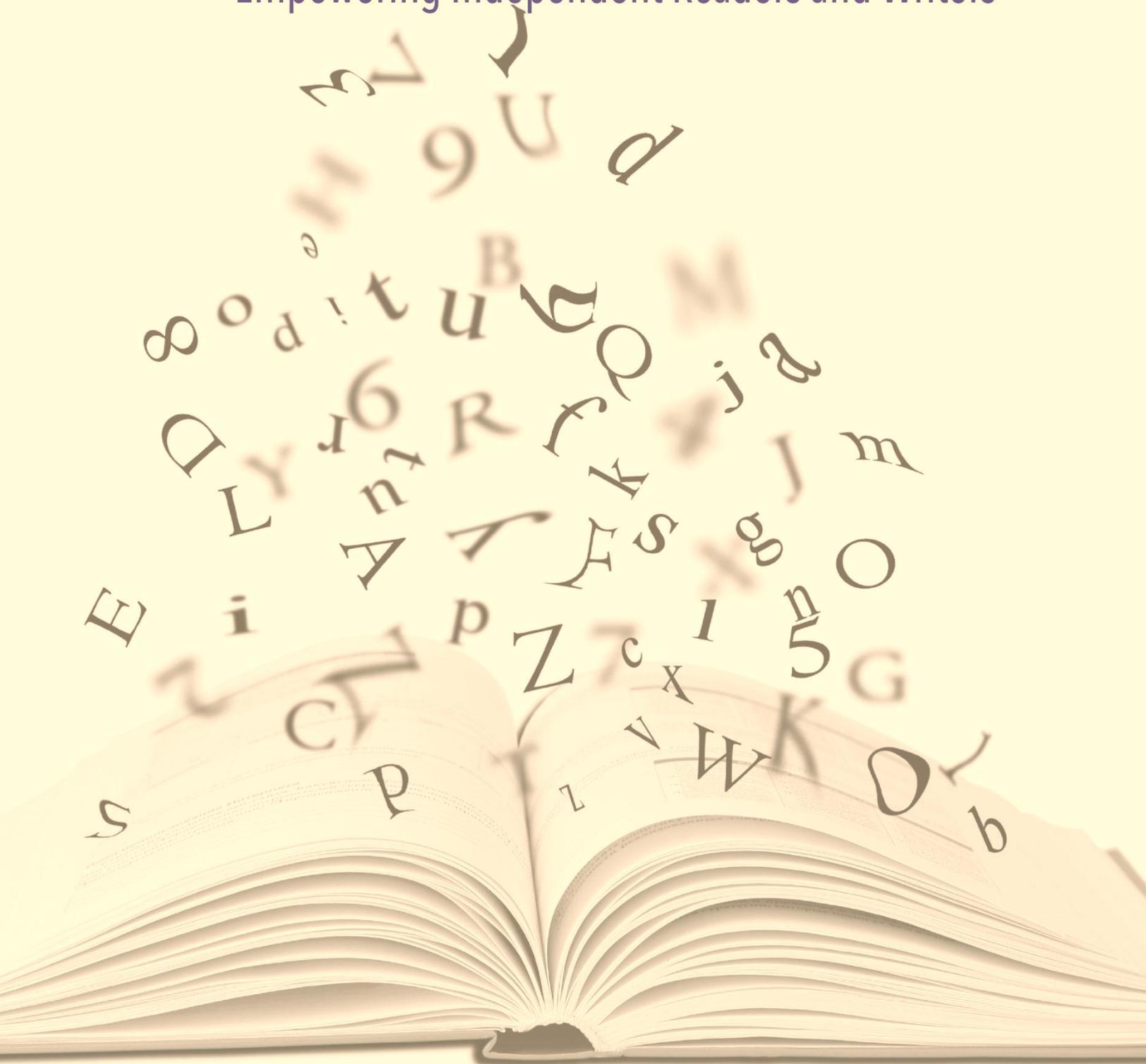




GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA
Ministry of Education
Department of Education

