

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Early Literacy Screening

### What is early literacy screening?

Early literacy screening is a **formative assessment process** that provides valuable information about students' early literacy skills and identifies gaps within the education system.

Early literacy screening is **not** a diagnostic assessment or an evaluation of a student's academic achievements. The results of early literacy screening are not meant to designate in an inclusive education funding category, nor are results meant to evaluate the performance of teachers or make decisions about funding.

### Why is early literacy screening important?

Understanding a student's literacy skills early on in their education journey allows for prompt implementation of necessary instructional supports and interventions that can have a profound impact on their literacy skills and future reading abilities.

At the classroom level, the results from early literacy screening can:

- Identify students who may need additional literacy support through instruction and/or interventions early in their education journey;
- Inform whole class, small group, and individualized instructional and intervention approaches by identifying the reading-related skills of focus;
- Document and monitor student progress while they receive targeted instructional support and/or literacy interventions;
- Inform adjustments to instruction and/or interventions to enhance student learning.

At a systems-level, results from early literacy screening can:

- Examine the effectiveness of and identify gaps within the education system;
- Help determine how districts and schools can best allocate resources to support student literacy development;
- Help identify how the education system can be restructured to improve educational outcomes for all students.

## How does early literacy screening fit with other types of assessment?

### Early Literacy Screening

- A series of brief, **formative assessments** administered using an early literacy screening tool that assesses foundational literacy skills multiple times (i.e., 2-3) throughout the school year.
- Screening results can identify students who need additional educational support and/or interventions that target specific literacy skills.
- Screening results may also flag which students require additional assessments, such as a diagnostic assessment.



*Like a lighthouse drawing our attention to something in the distance, early literacy screening shines a light on students' early literacy skills and draws our attention to those who may benefit from additional support.*

### Diagnostic Assessment

- An evaluation procedure that allows for the careful and systematic examination of a student's literacy skills, administered in response to a significant educational need identified.
- Diagnostic assessment results provide a more thorough understanding of various areas of literacy development to identify where the instructional focus should be, and what additional supports may be needed.
- Not all students will need diagnostic assessments. Diagnostic assessments are typically reserved for instances where a significant educational need has been identified or where progress monitoring shows implemented literacy supports have not met student needs.
- Diagnostic assessments are more comprehensive than screening tools and look more closely at specific areas of students' literacy development.
- Diagnostic assessments may be Level B or C assessments (e.g., academic achievement tests) or psychoeducational assessments.



*Like binoculars, diagnostic assessments allow us to closely examine specific areas of students' literacy skills and identify effective instruction and intervention.*

### Progress Monitoring

- A quick, formative assessment that measures a student's progress towards literacy goals.
- Progress monitoring results can inform instructional decision making and guide teachers to adjust their instruction where necessary.
- Progress monitoring assessments are directly aligned with what is being taught in the classroom, are sensitive to student learning, and can be administered as often as needed.
- An early literacy screening tool can be used to monitor student progress.



*Like a compass helps continue moving forward on the right path, progress monitoring is about knowing where we are and then understanding where we want to go. Progress monitoring allows us to adjust instruction and supports in a responsive and timely way.*

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## **B.C.'s Approach to Early Literacy Screening**

### **NEW: Why is the ministry mandating early literacy screening?**

As part of the ministry mandate to ensure that B.C.'s literacy instruction and early interventions are the most effective in North America, the ministry is expanding its direction on early literacy screening. In the 2025-26 school year, school districts were required to begin implementing mandatory screening in kindergarten, at a minimum. Beginning in the 2026-27 school year, districts will be required to expand their early literacy screening practices to include all students from kindergarten to Grade 3. Mandatory early literacy screening is one of the ways we will make meaningful progress on literacy outcomes for B.C. students in our K-12 system. By ensuring all public school students are screened in K-3, schools will be able to identify students who may have difficulty reading and provide the targeted instruction and interventions they need to become proficient readers.

