources Repository on the California Educators Together online platform at <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/hmdnyg/comprehensive-literacy-state-development-grant-resource-repository>. This repository also includes a series of knowledge-building recorded webinars that focus on topics such as supporting students with dyslexia and other students who struggle to read, family and community engagement, distance learning, early literacy, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and other topics. Members of the State Literacy Team provided content and resources for the webinar series and other resources within the repository, and continue to work with the CDE to curate and populate it with more resources. These resources are shared with the LLAs for use in their respective grant activities at the local level.

**Objective Three: Build local capacity to establish, align, and implement local literacy initiatives that emphasize family and community involvement to address the needs of California’s most vulnerable children.**

The CDE released a Request for Applications for CLSD subgrants in May 2021. An internal team of highly qualified readers from across three divisions within the CDE scored the applications and identified the seven LLA awardees. One of the selected kindergarten through grade five districts identified by an LLA has also been selected by the U.S. Department of Education’s (ED’s) federal evaluators, the American Institutes for Research, to participate in a national evaluation study. Subgrantees were identified and awarded in August 2021, and grant work began on September 1, 2021.

The seven LLAs, each representing a consortium of COEs, will build expertise in strategies that address the statewide literacy priorities identified in the SLP and implement these strategies through three-year small-scale pilot projects with one or more local districts within their regions. These strategies must align with state guidance and policies, must be evidence-based, and support the literacy needs of economically disadvantaged and high-need students. Each LLA will support districts and schools in its region to improve comprehensive literacy instruction with a focus on the statewide literacy priority for the identified age and/or grade span. The expertise and resources that LLAs generate with their model sites will be disseminated to educators across the state through the SoS.

The CDE has dedicated EPCs to support each LLA for the course of their three-year grant. Monthly meetings with the CDE and quarterly convenings with other LLAs and SoS literacy partners will ensure that CLSD subgrantees are supported ongoing and that statewide literacy initiatives are aligned. An overview of each LLA project is available in the attachment. More information regarding the LLAs is available on the CDE CLSD Grant LLA web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsdlla.asp>.

## Attachment(s)

* **Attachment 1:** Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Local Literacy Lead Agency Overview (10 pages)

## Attachment 1: Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant Local Literacy Lead Agency Overview

Sections 2222–2225 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 authorizes the Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) Grant. This competitive federal grant advances literacy skills through the use of evidence-based practices, activities and interventions, including pre-literacy skills, reading, and writing. The grant serves children from birth through grade twelve, with an emphasis on disadvantaged children, including children living in poverty, English Learner (EL) students, and children with disabilities. The grant also has two priorities: (1) projects that include evidence-based family literacy strategies and (2) projects that increase educational options for groups of students who have traditionally been underserved.

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Education awarded the California Department of Education (CDE) approximately $37.5 million in CLSD Grant funds. During the first two years of the five-year grant project, the CDE established partnerships within the Statewide System of Support (SoS), conducted a statewide literacy needs assessment, assembled a State Literacy Team, developed a State Literacy Plan (SLP), built an online repository of resources, and conducted a competitive grant process to identify subgrantees.

Approximately $35 million (95 percent) of grant funds were awarded to seven county offices of education (COEs), and their respective consortia of COEs, through a competitive grant process in summer 2021. These local Literacy Lead Agencies (LLAs) will be required to build expertise in one or more priorities identified in the SLP and implement the associated strategies as a multi-year small-scale pilot with one or more local districts. These strategies must align with state guidance and policies, must be evidence-based, and support the literacy needs of economically disadvantaged and high-need students. Consistent with grant requirements, funds are awarded as follows:

* Birth to age five programs: 15 percent of funding
* Kindergarten to grade five programs: 40 percent of funding
* Grade six to grade twelve (6–12) programs: 40 percent of funding

Each LLA will support teachers in its region to improve comprehensive literacy instruction with a focus on statewide literacy priorities for each age and grade span. The expertise and resources that the COEs generate with their model sites will be disseminated to educators across the state through the SoS. Subgrantees began work in September 2021.

The California SLP, adopted by the SBE in March 2021, is available on the CDE CLSD Grant web page at [https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsd.asp.](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/clsd.asp) A primary objective of the SLP is to align and integrate state literacy initiatives, content standards, and state guidance documents to support teachers of students, birth through grade twelve. The CDE will work to implement the plan over the life of the CLSD Grant. The Literacy Planning Toolkit accompanies the SLP and may be used as a tool by county, district, and site leaders and teachers to develop their own literacy plans. For more information about the development of the SLP, visit the CDE SLP Development web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ps/slpdevelopment.asp>.