2014

NATIONAL LITERACY STRATEGY:
Empowering Independent Readers and Writers



National Literacy Strategy

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, one's income, and one's relationship with the world. – UNESCO

Ensuring a future of empowered 21st century readers and writers requires a powerful vision for how young people learn and experience literacy in our world. In this vision for Bermuda classrooms, students will confidently engage in reading and listening to a wide variety of texts (including digital) which will empower them to think, discuss, and write critically about important ideas. They will have opportunities every day to make sense of their experiences and make connections to their histories, culture and communities. The 21st century literacy teacher in Bermuda's schools will intentionally facilitate a community of learners built around students' interests and questions, and provide a multitude of ways for students to express their expanding knowledge.

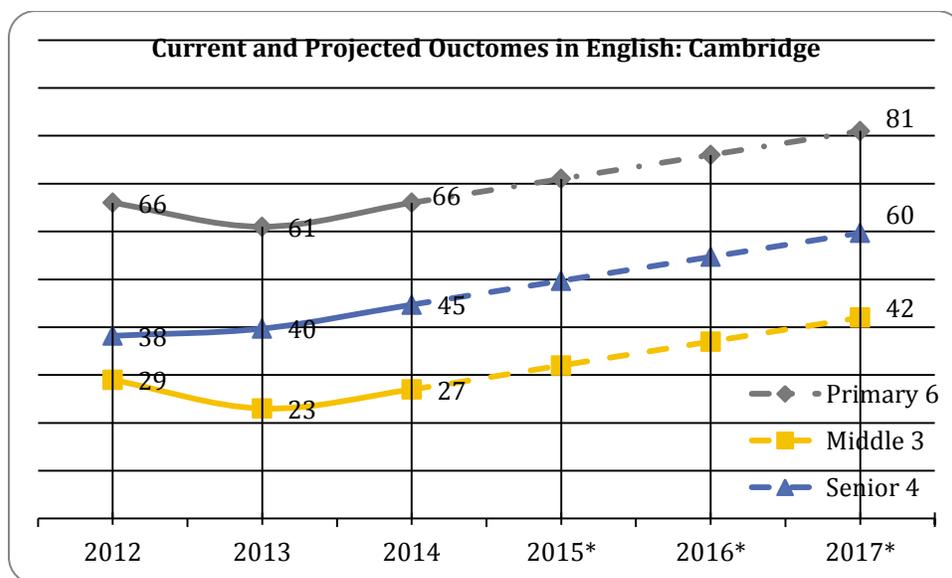
According to the National Council of Teachers of English (2008) the 21st century will demand the capacity to maneuver multiple dynamic literacies that are ever changing. Active, successful participants in a global society must be able to:

- Develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology;
- build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought;
- design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes;
- manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information;
- create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts; and
- attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

The purpose of the National Literacy Strategy is to improve literacy outcomes of Bermuda's students by 2017 through the transformation of teaching and learning in our schools. The Strategy will establish a common vision and pedagogical understanding of literacy and set the direction for improvement over the next three years. The National Literacy Strategy sets out a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction and learning in order to ensure high levels of achievement in 21st century literacy skills. Within the organization of a National Literacy Strategy, services will be coordinated and the gaps in services addressed.

Literacy outcomes in Cambridge International Examination have depicted fluctuating results across all three levels: Primary 6, Middle 3, and Senior 2 in the public school system. In 2013–14, 66% of primary students, 27% of middle students and 45% of senior students achieved level 3 (C) in reading and writing. A detailed review reveals strengths in explicit reading, punctuation and spelling. The findings suggest that many students face challenges with implicit or inferred meanings. It is suggested that students also struggle with the skills to engage with complex texts: to deconstruct and to think critically about the implications of their messages. Further, students are challenged when asked to write for a specific purpose and audience with appropriate text structures and content.

The direction for strengthening student achievement in literacy is clear. To improve student achievement in literacy the focus of instruction must be on higher order thinking and comprehension skills; specifically, increasing understanding of vocabulary, comprehension of implicit meanings and writing using specific forms for specific audiences.



