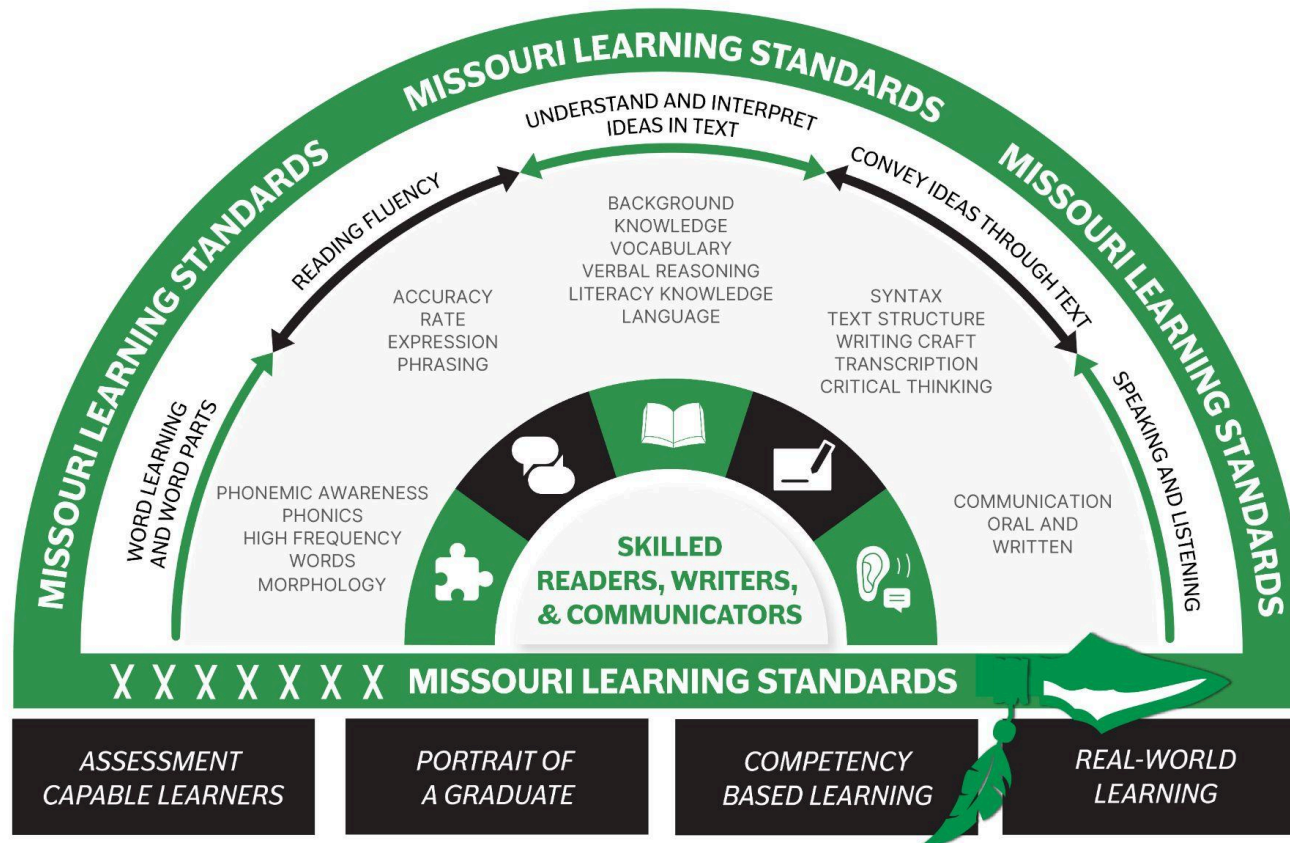


**Smithville School District
K-12 Literacy Elements**



**SMITHVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT
K-12 LITERACY ELEMENTS**

This document reflects SSD's commitment to high-quality, structured literacy instruction. The elements outlined here are designed to support all learners in developing strong foundational skills in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Grounded in the Science of Reading and Writing, these elements recognize the deep interconnectedness between reading and writing and emphasizes the importance of a systematic, explicit approach to instruction. The SSD is committed to fostering a student-centered environment that nurtures and empowers every learner to grow as a confident reader, writer, and communicator.