### **How does early literacy screening connect to the B.C. Curriculum?**

Early literacy screening is intended to determine where students are at regarding their reading skill development and identify students who may require additional instructional supports and/or interventions. The information provided by screening can be helpful in ensuring that all students are achieving proficiency in their literacy.

### **NEW: Is the ministry developing a provincial early literacy screening tool?**

Yes, the ministry is developing the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool. This provincial early literacy screening tool will be available in English and French for French Immersion and will be required for use in all public kindergarten to Grade 3 classrooms across the province at the beginning of the 2027-28 school year.

The B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will not be an adaptation of an existing commercially available screening tool. Instead, the provincial tool will be reflective of B.C., both its culture and curriculum, and will use norms derived from B.C. students.

### **NEW: Why is the ministry developing the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool?**

The ministry is developing the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool to ensure that students' literacy skills are assessed using norms derived from, and representative of, the B.C. student population and reflective of our diverse communities and cultures, including Indigenous and First Nations learners. Currently, no commercially available early literacy screening tool fully meets the needs of B.C.'s diverse student population or aligns with the province's curriculum and educational context.

Developing a provincial early literacy screening tool will ensure that screening results are meaningful and useful for educators by accurately reflecting the strengths and needs of our student population and supporting instruction aligned with B.C.'s curriculum. The provincial tool will help educators understand where students are in their development of early reading skills and to plan instruction for the class accordingly. The tool will also identify students who may be experiencing reading difficulties and would

benefit from timely literacy supports and interventions.

The development of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool supports the province's consistent approach to early literacy screening, ensuring all schools and districts have access to a tool that is robust, culturally responsive, and aligned with B.C.'s educational priorities.

### **NEW: When will the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool be ready for provincial use?**

The B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will be ready for provincial use at the start of the 2027-28 school year. Once ready, implementation of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will be mandatory in all public kindergarten to Grade 3 classrooms.

### **NEW: How does the development of a provincial screening tool impact district screening practices in the current school year?**

For the 2026-27 school year, districts can continue to use (a) one of the approved commercially available screening tools (i.e., Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus, and DIBELS) **or** (b) another commercially available screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria **or** (c) if already in use, a locally developed screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) to expand their screening practice from kindergarten to Grade 3. With the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool being required in the 2027-28 school year, school districts are discouraged from developing and introducing new local screening tools for kindergarten to Grade 3 at this time.

Districts are also encouraged to continue growing teachers' expertise in literacy instruction, screening and intervention. Training teachers in the implementation of evidence-based screening tool(s) is highly valuable, as the new B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will be designed to align with these tools, following similar structures and administration instructions. This means the skills and familiarity teachers develop with other evidence-based screening tool(s) in the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years will support a smoother transition when the provincial tool is implemented in the 2027-28 school year.

While school districts can continue using a locally developed screening tool in the 2026-27 school year, the ministry recommends early consideration is given to supporting teachers with the transition to the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in advance of the 2027-28 school year. School districts that are using Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus, or DIBELS should find the transition to the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool relatively seamless, however, there may be more significant transition planning required for districts using other commercially available tools or local tools where screening approaches may vary (e.g., the use of timed measures).

### **NEW: What opportunities are available for sector engagement in the development of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool?**

The development and refinement of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will be further informed by the insights and experiences of B.C. teachers, school districts, education partners, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and other Indigenous education partners. Opportunities for engagement – such as participation in tool piloting and field testing, and teacher focus groups – will be made available to schools,

districts and educators over the next two school years. This extensive engagement and collaboration will help ensure that the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool is truly made in B.C. and reflects experiences and professional expertise of educators across the province.

### **NEW: How will school districts be supported with the implementation of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in the 2027-28 school year?**

School districts will be supported in the implementation of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in the 2027-28 school year through professional learning and training materials. The team leading the development of the provincial tool will develop comprehensive teacher professional learning materials to support the administration of the tool and interpretation of screening results. These materials will be developed alongside the tool itself and will include training videos, an administration manual, and a technical manual to support standardized and effective implementation across the province.