In Bermuda’s government schools, a significant commitment has been made to literacy training in best practices; however, implementation has not been evenly applied or adopted across the system. A group of teacher leaders were provided with training in Lesley University’s Collaborative Literacy model starting in 2006–2007. The aim was to have teacher leaders provide professional development and coaching in literacy content and instruction in primary and middle schools. Fourteen primary teacher leaders received this training and in 2008-09 began providing professional development and coaching at the lower and upper primary levels.

In 2008–09 middle school teacher leaders were provided with the same training. Unfortunately, middle school schedules have not supported coaching in all classrooms.

Two literacy leaders were trained as District Trainers, with the responsibility of localizing the certification of future upper primary school literacy coaches. In 2012–13 a cohort of upper school teacher leaders received this training from the District Trainers. Similarly, the education system has invested heavily in Reading Recovery, an intervention programme for struggling readers in the early primary years. While these programmes and supports have been effective, they have been inconsistently applied and connected to the wider objectives for improving classroom instruction.

Characteristics of Effective Strategies

Improving the literacy outcomes of our students will necessitate a reliance on best practices. Most literacy strategies point to an all-inclusive network of support as essential for deep implementation. This includes school leadership teams with a laser-like focus on literacy gains, and school-based literacy leaders who provide initial and ongoing professional development for teachers. The emphasis is on in-class coaching for all teachers in research-based instructional practices. Interventions are provided for students who need additional support in order to achieve level specific skills. Relevant classroom resources are made available to teachers to support effective classroom instruction. Home-school partnerships encourage parents to strengthen literacy by continuing the learning at home. Frequent reporting on student achievement results by the school and district leadership teams keeps everyone informed, able to analyze progress and respond in a timely manner.