Rationale

The Missouri Learning Standards outline the essential knowledge and skills students need at each grade level and course to succeed in college, post-secondary training, and careers. From these standards, the English Language Arts priority standards were identified to highlight the most critical expectations for student readiness. SSD used these state-defined priority standards as a foundation to develop our own internal priority standards. While all Missouri Learning Standards will be addressed, these elevated standards provide a clear curricular focus, guiding teachers to engage students in deeper learning and ensure mastery of essential concepts and skills.

The five major components shown in the graphic (*Word Learning and Word Parts, Reading Fluency, Understanding and Interpreting Ideas in Text, Conveying Ideas Through Text, and Speaking and Listening*) were developed through a comprehensive review of literacy research and are designed to prioritize focus areas of K-12 instruction. Aligned with a structured instructional model, high-quality resources, and evidence-based practices, these focus areas collectively support the development of skilled readers, writers, and communicators. Each area is supported by subskills that guide instruction and provide a cohesive framework for literacy learning across grade levels. Together, they ensure that all students in the Smithville School District receive the focused, intentional instruction needed for long-term academic success.

At the bottom of the graphic are four core components that support student-centered learning in SSD literacy classrooms. These components (*Assessment Capable Learners, Portrait of a Graduate, Competency-Based Learning, and Real-World Learning*) work together to create an environment where students are empowered, engaged, and prepared for future success.

Word Learning and Word Parts	<p>Students learn new words through a comprehensive approach that includes explicit phonics instruction, direct vocabulary teaching, morphology, and repeated exposure to words in meaningful contexts. This goal emphasizes the importance of graphemes, phonemes, and word parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots, in supporting vocabulary development and helping students decode and comprehend unfamiliar words. As students progress, they deepen their understanding by studying Greek, Latin, and other word origins. This element also includes key subcomponents: phonemic awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, spelling, and morphology.</p>
Reading Fluency	<p>Fluency is the ability to recognize words easily, read with greater speed, accuracy and expression, and to better understand what is read (The National Reading Panel, 2000). Fluent readers recognize words automatically and are able to read for meaning. According to Duke and Cartwright (2021), fluency provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.</p> <p>Fluency is commonly defined as the ability to read with accuracy, appropriate rate, expression, and phrasing. Reading fluency encompasses both oral and silent reading, reflecting a reader's ability to read smoothly and with understanding.</p>
Understand and Interpret Ideas in Text	<p>Reading comprehension is complex. For language-comprehension to be taught well, background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge must play critical roles (Castles et al. 2018). Comprehension is the act of understanding what you read, extracting meaning, and understanding and interpreting what is read (Archer, 2020). Comprehension is an outcome, not a strategy. This requires students to read words accurately and fluently, understand the meaning of words, have adequate background knowledge, and be able to focus on critical content.</p>
Convey Ideas Through Text	<p>Conveying ideas through text allows students to express their thoughts clearly, purposefully, and effectively in written form. This skill supports communication across all content areas and empowers students to participate in academic and real-world tasks. Subcomponents of skilled writing include critical thinking, text structure, sentence construction, grammar, and writing craft. Foundational skills such as transcription (spelling and handwriting or typing) are also important. When students can integrate these skills, they are better equipped to organize their thinking, support their ideas with evidence, and tailor their writing for different audiences and purposes.</p>
Speaking and Listening	<p>In an ever-changing world, students must learn to communicate effectively across a variety of settings. The Missouri Learning Standards emphasize this essential skill, highlighting the importance of both oral and written communication. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are deeply interconnected, all serving the shared goal of conveying ideas clearly and purposefully.</p>

These four core components were identified as essential to student-centered learning in a literacy classroom. These elements create a supportive environment where students develop strong reading and writing skills, actively engage with texts, and build a lasting interest in literacy for long-term success.

Assessment Capable Learners	Students are taught to understand learning targets, assess their own progress, and use feedback to improve. This fosters ownership of learning, helping them become reflective, self-directed readers and writers who strive toward clearly defined goals.
Portrait of a Graduate	Literacy instruction integrates the qualities of the Smithville Warrior: Well-Rounded Learner, Innovative Thinker, Compassionate Advocate, Resilient Achiever, and Confident Leader. These attributes guide students to engage with texts thoughtfully, express their ideas clearly, and communicate with purpose and empathy.
Competency-Based Learning	Students and teachers have a clear understanding of mastery of literacy skills. Instruction is personalized to meet individual needs, ensuring every student develops a deep understanding of reading and writing concepts.
Real-Word Learning	Literacy instruction includes opportunities for authentic tasks that connect to students' lives and future goals. Through relevant reading and writing opportunities, students see the value of literacy beyond the classroom, preparing them for college, careers, and active citizenship.