The online Literacy Repository, available on the California Educators Together website at <https://www.caeducatorstogether.org/groups/hmdnyg/comprehensive-literacy-state-development-grant-resource-repository>, contains free resources, organized by age and grade span. Also included are recorded webinars in the Literacy Knowledge Building Video Series and articles in the Literacy Research Collection.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority One

Birth to age five projects that support early childhood education programs that promote literacy-rich environments and experiences and support the quality of programs and their capacity to support early language and literacy skills, as well as to increase family support by increasing knowledge, skills, and confidence through family-centered curriculum and literacy activities with special attention to linguistic diversity and equity and access for all.

**LLA:** San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (CSS)

**Consortium Members:** Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), Fresno CSS

**Project Name:** The Early Learning Literacy Project (ELLP)

**Project Overview:** Key activities of the ELLP include:

1. Identification of an early literacy problem of practice
2. Attention to diversity and variability in early literacy and across early learning programs
3. Root cause analysis of the comprehensive early literacy system
4. Determination of measurable early literacy goals and outcomes
5. Engagement in inquiry-driven professional learning and coaching experiences
6. Sharing of best practices in a networked community of practice (CoP)

The ELLP will engage in a Plan-Do-Study-Act coaching cycle model to assist schools and early learning agencies in systematically improving early literacy outcomes and to assist counties in scaling replicable program improvement efforts for early literacy to improve overall student outcomes in response to county-specific performance indicators. Early childhood educators will be trained in developmentally appropriate practices, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), culturally responsive teaching, and family engagement.

During each year of the ELLP Continuous Improvement Coaching Cycles, participants will engage in data-driven inquiry to identify and implement high-leverage evidence-based practices that will accelerate early literacy development. Attention will be given to evidence-based practices that can be pivoted to engage children, birth through age five, in early literacy experiences at school and at home to extend the continuity of learning within and beyond the school day. Educators will assess students’ early literacy progress through comprehensive assessments to decide when to intervene and accelerate literacy progress, which literacy strategies are appropriate for the identified point of intervention, and at what level of intensity in order to impact the level of acceleration.

San Bernardino CSS will work directly with two districts, Rialto Unified School District (USD) and Victor Elementary School District. Fresno CSS will work directly with Fresno USD. OCDE will work directly with Orange USD.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Two

Transitional kindergarten through grade five (TK–5) programs that build teacher capacity for tier one literacy instruction, including foundational skills, reading comprehension, and best first reading and writing instruction.

**LLA:** Los Angeles COE

**Consortium Members:** Lake COE, Siskiyou COE

**Project Name:** The Getting Reading Right Project (GRR)

**Project Overview:** The GRR will include expansive professional learning for all teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals in foundational literacy skills research and best practices. It will also allow for side-by-side implementation of best practices through expanded coaching services, along with co-teach and co-plan sessions.

Year One: The focus for year one is to build teacher capacity in foundational literacy skills and delivery of quality tier one instruction. The development of a literacy plan will provide a blueprint to accomplish literacy goals and identify next steps for students not showing progress. The plan can be implemented despite personnel changes and serve as the guiding document to ensure an equitable and sustainable path to literacy achievement.

* Professional Development (PD) in Foundational Literacy Skills: GRR is a series of PD modules aimed at building teacher knowledge and evidence-based strategies in foundational reading skills so teachers can deliver quality tier one instruction. The modules hone literacy skills identified in Scarborough’s Reading Rope and the California English Language Arts/English Language Development (ELD) Framework.
* Instructional Coaching: Coaching will support implementation in the classroom as a follow-up to the PD and emphasize support for vulnerable students. The topic of the monthly GRR meeting will provide the coaching focus each month. Classroom coaching will allow for modeling, co-plan/co-teach time, and lesson feedback.

Year Two: The focus for year two is to sustain and build upon the work from year one, as well as expand on culturally responsive teaching practices to support vulnerable populations.

Year Three: The focus for year three is to continue the work started in years one and two through the lens of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and equity, as well as to ensure the work is sustainable within the district beyond grant funding.

Los Angeles COE will work directly with Lancaster School District. Lake COE will work directly with Lakeport USD. Siskiyou COE will work directly with Mt. Shasta Union School District.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Three

TK–5 programs that build school capacity for effective literacy and comprehensive ELD for EL students, including opportunities to develop biliteracy and primary language instruction whenever possible.

