

STUDENT LEARNING AND SUCCESS

Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies

Empowering kindergarten through third-grade teachers to improve student literacy through research-based professional development

WHY IS THIS INITIATIVE NEEDED?

The impact of COVID-19 has been pronounced among early learners, for whom development of reading and writing skills is critical to success in all subjects and later grades. To counteract unfinished learning, the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) will offer [Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies](#) for 10,000 educators. The academies, with training from [Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling \(LETRS\)](#), will begin in August 2021 and continue through December 2024.

HOW WILL THIS INITIATIVE WORK?

Oklahoma is offering this comprehensive, no-cost professional development opportunity to 10,000 kindergarten through third-grade educators over the next three years. Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies will be implemented in four cohorts beginning in August 2021. Each cohort will engage in professional learning for two years and cover eight modules on essential literacy instruction topics, including phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, writing and assessment. Each module will include self-paced study and one day of facilitator-led learning. Participants must commit to completing the full two-year course and will devote approximately an hour each week plus one day each unit for live training to complete the program.

WHAT IS THE RESEARCH BASE FOR THIS INITIATIVE?

LETRS is an evidence-based program that provides professional learning grounded in the science of reading, a body of comprehensive and multi-disciplinary research for how students learn to read and write proficiently, why some students struggle and how educators can teach and intervene, if necessary.

- This [article](#) from the Institute for Multisensory Education includes an overview of the science of reading and teaching approaches.
- [The Science of Reading and Its Educational Implications](#) is a more in-depth discussion of the research and how it applies to instruction.
- Louisa Moats, the primary author of LETRS, updated her seminal paper "[Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science](#)" in 2020.
- The Association for Supervision and Curriculum (ASCD) [summarizes the research around reading](#) and what this means for teachers.

WHAT IS THE OSDE'S TOTAL INVESTMENT IN THIS INITIATIVE?

The OSDE will use approximately \$13 million of its federal emergency relief funding to provide no-cost LETRS training for 10,000 kindergarten through third-grade teachers.

Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is eligible to register?

Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies are for educators who teach reading or work with kindergarten through third-grade students in Oklahoma public schools (e.g., general and special education teachers, reading specialists, administrators and those who teach English learners or in Title 1 schools). Educators who work with students in pre-kindergarten or with students in older grades with identified reading difficulties may attend if space allows.

Are teachers required to participate?

No, but Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies will help educators utilize evidence-based approaches designed to improve reading and writing proficiency. Because reading and writing proficiently are building blocks to future academic success and in postsecondary pursuits, the Science of Reading Academies will provide educators with tools to help students be successful lifelong readers and writers.

Why should teachers participate in the Science of Reading Academies?

Participating educators will be equipped with comprehensive, evidence-based professional development they can use in their classrooms throughout their careers to help students build literacy skills. Additionally, they will receive a micro-credential in the science of reading upon completion of the course.

How can educators register for the academies?

[Registration](#) for Cohort 1 is open now. Registrants must ensure their administrator knows they are interested in participating. If a substitute is needed, the district will be responsible for that cost.

Will training sessions be live or virtual?

Most participants will have half of the training sessions in person and the other half in a virtual setting. Participants can also select training sessions in the evenings or on weekends.

What should educators who participate expect?

Participants will spend approximately an hour each week in asynchronous instruction, including videos and independent reading, and will apply information from the week's lesson through an activity with their students. At the end of each unit, which will take 6-8 weeks to complete, educators will work with a facilitator to reinforce content from that unit.

How can districts encourage participation and ensure their teachers' success in this workshop?

Districts may encourage groups of educators to participate together, allowing time to reflect on their learning, or offer a stipend to teachers who complete all requirements of the Science of Reading Academies using federal relief funds (ESSER I, II and III) or Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA) funds.

For questions about the Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies, contact Megan Ashbaugh at megan.ashbaugh@sde.ok.gov.

For information about federal coronavirus relief funding, see the [American Rescue Act FAQs](#).