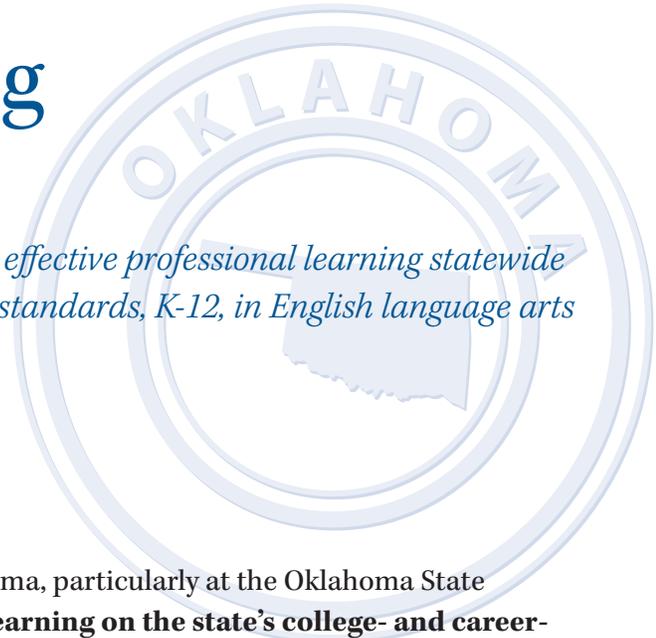


# Professional Learning Oklahoma

*In 2014-15 and 2015-16, how has Oklahoma fostered effective professional learning statewide for all educators on its college- and career-readiness standards, K-12, in English language arts (ELA) and math?*



SREB researchers gathered information on efforts in Oklahoma, particularly at the Oklahoma State Department of Education, to foster effective **professional learning on the state’s college- and career-readiness standards, the Priority Academic Students Skills (PASS)**. In collaboration with SREB states and national experts, SREB identified a set of expected state actions — “look-fors” — in **four areas of state leadership in professional learning**. The researchers reviewed online sources, such as state policy documents and the department’s website to assess the state’s efforts. The department provided feedback on the report as SREB researchers prepared it.

State efforts in each area fell into one of three levels of implementation:

- **Minimal**, indicating state leadership addresses some of the look-fors
- **Essential**, indicating state leadership addresses the look-fors SREB considers necessary for providing leadership and supporting local efforts
- **Strong**, indicating that in addition to the necessary look-fors, state leadership offers substantial support to foster quality and consistency statewide

The *Project Overview and Look-Fors* document and state profile reports are available on the project [Web page](#).

## Highlights for Oklahoma

- **Support for new teacher induction:** As of 2015-16, state law requires all new teachers to participate in a yearlong residency program. To support districts in developing their programs, the Oklahoma State Department of Education provides teacher residency program guidelines and requirements; online modules and tools for mentors; and professional development, support and coaching for new teachers.
- **Feedback to the field:** The department highlights best practices in professional development and other topics on its ELEVATE Web page, a blog that chronicles innovative and inspiring accomplishments in Oklahoma K-12 public education.

## 1 Establish Clear Expectations

*Has the state established clear expectations for high-quality professional learning for all educators on the state college- and career-readiness standards through state professional learning standards or other policy documents?*

**Oklahoma provides *minimal* support.**

- Oklahoma does not have a single set of professional development standards. The Oklahoma School Law Book of 2014 cites statutory requirements that professional development focus on core curriculum areas and on increasing academic performance in schools and districts.

## 2 Provide Guidance, Technical Assistance and Other Support

*Does the state education agency provide information, guidance, tools, direct assistance and other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation, to support local efforts to deliver high-quality, college- and career-readiness standards-aligned professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers in service of all students?*

**Guidance and tools**

**Oklahoma provides *minimal* support.**

- Tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning
  - Ways to Improve School Effectiveness (WISE) Tool, which includes a needs assessment rubric, a planning guide and a school improvement progress monitoring instrument
- Professional learning resources and exemplars
  - Archived materials and tools from the department's School Improvement Grant (SIG) Principals Academy in 2013
- Support for educator induction and mentoring programs
  - As of 2015-16, state law requires all new teachers to participate in a yearlong residency program. The department's teacher residency program guidelines and requirements demand that district programs address curriculum planning. Additionally, the department provides online modules and tools for mentors, support and coaching for new teachers, and training. (Training, for example, included regional trainings for mentors and new teachers in January 2016.)

**Technical assistance**

**Oklahoma provides *essential* support.**

- The department provides intensive technical assistance to leaders in districts with large numbers of schools in need of improvement. It also provides SIG schools a school support team (SST) of retired and practicing educators and a department staff member who assists with identifying needs and improvement planning.
- To support local implementation of the state's Reading Sufficiency Act (amended in 2014), the department reviews local professional development and Reading Sufficiency Plans and provides literacy coaches and a SWAT Team to provide individualized assistance and data analysis support to each low-performing preK-3 school.
- In 2014-15, Regional Educators Advancing College, Career and Citizen Readiness Higher (REAC3H) districts volunteered to support neighboring districts and schools, with assistance varying by local needs and REAC3H district capacity. REAC3H services are not available in 2015-16 due to limited funding.