**LLA:** San Diego COE

**Consortium Members:** Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), Imperial COE

**Partner Organization:** California Reading and Literature Project

**Project Name:** The Region 9 Literacy Project (Project 9)

**Project Overview:** Key activities of Project 9 include:

* Improve literacy outcomes for TK–5 EL students and American Indian (AI) students in traditional and dual language settings.
* Increase teacher capacity (mindsets, knowledge, and skills) to align and implement asset-based instructional practices.
* Increase educators’ capacity (mindsets, knowledge, and skills) to implement asset-based literacy leadership practices, including evidence-based family engagement and literacy programs.

The consortium members of Project 9 will build local capacity by co-leading and co-facilitating CoPs and educator academies with literacy coaches at each identified local educational agency (LEA). Based on the local needs of the LEAs identified during the literacy planning process, the CoPs and academies will provide a menu of professional learning options that builds upon the region’s existing catalog, which includes content on equity-focused leadership and high-quality, standards-based instruction and intervention for EL and AI students.

Project 9 will provide supplemental books and other multimedia materials to support culturally responsive literacy instruction and opportunities for collaboration between library staff and teachers on their use. Portions of the funding will be allocated to support culturally responsive family literacy programs. School libraries will serve as a hub for school-family-community engagement and will host activities and community literacy events. Regional team aims to build capacity in district and site administrators, coaches, lead teachers and teachers through literacy plan development, coaching, and ongoing support to improve literacy outcomes for the most vulnerable students.

San Diego COE will work directly with two districts, the National School District and Valley Center-Pauma USD. Imperial COE will work directly with two school districts, Calexico USD and San Pasqual Valley Union School District. OCDE will work directly with Santa Ana USD.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Four

TK–5 programs that build school capacity to support students struggling with reading, including, but not limited to, students with disabilities and students with dyslexia**.**

**LLA:** Contra Costa COE

**Consortium Members:** San Diego COE

**Project Name:** Every Child Reads

**Project Overview:** Three targets and related key activities include:

1. Building capacity to serve struggling readers by strengthening district and pilot site Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)
2. Developing district and pilot site literacy plans and implementing evidence-based strategies through improvement cycles. The following evidence-based strategies outlined in the SLP will be the focus of the project’s efforts:
	1. Utilize strategies to accelerate student learning post-pandemic
	2. Plan and provide differentiated and targeted instruction within tier one
	3. Implement a continuum of interventions (tiers two and three)
	4. Establish a comprehensive assessment system—universal screening, diagnostic, and progress-monitoring tools
	5. Build understanding of reading development and difficulties
	6. Utilize a data-based approach to decision-making and problem-solving
	7. Implement culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies
	8. Plan using the principles of UDL
3. Increasing family and community engagement in literacy

The Every Child Reads project will build the capacity of district and site literacy teams to support struggling readers and improve literacy outcomes for all learners. This begins with a focus on implementing a MTSS that effectively and efficiently meets all students’ needs. Developing the educator knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for responsive planning and teaching that meets all students’ literacy and language needs will also be a focus. This includes deepening knowledge of key components of structured literacy, increasing awareness and implementation of the California Dyslexia Guidelines, providing support for effective tier one instruction, expanding language intervention supports, and increasing educator response to student strengths and areas of need.

The ability to plan and implement inclusive and equitable learning experiences that account for student variability will be expanded through training and coaching around UDL and differentiated instructional practices. Additionally, Every Child Reads will support district and site efforts to increase family and community engagement related to literacy. The project will provide ongoing, differentiated support for administrators, and responsibility for providing professional learning and supporting the project’s literacy initiatives will be gradually released to LEAs.

Contra Costa COE will work directly with Oakley Union Elementary School District. San Diego COE will work directly with Oceanside USD.

**Partner District for the American Institutes for Research Impact Study:** Oakley Union Elementary School District.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Five

Grades 6–12 programs that build teacher capacity across disciplines for literacy instruction, including peer to peer coaching models.

**LLA:** Butte COE

**Consortium Members:** Plumas COE, Shasta COE, and Modoc COE

**Partner Organization:** Center for Applied Special Technology

**Project Name:** The Far North Literacy Development Consortium (FNLDC)

**Project Overview:** The FNLDC will focus on UDL to build teacher capacity for literacy instruction across disciplines. The FNLDC will use UDL to “establish a shared set of expectations, experiences, and a common language for molding and shaping an instructional approach.” Key activities include:

* Providing professional learning focused on UDL, including but not limited to the creation of professional learning communities, providing opportunities to earn micro-credentials in UDL, providing access to deep dive modules, annual symposiums, guest speaker series, lesson design studios, and a final culmination summit.
* Developing committees that focus on family engagement, including planning interactive literacy nights.
* Maintaining a web page to house resources to share beyond the life of the grant.