Word Learning and Word Parts

By integrating word learning, SSD builds the foundation for lifelong reading success. Students will learn using explicit and systematic instruction. Students will have the opportunity to explore word parts and meanings.

The subcomponents of word learning and word parts include, but are not limited to instruction in: Phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, high frequency words, and morphology.

K-2	<p>Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken language can be broken down into phonemes. It is the ability to recognize, identify, and manipulate individual speech sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. Whole class phonemic awareness instruction in kindergarten and first grade is one of the best preventative measures for future reading failure (Moats & Tolman, 2019).</p> <p>Phonics is the relationship between the letters (or letter combinations) in written language and the individual sounds in spoken language. Phonics instruction teaches students how to use these relationships to read and spell words. The National Reading Panel indicated that systematic phonics instruction enhances children’s success in learning to read. Connor et al. (2007) states that second grade students of all abilities benefit from phonics instruction.</p> <p>High frequency words are a small group of words (300-500) that account for a large percentage of the words in print and can be regular or irregular words. Automatic recognition of these words is required for fluent reading (Burns, 2022).</p> <p>Spelling research supports the importance of teaching patterns, word parts, using morphology, and teaching words in context. Learn more about the relationships between letters and sounds and how a proper understanding of spelling mechanics can lead to improved reading and writing (Moats, 2005)</p>
3-5	<p>Phonics instruction continues to be necessary in the intermediate grades. Understanding how syllables work matters for accurately reading words in English. This includes both whole and small group instruction. Instruction also includes morphology components.</p> <p>Spelling research supports the importance of teaching patterns, word parts, using morphology, and teaching words in context. Learn more about the relationships between letters and sounds and how a proper understanding of spelling mechanics can lead to improved reading and writing (Moats, 2005)</p>

6-8	Morphology is the study of words and how they are formed from smaller units called morphemes (roots, prefixes, suffixes). Morphology instruction helps enhance vocabulary and improves reading comprehension (Bowers et al., 2010) (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012), and improves decoding of complex words (Carlisle, 2003).
9-12	Morphology is the study of words and how they are formed from smaller units called morphemes (roots, prefixes, suffixes). Morphological awareness aids word analysis which is essential for success beyond high school. Students with morphological instruction are better prepared for post-secondary studies (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012), because of enhanced vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension (Bowers et al., 2010). Keep fundamentals in mind. Apply morphology to academic vocabulary.

Reading Fluency

Building strong oral reading fluency is essential for lifelong reading success, as fluency bridges word recognition and comprehension. Through intentional instructional practices, students will have the opportunity to practice both reading aloud and reading silently to translate text into “spoken” language to understand.

The subcomponents of Reading Fluency include, but are not limited to instruction in: accuracy, rate, expression, and phrasing.

K	Fluency begins with print awareness and letter naming. Students observe and listen to adults read aloud and model fluent reading. Students can practice expression and phrasing with repeated readings, oral language activities like reciting stories
1-2	Students continue to build foundational fluency skills by observing and listening to adults model expressive, fluent reading through read-alouds. To enhance expression and phrasing, students engage in repeated readings and oral language activities, such as reciting stories and participating in activities like Reader’s Theater to further develop their reading proficiency. Beginning in the middle of first grade, students are formally assessed on fluency using grade-level passages.
3-6	Students will have increased opportunities to develop fluency through expressive reading, appropriate phrasing, silent reading, Reader’s Theater, structured partner reading, and self-monitoring. Instruction will be supported by teacher modeling, and students’ progress will be assessed through timed readings.

7-8	Students will develop fluency. Instruction will focus on morphology, sentence structure, and focused independent reading time. Support will include teacher modeling, read-alouds, and partner reading. Students will use context clues, morphology, and word analysis to understand unfamiliar words, with progress monitored through fluency screeners.
9-12	If students haven't developed this kind of "automaticity" when reading, then they may be able to sound out individual words with little trouble, but they will read them in such halting fashion when put together in sentences that they cannot pay full attention to the meaning of the text. According to Samuels (2006), "To be considered a fluent reader means to be able to decode and comprehend at the same time." Students will be able to read with appropriate phrasing of silent and oral reading. Students will use resources to reinforce their understanding of new and unfamiliar words. Some instructional resources include read aloud to students, modeling expressive reading, echo reading, paired and repeated readings.

