

EMBARGOED UNTIL AUGUST 18 @ 9 AM ET

**INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE ON TEACHER PREPARATION
RELEASES PRELIMINARY REPORT ON LANDSCAPE OF STATE-LEVEL STANDARDS
FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION**

NEWARK, Del. (August 18, 2015) — The International Literacy Association (ILA) today issued the first of a two-part report by its Teacher Preparation Task Force reviewing preparation that U.S. teachers receive to teach literacy and how different state departments of education differ in their requirements. The preliminary report uncovered inconsistent standards and criteria for preparing teachers on how to teach literacy.

“While there are limitations to this data and further review is underway, our initial findings show that few states require coursework related to preparation to teach literacy,” said Deanna Birdyshaw, co-chair of the ILA Teacher Preparation Task Force and lecturer, University of Michigan. “Further investigation of both state and preservice teacher preparation programs is necessary. The data contained here reflect the first phase of our study of what states’ requirements are for preservice teachers in terms of developing their skills as literacy instructors.”

Angela Rutherford, associate professor at the University of Mississippi and task force member, explained, “Surprisingly, our analysis showed only 18 states require specific courses in literacy for elementary teacher candidates, and half the states did not require specific coursework in any of the licensure areas. Further, there do not appear to be any requirements for literacy experiences during student teaching or other required practica.”

The 13-member task force, co-chaired by Birdyshaw and Elizabeth Swaggerty, associate professor of Reading Education at East Carolina University, includes leading literacy experts from across the country. The task force used a two-part procedure to inform this preliminary report. The first part included compiling information about requirements for teacher preparation in literacy from 50 state education department websites between July and October 2014. The taskforce then interviewed state education department officials from 23 states to confirm the data collected and to increase understanding of how literacy instruction was addressed in the certification guidelines. The second year goal is to interview Teacher Education Programs officials, administrators and professors in all 50 states to determine how they are integrating the guidelines.

Implications of Findings

“Our primary takeaway is that all stakeholders need to be involved in the conversation about how to improve preparation of preservice teachers to design and implement instruction that increases the literacy learning of children in kindergarten through grade 12,” added Swaggerty. “We hope this initial report is a starting point for that conversation.”

Given the importance that state education standards and assessments play in the review of Teacher Education Programs, analysis of the data suggests:

- Systematic and comprehensive research that investigates preservice program features that effectively prepare candidates to develop students' literacy across all grades and in all disciplines should be conducted and shared.
- State standards and assessments related to literacy teacher preparation should be research based and of sufficient quality to provide the feedback needed to develop or revise teacher education curricula and state certification guidelines.
- State guidelines for preservice teacher preparation should make explicit reference to what candidates should know and be able to do in relationship to literacy instruction.
- All preservice teachers should be required to participate in activities during their practica that develop their ability to design literacy instruction and monitor literacy growth.

In considering the findings, the taskforce recognized three primary limitations to the research.

1. This is a preliminary report with the second phase ongoing.
2. Teacher education programs are in transition, with state education department officials from 15 of the 23 states interviewed stating that changes were being made to teacher certification requirements in the coming year.
3. State education officials interviewed were knowledgeable about the teaching requirements, but not necessarily experts in the areas related specifically to teaching literacy.

“Today’s teachers must be well prepared to help students acquire the literacy skills they will need to learn, work and live in a complex world,” said Dan Mangan, director of public affairs, ILA. “The preliminary work of this task force has helped us to better understand the landscape of state-level standards and criteria for teacher preparation for literacy instruction through a research-validated framework. We look forward to insights from the second phase of the task force to determine how best to move ahead to ensure the more than 250,000 new teachers entering the work force annually are prepared.”

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

The International Literacy Association (ILA) is a global advocacy and membership organization dedicated to advancing literacy for all through its network of more than 300,000 literacy educators, researchers and experts across 75 countries. With 60 years of experience in the field, ILA believes in the transformative power of literacy to create more successful societies, healthy communities and prosperous economies. ILA collaborates with partners across the world to develop, gather and disseminate high-quality resources, best practices and cutting-edge research to empower educators, inspire students and inform policymakers. The International Literacy Association publishes several peer-reviewed journals, including *The Reading Teacher*, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* and *Reading Research Quarterly*. For more information, visit literacyworldwide.org.

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