Overall, the FNLDC will help teachers intentionally plan lessons, choose materials, and improve instructional practice in a way that mitigates or removes barriers to meet the needs of all learners. Teachers will empower students by valuing their voice and choice, which will improve engagement. A focus on family literacy will help the community understand the importance of developing literacy skills.

The FNLDC will work with the following districts:

* Biggs USD, which includes Biggs Elementary and High School
* Plumas USD, which includes Chester Junior/Senior High School, Greenville Junior/Senior High School, Quincy Junior/Senior High School, and Portola Junior/Senior High School
* Happy Valley Elementary School District

The project will be evaluated by Dr. Ben Seipel from California State University, Chico through a variety of quantitative and qualitative means.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Six

Grades 6–12 programs that build school capacity for effective literacy and comprehensive ELD for EL students, including opportunities to develop biliteracy and primary language instruction whenever possible.

**LLA:** Tulare COE

**Consortium Members:** Kings COE, Fresno CSS, Madera CSS, Merced COE, Mariposa COE

**Project Name:** The Readership Project

**Project Overview:** Key activities include improving literacy for EL students by expanding access to culturally relevant texts and taking an asset-based approach by:

* Providing professional learning, including network convenings; training staff on analyzing data, effective family and community engagement, and continuous improvement, all with an asset-based approach; and offering three courses through Brandman University on Developing Community Literacy Access, Parent and Family Partnerships, and Community Literacy Intervention
* Creating a library forum of librarians and library staff, who will curate a list of culturally diverse and relevant books with resources and guidance for districts, schools, teachers, and community organizations
* Promoting the State Seal of Biliteracy (SSB), including researching why the SSB is not often awarded in these counties and what can be done to increase the number of students earning the SSB
* Creating a robust community and family outreach plan, including working with various community-based agencies

The Readership Project intends to improve EL student achievement through focusing on an asset-based approach with culturally diverse and relevant texts. Teachers will learn to hold their EL students to a high standard and empower their voices, as well as provide more opportunities for EL students to obtain the SSB. They will build an extensive network of community support to ensure success. Qualitative and quantitative data will inform decisions throughout the life of the grant. Resources will be disseminated statewide, including videos, templates, checklists, a guidebook, and more.

The Readership Project will work with the following districts and schools: Visalia USD, Lemoore Elementary, Liberty Middle, Lemoore High, Kerman Middle, Kerman High, Pioneer Technical Center, Chowchilla High, Washington Elementary, Bryant Middle, Mariposa High, El Portal Elementary, Mariposa Elementary, Ridgeview Middle, El Diamante High, Golden West, Monson Sultana, Oak Valley, Valley Life, Tulare Joint Union High School Tech Prep, Burton Middle, Woodville, Sunnyside, Earlimart Middle, Alta Vista, Woodlake High, and Orosi High.

### Statewide Literacy Priority: Priority Seven

Grades 6–12 programs that promote and build school capacity for effective literacy instruction for students with disabilities.

**LLA:** Napa COE

**Consortium Members:** Riverside COE, Siskiyou COE

**Project Name:** The Lead to Literacy (LtL) Project

**Project Overview:** Key activities of the LtL Project include:

1. Conducting pilot programs aligned to the state’s newly developed literacy model and focus on the needs of students with disabilities at partnering districts
2. Applying a continuous improvement cycle, using pilot program data to drive actions and make needed adjustments to the plan
3. Helping districts build instructional capacity, strengthen organizational culture, and develop leadership to allow for rigorous structured literacy strategies to take root
4. Supporting the sustainment of systemic changes that result in better outcomes for students, especially those with special needs
5. Engaging students, families, and community as partners in improving literacy outcomes

The LtL Project will begin with building the local context essential to sustainable school improvement through needs assessment and data analysis. Participating districts will form implementation teams and draft local literacy action plans. Current data indicates the consortium counties and districts need professional learning support in improving student learning outcomes in literacy, especially for students with disabilities; professional learning systems for leaders; and engaging students, families, and community as partners in improving literacy outcomes. LEAs will receive evidence-based professional learning opportunities aligned with goals outlined in their literacy action plans. Asset-based and culturally sustaining pedagogies will be infused throughout professional learning.

The project will ensure and refine effective implementation through a continuous improvement process. Coaching and training continues throughout the life of the project and beyond; data analysis determines actions and adaptations to the plans and examines whether policies and practices are leading to improved student outcomes.

Napa COE will work directly with Calistoga Joint USD and Napa Valley USD. Siskiyou COE will work with Butte Valley USD, and Riverside COE will work with Moreno Valley USD.