Framework

Intervention

Data

Texts

Training

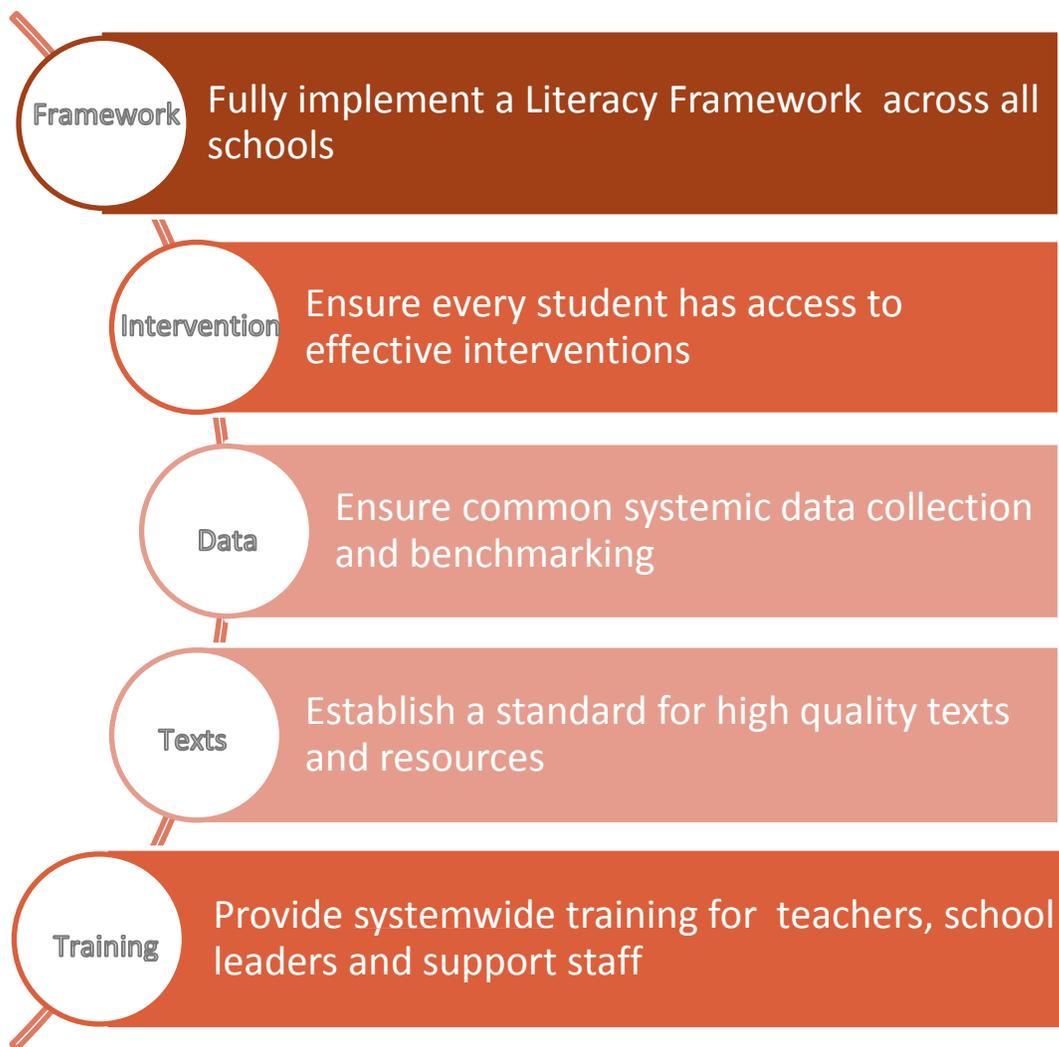
Five Essential Strategies

Key to the National Literacy Strategy is a common framework to guide the instruction of language and literacy in the preschool, primary, middle and senior years, supported by a continual focus on literacy across all content areas. Setting in place foundational strategies for instruction and learning will allow all young people to be successful. Another aspect of the strategy calls for providing students with real support to overcome reading and writing difficulties through focused intervention. The plan also focuses on ensuring that children and youth have access to rich, relevant texts that engage them and inspire them to read critically. Data and benchmarking is critical to making important intervention decisions for students that need support. A last vital ingredient to the success of improving teaching and learning, the National Literacy

Strategy works to build capacity across schools, for teachers, teacher leaders, mentors, coaches, principals and support personnel through systemic training.

A Focus on Equity

Ensuring that all students have access to rigorous and relevant experiences in language arts and literacy will be a key priority seen throughout the National Literacy Strategy. Recent data has revealed gaps in literacy achievement by gender as well as uneven support for students with special needs. Culturally relevant teaching is responsive to the needs of all children because it promotes academic excellence in a manner that attends to students' identities and empowers them as critically conscious citizens.



Strategy I: Fully implement a Literacy Framework across all schools which fosters critical and independent readers and writers, and literacy across all content areas

The framework defines a comprehensive programme that establishes the essential and foundational literacy strategies required in every classroom. Going forward, it is paramount that all teachers have a strong pedagogical understanding of what research has proven to be effective literacy approaches. Teachers must know how to implement these strategies with fidelity and be able to make the appropriate instructional adaptations for varying trajectories in student learning. Consistent and deep implementation will require that all teachers fully implement the framework and that all teachers with specific training share their expertise and coach others to improve their practices.

The Literacy and Language Framework

At preschool, the foundation for reading and writing are established with a literacy emphasis on aural and oral language skills; vocabulary development; phonological and phonemic awareness; and the alphabetic principle. Daily interactive read alouds, shared reading, modelled and shared writing introduces children to text forms on a variety of topics. Small group instruction supports preschool children as they develop as emergent readers and writers.

The critical components of the framework in primary school and middle schools language arts classes are Language and Word Study, Reading Workshop and Writing Workshop. In Language and Word Study, teachers engage students through interactive read alouds with texts that are more complex than they can read independently. In shared reading, teachers and students pay attention to the way text is written as well as to its meaning. In Word Study, students explore the intricacies of language across multiple genres including literature, informational texts, and poetry. They investigate the meaning and structure of words, and conventions and forms of written language.