<p style="text-align: center;">Understand and Interpret Ideas in Text</p> <p>The goal of comprehension instruction in SSD is to help students develop the knowledge, skills, and experiences they must have to become competent and enthusiastic readers.</p> <p>The subcomponents of Understand and Interpret Ideas in Text include, but are not limited to instruction in: listening comprehension, language structures, vocabulary, background knowledge, literacy knowledge and verbal reasoning.</p>	
K-2	Students will build comprehension through focused instruction on vocabulary and background knowledge. They will develop these skills through read-alouds, shared reading, and independent reading when appropriate. Students will engage with a variety of texts, both literary and informational, to support their learning. They will also strengthen their literacy skills and understanding of language structures through clear and structured instruction. Opportunities to discuss texts and ideas with classmates will help deepen their understanding.

3-6	Students will build comprehension through focused instruction on vocabulary and background knowledge. They will develop these skills through read-alouds, shared reading, and independent reading when appropriate. Students will engage with a variety of texts to support their learning. They will also strengthen their literacy skills and understanding of language structures through clear and structured instruction. Students will engage more deeply with texts, participate in book clubs that provide opportunities for discussion and collaboration. Additionally, media literacy instruction will support their ability to analyze and evaluate different types of information. Opportunities to discuss texts and ideas with classmates will help deepen their understanding.
7-8	Students will strengthen comprehension by engaging with a variety of text genres, building vocabulary, and deepening background knowledge. Instruction will include read-alouds, shared and independent reading, and discussions to enhance understanding. Students will analyze text structures, participate in book discussions, and develop media literacy skills to evaluate information critically. Assignments will encourage deeper thinking and application of comprehension strategies.
9-12	Students will build comprehension through focused instruction that uses a variety of text genres. Students will access and build upon the above mentioned skills. Assignments will add complexity and depth of comprehension for the variety of texts that will be assigned or chosen.

Convey Ideas Through Text

The goal of writing is to convey ideas through text. Explicit writing instruction improves students' writing skills but also helps build and deepen their content knowledge, boosts reading comprehension and oral language ability, and fosters habits of critical, creative and analytical thinking.

The subcomponents of Convey Ideas Through Text include, but are not limited to instruction in: syntax, critical thinking, text structures, writing craft, and transcription (handwriting/keyboarding skills).

K	Students begin developing foundational writing skills by speaking in complete sentences and combining simple ideas. They learn to express their thoughts orally before transitioning to writing, answering basic questions such as "who," "what," and "where." Through drawing, dictation, and emergent writing, they organize their ideas into a beginning, middle, and end. Writing craft is introduced through sensory words and basic details with teacher support. Transcription focuses on correct letter formation, phonetic spelling, and spacing between words.
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1	Students expand their sentence structures by using simple and compound sentences, introducing conjunctions such as "and" and "but." They begin to develop critical thinking skills by generating ideas and supporting their opinions with simple reasoning. Writing becomes more structured, as students learn to recognize and use sequence and description text structures. Writing craft improves as students add details, apply grammar skills, and begin experimenting with dialogue. Transcription skills advance through correct sentence formation, spelling of high-frequency words, and the application of basic capitalization and punctuation rules.
2	Sentence complexity grows as students incorporate adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions into their writing. They support opinions with reasons and start making connections between ideas, laying the foundation for logical reasoning. Instruction in text structures expands to include problem/solution and cause/effect patterns, helping students organize their writing more clearly. Writing craft develops through the use of precise words and sentence revisions for clarity. Transcription focuses on spelling grade-level words correctly, using commas in a series, and applying basic paragraph structure.
3	Students use a variety of sentence types, including complex sentences with subordinating conjunctions, to enhance their syntax. They develop logical arguments supported by evidence and begin explaining their thinking more explicitly. Writing is organized into paragraphs with clear topic sentences, and students explore multiple text structures within a single piece. Writing craft becomes more sophisticated as they experiment with figurative language and integrate dialogue effectively. Transcription skills include improved spelling, correct subject-verb agreement, and appropriate punctuation.
4	Students refine their syntax by incorporating relative pronouns and prepositional phrases. They justify opinions with multiple reasons and analyze different perspectives. Writing organization improves as students develop clear introductions, structured body paragraphs, and effective conclusions. Their writing craft strengthens through the use of varied sentence structures, figurative language, and an emerging sense of voice and tone. Transcription skills focus on accurate spelling of multisyllabic words, proper punctuation in dialogue and quotations, and consistent paragraph formatting. Students produce well-organized writing with a strong focus on purpose and audience.

