

Utah State Board of Education  
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# LETRS

## FOR ADMINISTRATORS

### FACT SHEET



**What do Utah educators who have already participated in LETRS have to say about their experience?**

To see how educators in Alpine have felt about their experience, you may want to watch this [video](#).

**Starting Fall 2021**, hundreds of school leaders and school psychologists will be engaging in LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) for Administrators professional learning to advance their knowledge and leadership in the science of reading while supporting their teachers and coaches in implementation of the knowledge and skills gained from LETRS professional learning. To address the many questions that participants likely have about this opportunity, we have created this fact sheet to share the key details.

**Why is USBE supporting school leaders and school psychologists 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 and contributing members to their community.

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.

In addition, a similar survey was conducted with principals across the state. The survey results of the 341 participants showed that only 34% believed that to a great extent, the instruction and interventions in their schools were sufficient to close the literacy achievement gap.

In recent years the science of reading is aligning 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 educators and leaders 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.

As a school leader or school psychologist, your continued support and leadership for teachers and coaches learning through LETRS is an integral part of their success and improving K-3 student literacy outcomes. The research-based course, LETRS for Administrators, complements LETRS and guides building leaders in implementing research-based, multi-tiered instruction. Administrators are provided specific steps for facilitating change, developing a comprehensive assessment plan, managing resources, assembling a school leadership team, and making data-based decisions.

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### **What qualified our district/charter to participate?**

In light of COVID-19, the Utah State Board of Education used middle of year Acadience Reading growth data from the 2020-2021 school year to determine which school districts and charters would be eligible to participate. Knowing that many K-3 students will need their learning gains accelerated now more than ever, providing this timely support is even more important. More specifically, if the school district or charter had four or more student groups (e.g, low income, English learners, students with disabilities) showing less than the state’s average of typical or better progress, then that school district or charter was invited and needed to participate in a professional learning opportunity. In the end, 69 school districts and charters were chosen.

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### **Who is expected to attend?**

All elementary principals, vice principals, and any school psychologists who are employed by a district or charter school are expected to attend. This includes only those within these roles on or before September 15, 2021. This includes only those who are employed in the district and charters who met the qualifications listed above, not all administrators and school psychologists across the state.

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### **When and where will the sessions be held?**

The professional learning sessions will be held in regional locations across the state. Actual locations and dates will be determined in coordination with each school district and charter school. Sessions will likely occur between August 2021 through September 2023.

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### **Will participants earn credit for participating?**

Each participant will receive 1.5 USBE credits in MIDAS.

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### **What can I expect in participating in LETRS for Administrators?**

Over the next two years, there will be offerings of 2 full days of professional learning along with online coursework which takes approximately 10-16 hours to complete. The completion of the online content and in-person sessions can be done in any order over the 2 years to provide greater flexibility.

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### **What will I learn in the LETRS for Administrators Sessions?**

LETRS for Administrators is a course of study that combines *A Principal’s Primer for Raising Reading Achievement* with an online component and 2 days of face-to-face professional learning to help instructional leaders create the systems and structures needed to improve overall literacy instruction. LETRS for Administrators helps literacy leaders:

- Create efficient methods of analyzing student data
- Establish effective instructional blocks in literacy
- Examine resources for all tiers of instruction
- Support their LETRS professional learning participants by providing an overview of all 8 units of LETRS, data and accountability tools, and resources for supporting literacy improvement in your school

*A Principal's Primer for Raising Reading Achievement* is a how-to manual for principals who want to improve the overall reading performance of an elementary school population. It explains in very practical terms exactly how a principal can lead a school-wide implementation of research-based, multi-tiered reading instruction.

**A Principal's Primer for Raising Reading Achievement**

- Chapter 1: What Does Science Say About Teaching Reading?
- Chapter 2: How to Get Started
- Chapter 3: Develop A Comprehensive Assessment Plan
- Chapter 4: Materials Selection in Year One
- Chapter 5: Professional Development in Year One
- Chapter 6: Implementing Instruction With New Materials in Year One
- Chapter 7: School Organization and Funding
- Chapter 8: Refining the Reading Initiative in Year Two
- Chapter 9: Solidifying the Reading Initiative in Year Three and Beyond

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**Who should I contact for more information?**

USBE staff will be working with each eligible school district and charter to work out logistics, such as dates, locations, cohort makeup, etc. As those details are finalized, you can expect your district or charter staff to communicate your options.

We recognize and appreciate the time commitment in participating in this professional learning opportunity. For Utah schools who have engaged with LETRS previously, educators have expressed how grateful they are for what they have learned. For example, one kindergarten teacher broke down in tears after participating in LETRS as she saw how using the newly learned skills and strategies with her students had such a powerful impact on their learning. Her tears were both for joy and sadness. She felt for those students she had served before as she wished she had known this years ago to better meet their needs. She felt joy as she now had more impactful tools to use with her current and future students to empower them as lifelong readers. We are excited for what you will learn, too!