

SECTION 1:

Overview

Whether they are struggling learners or high achievers, all students in Grades 4-12 are continuing to develop their literacy skills. Most of these students acquired a basic core of literacy strategies while in kindergarten through Grade 3. From Grade 4 to Grade 12, learners face increasingly complex and challenging literacy tasks, not only in their English language arts classes, but also in all content areas. In each content area, curricular standards specific to that area guide a teacher's decisions about what students need to learn. It is through the primary tools of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and presenting that students master those content curricular standards. As students continue to develop proficiency in literacy, their teachers must be skilled guides, coaches and instructors. Connecticut students deserve consistent access to quality learning communities where teachers and staff in all content areas, in conjunction with administrators, parents/guardians and community members, serve an essential role in students' ongoing literacy development.

The State of Connecticut and the Connecticut State Department of Education are committed to the literacy development of all students. In 2000, the Department published *Connecticut's K-3 Blueprint for Reading Achievement: the Report of the Early Reading Success Panel* and distributed it to every K-3 teacher in the state. This publication clearly defined the literacy competencies important for students at each grade level, the required teacher competencies to support these student achievements, and the components of a comprehensive literacy program. This document provided direction for primary grades literacy instruction.

Most students acquire basic literacy skills, such as accurate word identification, by the end of Grade 3, especially if they are provided with explicit instruction in those skills. However, development of many higher-level components of literacy, particularly those related to comprehension, continues long after the primary grades. Research indicates students require systematic, explicit instruction in how to comprehend and evaluate the sophisticated, more difficult texts they encounter in content area and English language arts classes through the upper grades.

In response to this research and as an extension to *Connecticut's K-3 Blueprint for Reading Achievement*, the Department organized a task force of Connecticut teachers, literacy supervisors, university professors and education consultants in 2003. The result of the 4-12 Task Force members' work is this document, in which they define a program of comprehensive literacy instruction, Grades 4-12.

This document is based on the assumptions that *all* students need a systematic, ongoing literacy program and that *all* teachers, staff, administrators, parents/guardians and community members share the responsibility for developing students' literacy. This document is intended to support literacy instruction in English language arts and all content-area classes. Accordingly, this document must be used by all teachers and staff. It likewise is to be used by administrators to identify important strategies to be addressed in classrooms, as well as helpful schedule design for creating a culture of literacy that should be provided. It also should be read by parents/guardians and community members to support their children and local educators. Finally, this document should be employed by a wide range of teacher educators as part of teacher preparation beyond Grade 3, not only in English language arts, but also for prospective content-area teachers.