The ministry recognizes that many districts have invested significant time and resources in teacher training to administer commercially available or locally developed early literacy screening tools, and that there may be concerns about the need to retrain teachers when the provincial tool is introduced in the 2027-28 school year.

We want to assure school districts and educators that the training teachers receive in implementing evidence-based screening tools is valuable and transferable, as the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool is being designed to align with other commonly used early literacy screening tools. Therefore, the knowledge, skills, and familiarity teachers develop by using evidence-based tools during the 2025-26 and 2026-27 school years will support a smooth transition to the provincial tool when it is implemented in the beginning of the 2027-28 school year. Building local routines and practices related to literacy screening, instruction, and intervention will be useful for all districts when implementing the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in the 2027-28 school year.

In the 2026-27 school year, school districts are encouraged to begin supporting teachers with the transition to the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in advance of the 2027-28 school year. One way to do this is through piloting and field testing of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool. While school districts that are using Acadience Reading, aimswebPlus, or DIBELS should find the transition to the B.C. Early Literacy Screening tool relatively seamless, there may be more significant transition planning required for districts using other commercially available tools or local tools where screening approaches may vary (e.g., the use of timed measures).

*For additional information or questions on ways to support a successful transition to the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool, please reach out to the ministry at [Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca).*

### **How does the development of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool impact the literacy professional learning grants?**

For the 2026-27 school year, districts with unspent professional learning grants may choose to use their remaining funding to support the expansion of early literacy screening for kindergarten to Grade 3. Districts

may also choose to use remaining funds to continue supporting teacher professional learning and broader capacity building in literacy instruction and intervention that is not tied to a particular early literacy screening tool.

*School districts are required to complete a [Literacy Professional Learning Grant Expenditure Report](#) by June 30, 2026, providing the ministry with information on how grant funding is being allocated and used. Completed forms should be emailed to [Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca).*

*If funding has not been fully expended by that time, remaining funds must be spent by June 30, 2027, and a second Expenditure Report must be submitted to the ministry by July 15, 2027.*

## ❖ **Considerations for French Immersion Screening**

### **What early literacy screening tool should school districts offering French Immersion programs be using in the 2026-27 school year?**

For the 2026-27 school year, school districts offering French Immersion programs are required to use (a) an approved commercially available screening tool offered in French (i.e., Acadience Reading) **or** (b) another commercially available screening tool offered in French that meets the ministry's criteria **or** (c) a locally developed French screening tool that meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

### **Can a school district already screening students in French continue using their existing screening tool in the 2026-27 school year?**

School districts that are already screening students in French and have invested in commercially available or locally developed/adapted tools may continue to use these tools for the 2026-27 school year, so long as the screening tool meets the ministry's criteria.

Early literacy screening tools in French that do not meet the ministry's criteria outlined in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) should not be used for screening.

### **NEW: How can school districts meet the provincial mandate to expand screening from kindergarten to Grade 3 if their selected screening tool does not include measures beyond Grade 2?**

For the 2026-27 school year, school districts will be required to expand early literacy screening to include all students from kindergarten to Grade 3 in English and French Immersion programs. The ministry acknowledges that not all commercially available early literacy screening tools fully meet provincial requirements for all student populations, including students in French Immersion, and that some early literacy screening tools may not include measures beyond Grade 2.

We recognize that this may cause a gap in your district's screening practices for the 2026-27 school year. Addressing this gap is one of the reasons why the ministry is developing the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool, which will include screening measures for students from kindergarten through Grade 3 in both English

and French Immersion programs.

Some school districts may have identified local solutions to support early literacy screening for Grade 3 students in French Immersion programs. The ministry will provide additional guidance to districts through upcoming K-12 Literacy Supports Community of Practice meetings to support the implementation of K-3 screening in 2026-27 school year. However, some strategies we are aware of districts using include:

- Using commercially available screeners from the end of Grade 2 at the beginning of Grade 3.
- Using the [ÉCLAIR diagnostic screener](#) developed in Ontario.

