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LETRS
FACT SHEET

What do Utah educators who have already partici-pated in LETRS have to say about their experience?

To see how educators in Alpine have felt about their experience, watch this **video**.

Starting Fall 2022, thousands of Utah's educators will be engaging in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) pro-fessional learning to advance their knowledge and skills in the science of reading. To address the many questions that educators likely have about this opportunity, we have created this LETRS fact sheet to share the key details.

Why is USBE supporting K–3 teachers with this professional learning opportunity?

In considering Utah's early reading data over the last several years, one in every two third-grade students is not reading at grade level by the end of the school year. This data suggests that we have many students not achieving the expected reading skills necessary for future academic success.

To better understand what the state could do to address this student need, we conducted an early grade teacher survey and collected over 4300 responses. The survey results showed significant evidence that many teachers desire to feel more confident in their skills to teach reading. Most notably, many teachers expressed little to no confidence in teaching phonological awareness (74%), and phonics (56%), which are key foundational skills for the building blocks of a proficient reader.

The science of reading is aligned with research-based practices. We want to give educators every opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills to align their practice with the science of reading in order to meet the needs of all students. As such, there is more current research to inform our practices as literacy educators. Furthermore, over 40% of our current K–3 educators earned their teaching license prior to the updated research evidence related to the science of reading.

Given these facts, the USBE concluded that supporting our teachers in advancing their current knowledge about the science of reading would be prioritized in order to improve the reading skills of our K–3

students. Specifically, LETRS is an intensive professional learning opportunity that was selected given its evidence base and ability to empower teachers to understand the science behind why students struggle to read through learning evidence-based instructional practices. LETRS provides details for educators to understand the what, why, and how of scientifically based reading instruction including:

- **What** must be taught during reading and spelling lessons to obtain the best results
- **Why** reading instruction has several key components and how they are related to one another
- **How** to explain spoken and written English language structures
- **How** to interpret individual differences in student achievement
- **How** to implement instructional routines, activities, and approaches and differentiate instruction

What will I learn in each LETRS Unit?

Each LETRS unit addresses each essential component of reading instruction and the foundational concepts that link each component. Units 1–4 include theoretical models and effective instructional strategies from reading science in the essential reading areas of phonology, basic and advanced phonics, and screening and educational diagnostic assessment. While units 5–8 include evidence-based instructional strategies for teaching vocabulary, language and reading comprehension, and writing.What can I expect in participating in LETRS?

Over the next two school years, there will be 8 LETRS units offered between fall 2021 to September 2023. Each unit includes online coursework that includes classroom application with students as a bridge to practice. This online work is meant to be completed prior to the in-person professional learning sessions to ensure each participant has the background knowledge and vocabulary to successfully engage and participate. The in-person sessions deepen participants' knowledge of the background knowledge gained in the online coursework.

- Online Coursework (includes reading time): 7.5–11.5 hours on average per unit
- Bridge to Practice (application with students in your classroom that is embedded within the online course): 2.5–3.5 hours on average per unit
- In-Person Professional Learning Sessions: approximately 6 instructional hours over a single day for each of the 8 units (totalling 48 hours over the 2 years)

LETRS UNITS	ONLINE COURSEWORK
Unit 1: The Challenge of Learning to Read	■ Why reading is difficult ■ The connection between language and literacy ■ What the brain does when a person is reading ■ The skills that support proficient reading ■ How children learn to read and spell ■ Major types of reading difficulties ■ How to use assessment for prevention and early intervention ■ Using assessment to differentiate instruction
Unit 2: The Speech Sounds of English	■ Phonology related to reading and spelling ■ How phonological skills develop ■ The importance of phonemic awareness ■ The consonant and vowel phonemes of the English language ■ Recognize and respond to errors of English learners and dialect speakers ■ Recognize how allophonic variation in speech affects students' spelling ■ How phonological skills should be taught, and which ones should be assessed
Unit 3: Teaching Beginning Phonics, Word Recognition, and Spelling	■ The role of the strands of the Reading Rope in word recognition ■ The role of phonics in reading instruction ■ Compare code-emphasis instruction with meaning-emphasis instruction ■ Explore phoneme-grapheme correspondence system of English ■ Classify phonics elements ■ Understand some basic patterns of position-based spelling in English ■ Instruction sequence: letter names and letter formation; key word for sound-symbol associations; teach correspondences explicitly; use sound-blending routines ■ Word practice and word meaning routines ■ How to teach spelling using dictation ■ Decodable text and when it is important to use ■ Using data to further student success
Unit 4: Advanced Decoding, Spelling, and Word Recognition	■ Advanced word study ■ Position-based spelling correspondences and other orthographic conventions ■ Phoneme-grapheme mapping ■ The six syllable types and how they should be taught ■ Distinguish syllables from morphemes ■ Suffix rules ■ Spelling screeners and how to interpret the results ■ Best practices for teaching spelling ■ Relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension ■ Building word, sentence, and passage reading fluency ■ Interpret phonological, phonics, spelling, and fluency data ■ Aligning practices with scientific evidence

LETRS UNITS	ONLINE COURSEWORK
Unit 5: **The Mighty Word: Oral Language and Vocabulary**	■ The relationship among vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, oral language proficiency, and reading comprehension ■ Mental map of a well-known word ■ Words that should be taught directly ■ Introducing new words ■ Effective practice of new words ■ Creating a language-rich classroom
Unit 6: **Digging for Meaning: Understanding Reading Comprehension**	■ The language and cognitive skills that support reading comprehension ■ Distinguish comprehension products from comprehension processes ■ The goal of comprehension instruction is to create a coherent mental model of the text ■ Characteristics of students who struggle with language and reading comprehension ■ The connection among vocabulary, background knowledge, and reading comprehension ■ Process for teaching texts ■ The importance of syntax and how to teach it ■ The importance of text coherence and its relationship to mental coherence ■ How text structure affects comprehension
Unit 7: **Text-Driven Comprehension Instruction**	■ The balance of foundational skills with language comprehension ■ Which comprehension strategies are supported by research ■ Effective strategies during and after reading ■ Student-generated questions before, during, and after reading ■ The importance of generating questions that deepen understanding of text ■ Reread and revisit text for various purposes ■ The process for planning an entire reading comprehension lesson for narrative and informational text ■ Adapting instruction or special populations
Unit 8: **The Reading-Writing Connection**	■ Writing is important because it benefits reading ■ Understand the foundational and language skills necessary for writing ■ The phases of the writing process ■ Letter formation and handwriting fluency ■ Explicit instruction for spelling ■ How students gain competence in building sentences ■ Narrative writing development ■ Informational and opinion writing development ■ Methods for assessing student progress in writing