In the Reading Workshop, guided reading is a main component. During guided reading time teachers gather small groups of students of similar reading abilities to give them systematic reading instruction, using books at the students' instructional level. Literature circles provide a way for students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books with their peers. Students independently read a variety of self-selected texts at their reading level for extended periods. Through mini-lessons, teachers explicitly teach strategic actions for selecting, processing and responding to text.

In the Writing Workshop, teachers demonstrate the process of writing in a particular genre by thinking aloud so students understand the strategies that good writers use. Teachers and students compose texts together and think about the features of text and how to convey meaning in a variety of forms. Students write for sustained periods, exploring different genres and formats for a range of purposes and for a variety of audiences. Teachers also convene small groups of students with similar writing needs to provide guided writing instruction and intervention.

Literacy in the Content Areas

Language and literacy is the foundation for learning in all content areas, each with its own vocabulary, strategies for deconstructing and constructing text, and levels of comprehension and application. In order to ensure that all students in Bermuda's public schools have the skills to be independent and literate learners, we must ensure that all teachers see themselves as literacy teachers and that literacy instruction is current and aligned with the skills of the 21st Century.

In content-specific subject areas at the primary, middle and senior school, the emphasis is on literacy across the content areas. At the middle and senior school, this is critical, recognizing the complex nature of texts that students will be asked to read, understand and think about within each content area. Learning how to unpack disciplinespecific texts and to make meaning from them is necessary in order for senior students to think and respond critically to what they are reading.

Success Target

Fully implemented Literacy Framework across all schools which fosters critical and independent readers and writers, and literacy across all content areas

Year One Key Actions

- ✓ In September 2014, primary school teachers will receive professional development on several critical components of the Literacy Framework.
- ✓ Commencing November 2014, primary school teacher leaders will participate in professional training by identified educators designed to introduce teacher leaders to lower primary framework.
- ✓ Beginning January 2015, primary school teacher leaders will commence at least monthly literacy training and coaching for teachers of literacy in their respective schools.
- ✓ In February 2015, DOE will provide refresher training for all primary school principals and teacher leaders on the literacy framework and components.
- ✓ By February 2015, primary school principals will ensure that the Language and Literacy framework is fully implemented in every literacy lesson.
- ✓ By March 2015, the DOE will commence on-going monitoring of the framework implementation via instructional rounds.

Year Two and Three Actions

- ✓ Beginning September 2015, the DOE will provide training around best practices in lower primary instruction.

Strategy II: Ensure every student has immediate and consistent access to effective, research-based interventions, which close achievement gaps in literacy

Strong literacy instruction in every class will ensure that students' skills progress from class to class, and from year to year. When adults provide appropriate support, thoughtful instruction and a relentless determination to persist, students who may not be currently experiencing success will achieve. The Framework includes a range of instructional strategies that are responsive to different levels of literacy development. In Bermuda schools, students who require additional supports will have access to timely research-based interventions ensuring that all students are given time and opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to be independent learners. Recognizing that there are critical periods for learning particular skills, teachers must be skilled at identifying the level of support required for particular students at particular times. Intervening early when students are first learning how to read and write and at key points along their educational journey will set students on a trajectory for success.

Success Target

Every student has immediate and consistent access to effective, research-based interventions

Year One Key Actions

- ✓ In October 2014, Content Specialist Teachers for Language Arts will receive full training in Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) which will be provided for middle school students.
- ✓ Beginning December 2014, the Content Specialist Teachers will commence training middle school teacher leaders, learning support teachers and reading resource teachers in LLI.
- ✓ Beginning January 2015 the benchmarking component of Leveled Literacy Intervention will commence in all middle schools.
- ✓ In February 2015 Leveled Literacy Intervention will be implemented softly in the middle schools for identified students.
- ✓ By March 2015, the Department will identify and purchase Leveled Literacy Intervention for implementation at the primary level.
- ✓ By March 2015, all principals will have identified students with specific literacy needs, identified possible literacy intervention strategies and developed a plan of intervention for each student.
- ✓ By March 2015, all reading teachers will provide intervention at the lower primary level for those who are at risk for successful reading and who perform significantly lower than their peers.