### **Can a school district use a different early literacy screening tool for English and for French Immersion screening?**

Yes. For the 2026-27 school year a school district may use two different screening tools to screen students in English and in French Immersion programs, so long as both screening tools meet the ministry's criteria outlined in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

### **Should French Immersion students be screened in French or English?**

French Immersion students receive most of their instruction in the French language from kindergarten to Grade 3. The focus in kindergarten will be to introduce students to learning topics in the curriculum through French language instruction. When students are entering Kindergarten, however, in most instances they will not have the French language skills yet to engage with early literacy screening.

French Immersion teachers can begin screening in English at the beginning of the school year and then progress towards screening in French later in the school year. Thereafter, all early literacy screening should be conducted in French for French Immersion students.

Schools and districts should offer professional learning on how to administer early literacy screening in both English and French.

### **✧ Considerations for Francophone Screening**

### **Which early literacy screening tool should be used to screen Francophone learners at the Conseil scolaire francophone?**

The approved commercially available early literacy screening tools listed in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#) do not contemplate the unique language screening needs of Francophone learners in B.C. The Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) has independently developed an evidence-based early literacy screening tool to screen Francophone students. The CSF will continue to use this locally developed tool, ensuring it meets the ministry's criteria provided in the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#).

### **Does early literacy screening differ for French Language Learner status?**

French Language Learner (FLL) status only applies to students in the Conseil scolaire francophone (CSF) and differs from students attending French Immersion programs. CSF teachers should be mindful of students'

linguistic backgrounds, home language exposure, and cultural perspectives on literacy. Early literacy screening tools can be used for FLL students, but results must be interpreted with caution, considering their level of French exposure and proficiency. It is recommended that teachers assess both phonological awareness (which can transfer across languages) and oral language proficiency to better understand literacy development for FLL students. If an FLL student is not yet proficient in French, teachers can supplement the early literacy screening tool with vocabulary and language comprehension assessments.

## ✧ **Considerations for English Language Learner Screening**

### **What considerations should be made for English Language Learning (ELL) students?**

As with French Language Learning, teachers should be mindful of students' linguistic backgrounds, home language exposure, and cultural perspectives on literacy. Early literacy screening tools can be used for ELL students, but results must be interpreted with caution, considering their level of English exposure and proficiency. It is recommended that teachers assess both phonological awareness (which can transfer across languages) and oral language proficiency to better understand literacy development for ELL students. If an ELL student is not yet proficient in English, teachers can supplement the early literacy screening tool with vocabulary and language comprehension assessments.

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## **Early Literacy Screening Tools**

### **What is an early literacy screening tool?**

Early literacy screening tools are quick, evidence-based assessments used to identify students who require additional literacy supports and/or interventions. Early literacy screening tools assess key elements of early literacy, such as phonemic awareness, letter recognition, and decoding skills, to gauge where students are in their development of foundational reading skills and inform targeted instruction and intervention approaches for students needing additional support. Screening tools should be administered to most students.

Early literacy screening tools should be:

- Brief
- Specific (measures specific foundational early literacy skills; may inform instruction, supports and intervention)
- Reliable (produces consistent results) and valid (measures the skills it is intended to)
- Predictive (forecasts future reading performance with reasonable accuracy)
- Administered by a teacher, ideally the classroom teacher

### **Which literacy skills can an early literacy screening tool assess?**

The ministry's early literacy screening component criteria, provided on page 2 of the [Early Literacy Screening Tools Resource](#), outlines the foundational early literacy skills a screening tool may assess at each grade level. Each early literacy screening tool will include different subtests to assess foundational early literacy skills. Teachers seeking a more comprehensive formative assessment of students' early literacy skills may choose to

add additional subtests to the screening tool.

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## Administration of Early Literacy Screening Tools

### Is early literacy screening appropriate for all students?

There are a few instances where the approved early literacy screening tools may not be appropriate for students. Examples include, but are not limited to, students with limited verbal skills, oral apraxia, fluency-based speech disorders, complex medical profiles, or students who are Deaf.