5	Students master more complex sentence structures and ensure subject-verb agreement across all contexts. They use logical reasoning and elaboration to develop their arguments and support claims with relevant evidence. Writing becomes more sophisticated, integrating multiple text structures within a single piece while employing smooth transitions between paragraphs. Writing craft develops further as students refine their style and adjust tone based on audience and purpose. Transcription skills include consistent application of grade-level spelling and grammar rules, as well as proper use of commas for clarity. Students develop well-supported arguments and writing for different audiences and purposes.
6	Students learn to use similar sentence patterns and different sentence lengths to make their writing clearer and more engaging. They begin to check sources and include evidence to support their ideas. Their writing becomes more organized, using structures like compare/contrast or argument to make their points. They also work on improving their writing by revising, creating strong beginnings and endings, and developing their own style. In addition, they focus on using correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation in longer pieces of writing. Students cite sources, using a formal writing style, and organize ideas clearly.
7-8	Students will refine their writing by using varied sentence structures, organizing ideas effectively, and incorporating evidence to support their points. They will analyze model texts to explore different writing styles and structures, such as compare/contrast and argument. Students will conduct research, cite sources properly, and develop clear thesis statements. Emphasis will be placed on grammar, spelling, and punctuation, as well as revising and strengthening their writing through teacher and peer feedback.
9-12	Students will review multiple model texts to provide options for the writing choices students will make in their compositions. Students will choose different and appropriate writing strategies to organize their writing. As is appropriate, students will conduct independent research and include evidence to support their ideas and argumentation. Along with an emphasis on grammar, spelling, and punctuation, students will work on proper formatting of evidence, works cited, and documentation (e.g. MLA). Students will actively work on revising multiple compositions throughout the year with active support from their teacher and peers.

Speaking and Listening

By integrating speaking and listening, SSD builds a foundation for confident communication and collaborative learning. Students will develop these skills through intentional, scaffolded, and interactive instruction. Opportunities will include both structured academic conversations and informal discussions.

The subcomponents of speaking and listening include, but are not limited to: active listening, oral language development, collaborative conversations, presentation skills, oral and writing communication.

K-2

Oral language development is foundational in the early grades and is closely linked to future reading comprehension (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001). Students learn to speak clearly, listen attentively, and engage in structured conversations with peers and adults. Teachers provide modeling and sentence stems to support academic talk.

Active listening involves making eye contact, asking relevant questions, and retelling or summarizing what a peer has said. These early behaviors build attention, memory, and empathy.

Collaborative conversations begin with shared read-alouds and move toward turn-taking and topic-focused exchanges. Instruction includes visuals, modeling, and repetition to support all learners.

3-6

Students expand their speaking and listening skills by participating in more structured academic discussions. This includes responding to texts, justifying ideas with evidence, and paraphrasing others' points.

Presentation skills develop as students share research and writing with an audience. They are expected to speak clearly, use appropriate volume and pace, and organize their ideas logically.

Active listening evolves into listening for understanding and critical analysis. Students begin identifying points of view and comparing perspectives.

<p>7-8</p>	<p>Oral language is increasingly used to explore and evaluate complex ideas. Students participate in group discussions, Socratic seminars, and debates. They learn to build on others' ideas, ask clarifying questions, and consider multiple viewpoints.</p> <p>Presentation expectations include multimedia integration and adapting speech to a variety of audiences and purposes. Students are taught to monitor tone, volume, and body language to enhance communication.</p> <p>Listening comprehension now includes analysis of arguments, speaker credibility, and evidence. Students are expected to evaluate the purpose and effectiveness of presentations and media sources.</p>
<p>9-12</p>	<p>Speaking and listening instruction prepares students for post-secondary settings and careers. Students engage in sophisticated discussions requiring synthesis of multiple texts and sources. They evaluate and challenge others' ideas while refining their own.</p> <p>Presentations become more formal and independent, often requiring the use of technology. Students adapt delivery and content based on audience needs and feedback, using academic language fluently and persuasively.</p> <p>Listening skills now include critical analysis of rhetoric, tone, and bias in diverse media and real-world contexts. Students are expected to respond thoughtfully and constructively to peers and public speakers.</p>

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