## Other support, such as technology and flexibility for innovation

### Oklahoma provides *essential* support.

- Technology
  - Repositories of online, on-demand professional learning resources: [Mathematics Web page](#), PD on Your Plan online courses, and resource sharing, blogs and podcasts on the [ELAOK Teachers](#) portal
- Policies and opportunities to foster flexibility and innovation in professional learning
  - Charter schools may be approved to waive certain state rules or regulations to improve professional learning.

## 3 Offer Professional Learning

*Does the state education agency offer coordinated professional learning opportunities that develop educators' understanding of the state college- and career-readiness standards and skills to implement them — and that build local capacity to lead high-quality professional learning for all educators?*

### Context

- House Bill 3399, enacted in 2014, required the state board of education to adopt new academic standards in ELA and math by 2016. In 2015-16, the department is working with educators, representatives from higher education and external experts to develop the new standards. Once the board adopts the new standards, the department will need to train educators to understand and implement them.
- In order to provide training and technical assistance on a regional level, in 2011, the department selected 70 of the state's 550 districts that volunteered to serve as REAC3H regional centers. Through 2014-15, REAC3H districts redelivered department professional development, designed regional training plans and coordinated a training network that included institutions of higher education and career and technical institutes. Based on feedback from the field about inconsistent REAC3H services, in 2013-14, the department reduced the number of REAC3H districts and hired additional staff to provide more training to teachers. REAC3H services are not available in 2015-16 due to limited funding.

### Oklahoma provides *essential* support.

- Professional learning for teachers
  - Since 2014, the department has hosted summer, statewide professional development conferences for teachers and school and district leaders called Engage OK (formerly Vision 2020).
  - In fall 2014, the department offered 18 regional, half-day PASS Plus Academies on the standards, which were attended by over 2,500 math and ELA teachers.
  - In winter 2015, the department offered regional four-day trainings for teachers and reading coaches on Voyager Sopris Learning's Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) program.
  - To support local implementation of the Reading Sufficiency Act, the department provides literacy coaches and regional reading strategy workshops for teachers statewide.
  - In 2014-15, the department provided 21 regional REAC3H training sessions and a statewide summit. The department also partnered with Oklahoma CareerTech and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to provide 60 regional REAC3H coaches to support local districts.

### Funding for professional learning in 2014-15 and 2015-16:

Oklahoma used or is using state funds, including Reading Sufficiency Act funds, as well as federal funds.

- Professional learning for school and district leaders
  - In 2015-16, the department launched its cohort-based Lead to Succeed program to support principals in implementing the college- and career-readiness standards. The program included monthly face-to-face sessions and follow-up engagement. The first cohort included 25 participants. A second cohort begins in 2016-17.
  - School and district leaders can participate in role-specific sessions at the department’s summer statewide professional development conferences.
  - The department’s SST leaders provide monthly professional learning community meetings for SIG school principals and ongoing technical assistance for school and district leaders.
  - The department’s REAC3H initiative includes training for school and district leaders.

## 4 Use Data and Accountability for Continuous Improvement

*Does the state education agency use data to inform its planning and leadership of statewide professional learning, and does it provide feedback to local leaders and hold districts accountable for excellence in local professional learning?*

### Oklahoma undertakes *essential work in this area*.

- Department leaders analyze data to inform professional learning efforts on the PASS.
- The department regularly uses various types of data to inform its work. However, it has not recently conducted comprehensive program evaluations that include rigorous examination of the impacts of professional learning on teacher knowledge and practice or student outcomes, a crucial step in understanding the effects of state efforts.
- In providing feedback to local leaders and accountability for excellence:
  - The department provides feedback to local leaders on their professional learning efforts through its review and monitoring of annual district professional development plans, monitoring of REAC3H districts and SIG schools, and highlights of best practices on its [ELEVATE Web page](#), a blog that chronicles innovative and inspiring developments in Oklahoma K-12 public education.
  - Department leaders expect schools and districts to leverage the support and funding they receive for professional learning to make continuous improvement on school and district professional learning systems.

### **MOVING FORWARD:** *Practices for Oklahoma to consider*

- Provide educators with more **online, on-demand tools for planning, implementing and evaluating professional learning** and **exemplars of professional learning**, such as archived materials from high-quality professional learning programs. These tools and exemplars can serve as immediate learning resources and models for local leaders as they develop professional learning systems. See guidance, tools and exemplars noted in the Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland and North Carolina profiles.
- Explore ways to provide **coordinated, comprehensive technical assistance and professional learning to local leadership teams**. This would support the long-term work of building deep and broad capacity in schools and districts to implement high-quality professional learning for all educators. See work with local leadership teams noted in the Alabama, Delaware, Kentucky and Louisiana profiles.
- Undertake more **comprehensive program evaluations** to analyze the efficacy of professional learning initiatives — in particular, their impacts on teacher knowledge and practice as well as student outcomes — to help identify effective practices and weed out ineffective ones. See program evaluations noted in the Kentucky, North Carolina and Tennessee profiles.

**All related state profiles and reports are on the [project Web page](#).**