*Refer to the administration manual for the early literacy screening tool being used by your district for important considerations regarding cases in which the tool should not be administered.* In these instances, teachers may choose to administer other assessments that are better suited to assess the student's early literacy skills and monitor their progress towards literacy goals.

### When should early literacy screening tools be administered throughout the school year?

It's important to consider when early literacy screening tools are administered throughout the school year. Most early literacy screening tools have recommended times when the screener and/or its criteria components should be administered within the school year. *Refer to the administration manual for the early literacy screening tool being used by your district for important information on when to screen students.*

It is standard practice to screen students at the beginning of the school year; however, it is typically recommended to wait at least two weeks into the start of the school year before students are screened. This allows time for the students to become comfortable in their new classroom environment and with their teacher, and to also recapture some of the reading-related skills they may not have practiced over the summer holidays. For kindergarten students who have not enrolled or attended school before, this is a particularly important consideration. Screening too early in the new school year may result in the over-identification of students who appear to need additional literacy instructional supports or interventions.

Early literacy screening tools should be administered multiple times (i.e., 2-3) throughout the school year. Therefore, it is also recommended that teachers avoid screening immediately after other school breaks and holidays, such as winter and spring.

### Can students be provided with accommodations or modifications when administering early literacy screening?

Most early literacy screening tools have been designed to be administered to students without accommodations or modifications. Therefore, to maintain the tool's validity, it is important that it is administered using the standardized procedures, as outlined in the tool's administration manual. The interpretation of early literacy screening results is only informative when students have been assessed using standardized procedures.

There are a few instances where accommodations may be considered and used. If you are considering the

use of an accommodation for a student, please refer to the early literacy screening tool’s administration manual for specific administration guidelines and approved accommodations. Accommodations should only be used for students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP), a Student Support Plan (SPP), or an Annual Instructional Plan (AIP) that identifies the accommodation as a method or support required by the student to meet their educational and learning needs and when the instructional manual for the tool indicates that the accommodation is approved for use during screening administration. Accommodations should not be used to improve screening results. If an accommodation is provided, it is important to clearly document the type of accommodation used.

Modifications made to early literacy screening tools (e.g., extending the time on a timed assessment, changing scoring rules, changing administration directions) can produce invalid results, as they are likely to be meaningfully different than the results that would have been produced without the modification. Therefore, modifications should not be made to early literacy screening tools.

### **Should students practice or prepare for early literacy screening assessments?**

No, students should not practice or prepare for early literacy screening assessments as they are designed to capture a snapshot of a student’s current skills. Practicing the items on screening assessments or coaching students before screening can distort the results and reduce the accuracy of the results. If students practice the assessment items in advance, the results may not accurately reflect their literacy skills, potentially resulting in missed opportunities for timely supports and/or interventions.

### **Why are some components of early literacy screening tools timed?**

Timed elements of screening tools can help teachers assess the automaticity and fluency of the skill being demonstrated, which is an important component of overall reading success.

Most commercially available early literacy screening tools have timed components in their assessments. If you use one of these tools, it is important that you follow the administration instructions regarding timing to maintain standardization and reliability of the tools and results.

It is important to be sensitive to the needs of students who may be nervous or tempted to watch the clock. While you should be mindful of following the screening tool’s standardized administration instructions and accommodation procedures, you can be discreet while timing.

Examples of discreet timing may include:

- Not telling the student it is a timed task. Instead, you can start the timing when the student begins to read.
- Ensuring the device used to time is not within view of the student (e.g., discreetly using a phone or stopwatch that is silent and out of the student’s sight).
- Allow the student to continue to respond beyond the time limit, noting where the student was when the time elapsed.

## **Will Privacy Impact Assessments (PIAs) be required for the safe storage of screening data?**

Yes. School districts and independent school authorities (ISAs) are responsible for PIAs. School districts and ISAs should establish clear local policies and processes for the storage of student data, if these are not already in place.