Year Two Key Actions

- ✓ In September 2015 principals will ensure full implementation of LLI in the middle schools.
- ✓ Beginning September 2015, the Department and Principals will begin to identify, share and ensure best practice strategies are implemented to close the gender gaps.
- ✓ October 2015 training for identified primary school reading teachers will commence on Levelled Literacy Intervention

STRATEGY III: Ensure common systematic data collection and benchmarking in order to drive literacy support and instruction.

A highly functioning educational system knows how students are performing in literacy and are able to gear instruction to ensure progress. To achieve this, the DOE will ensure that schools and parents receive accurate data on the progress students make in their literacy development. This will also ensure that schools have data to make solid decisions for support and intervention. Leadership teams will use in-year data to monitor the progress of each student's achievement over time in order to determine the level of support needed for particular students and for what time period. Through benchmarking, teachers will identify individual student's reading levels and ensure that instruction is geared to raising these reading levels. These assessments, in combination with systematic observations, will allow teachers to monitor student progress, make decisions about interventions and reflect upon the effectiveness of their teaching.

Success Target

All schools report and use system data to drive literacy support and instruction

Year One Key Actions

- ✓ By February 2015 primary school teacher leaders will participate in refresher training on benchmarking at their school sites.
- ✓ In March 2015, DOE will monitor the implementation of primary school benchmarking and conduct audits for the fidelity of assessment.
- ✓ By June 2015, primary school principals will ensure that all students have been benchmarked correctly and have recorded the reading behaviours and levels of all students. The DOE will collect reading data for systematic decision making and analysis.

Strategy IV: Establish a standard for high quality mentor texts and resources to be used by students and teachers in all schools

With the advances in technology, youth growing up in the 21st century are global citizens, engaged in reading and writing about the world. Most everything they encounter is a text to be read interpreted and responded to. This text is not neutral, however, and requires children and youth to be critical thinkers about what they read, not merely passive consumers of the messages these texts convey. With 21st century skills, youth have the opportunity to contribute and to influence thoughts and ideas locally and globally.

To meet the demands of literacy skills for the 21st century, staff must expand the definition of text to include new and emerging text forms. Having access to mentor texts assists students to identify the writer's perspective, to notice and to understand how a writer uses particular elements such as word choice and sentence structure and text features to create explicit and implicit meaning. At more advanced levels, mentor texts can be used to illustrate the use of symbolism, imagery and tone.

Success Target

High quality resources for literacy instruction are utilized in every classroom

Year One Key Actions

- ✓ By January 2015, the DOE will administer an inventory of literacy resources.
- ✓ By February 2015, the DOE will make recommendations for mentor texts by genre at each level and standard literacy resources.

STRATEGY V: Provide required training and coaching for classroom teachers, school leaders and support staff on best practices for literacy instruction and interventions

Ongoing teacher training is a critical factor in making a difference in students' literacy learning. With coaching, teachers reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching as they apply knowledge, develop skills, polish techniques, and deepen their understandings. Through ongoing professional development and coaching, teachers learn to differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students, to improve their teaching practice, and create a more cohesive professional community and student learning environment focused on literacy. In Bermuda's schools, many teachers have received literacy training in primary and middle levels. These staff members will be called on to lend their expertise to closing the instructional gaps identified in the Bermuda government schools.

Success Target

All school leaders, teachers and support personnel will have a strong understanding of effective instructional strategies in literacy and will be actively engaged in refining their skills to differentiate instruction for student's literacy levels

Year One Key Actions

- ✓ Beginning September 2014 Principals, Teachers and Teacher Leaders across the system will participate in focused professional development on building deep understanding of the Framework, knowledge of best practice and instructional leadership.

National Literacy Strategy Team

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