## **What should schools and districts expect regarding costs related to early literacy screening tools (e.g., licensing, training, etc.)?**

School districts and independent school authorities (ISAs) are responsible for the associated costs related to the use of a commercially available early literacy screening tool selected for their district or ISA. While costs may vary depending on the specific early literacy screening tools, schools and districts can anticipate costs related to the procurement, development, and implementation of a commercially available early literacy screening tool, as well as costs associated with data storage, training, courses, and workshops. While commercially available screening tools may have costs associated with them, the paper version of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool will be free for schools and districts to use.

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## **Reporting Early Literacy Screening Results**

### **NEW: Should screening results be included in student report cards?**

Screening results are intended to inform instructional decision making and can be helpful for teachers in monitoring students' progress. For the 2026-27 school year, there is no requirement that screening results are included in the student's report card, but districts are able to set local policy regarding the communication of screening results to parents. **Screening results should not be used to determine a student's Language Arts proficiency level on their report card.**

With the launch of the B.C. Early Literacy Screening Tool in the 2027-28 school year, reporting requirements will be clarified. The ministry will share additional information about reporting requirements once confirmed and ahead of the 2027-28 school year.

### **How else could screening results be shared with parents and caregivers?**

Screening results can be a good starting place for a conversation with parents and caregivers regarding their child's literacy skills. Teachers may wish to discuss the screening process and results with parents and caregivers informally throughout the school year, as this information can be helpful to parents and caregivers in understanding their child's development of literacy skills and progress towards literacy goals, as well as how they can best support their child's learning at home.

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## Next Steps After Screening

### What are the next steps after screening?

#### Classroom teachers may want to consider:

- Using screening results to guide whole-class, small-group, and individualized literacy instruction and interventions.
- Identifying students who may need additional literacy support.
- Collaborating with other school-based educators to plan instruction for the class, identify small groups, and determine the next steps for each student.
- Monitoring and tracking student progress and sharing successes with your school team.
- Adjusting instruction and/or interventions to enhance student learning.

#### School leaders may want to consider:

- Coordinating next steps with staff based on screening results.
- Looking for trends to determine the literacy needs of students within the school.
- Building staff capacity with professional learning opportunities related to literacy screening, instruction, and interventions.
- Sharing provincial resources to support teacher practice.

#### District administrators may want to consider:

- Using screening results to identify needs and coordinate district-wide supports.
- Connecting screening results and achievement data to district goals around literacy, equity, and student success and required reporting in the Framework for Enhanced Student Learning (FESL).
- Investing and supporting sustained, evidence-based literacy professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff.
- Promoting provincial literacy resources to support teacher practice.

### **NEW: Will the ministry be releasing guidance on literacy instruction and interventions?**

While much of the K-12 Literacy Supports Initiative to date has focused on early literacy screening, we know that early literacy screening is only the first step in supporting students' literacy development. Early identification of students' literacy skills enables the timely delivery of effective classroom instruction and targeted interventions, which can have a profound impact on the development of early literacy skills, help close achievement gaps, and strengthen lifelong reading abilities.

To support this, the ministry will be investing in teacher resources and professional learning to support both current educators in the K-12 system and future educators enrolled in teacher education programs. Our goal is to ensure that teachers feel prepared and confident in their ability to support student literacy through effective instruction and interventions.

The ministry will be building on existing work, such as the B.C. Learning Pathways and Learning Progressions, and providing resources related to literacy instruction and intervention, as well as introducing new professional learning opportunities focused on literacy for educators. Additional information about these resources and learning opportunities will be shared throughout the school year.

We know that teachers and district staff bring a great deal of professional expertise in literacy, and that many teachers are already implementing instructional and intervention strategies in their classrooms that align with research. We want to encourage all educators to use strategies and interventions that research shows to be effective in strengthening student literacy skills.

Further information and resources on literacy instruction and interventions will be released as available.

If you have questions regarding the K-12 Literacy Supports Initiative, please contact:  
[Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca](mailto:Literacy.Supports@gov.bc.ca)



Ministry of  
Education and  
Child Care