

Swan River Montessori Charter  
School #4137-07

**Local Literacy Plan**

School Year 2023-24

[www.swanrivermontessori.org](http://www.swanrivermontessori.org)

Swan River Montessori Charter School (SRMCS) is committed to nurturing a love of reading and writing in every child, recognizing that literacy is the cornerstone of lifelong learning. The local literacy plan is designed to integrate the Montessori philosophy with evidence-based literacy practices, creating a rich, child-centered environment where each student can thrive. SRMCS focuses on individualized learning, allowing children to progress at their own pace while ensuring they develop strong foundational skills in the five essential components of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency. Through hands-on materials and a prepared environment, SRMCS aims to foster not only the technical aspects of literacy but also a deep and lasting engagement with the written word.

The plan emphasizes the importance of building a comprehensive literacy framework that includes these five essential components alongside knowledge building and critical thinking. By leveraging the Montessori method, SRMCS creates seamless connections between reading, writing, and the broader curriculum. This approach ensures that literacy is not taught in isolation but as an integral part of the child's overall development. The dedicated teachers and staff at SRMCS are trained to observe and support each child's unique learning journey, using formative assessments to inform instruction and make timely interventions. Through this holistic and responsive approach, SRMCS aims to empower its students with the literacy skills they need to succeed academically and beyond.

## **Introduction**

The Minnesota State Legislature has adopted statutes which require schools to adopt a local literacy plan to have every child reading at or above grade level no later than the end of third grade. Minnesota Statute 120B.12 requires that all students are provided with comprehensive scientifically based reading instruction as outlined in a local literacy plan.

Comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction includes strategies to develop skills in the following areas:

1. **Phonemic awareness:** ability to notice, think about and manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.
2. **Phonics:** understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words. Phonics instruction is a way of teaching reading that stresses learning how letters correspond to sounds and how to apply this knowledge in reading and spelling.
3. **Fluency:** the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and proper expression
4. **Vocabulary development:** process of teaching vocabulary both directly and indirectly, with repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items.
5. **Comprehension:** an active process that requires intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly by demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and implementing specific cognitive strategies to help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solving thinking processes.

Swan River Montessori Charter School's Read Well by Grade 3 Local Literacy Plan provides information on the following:

- The process that SRMCS uses to ensure proficiency by grade 3, including assessments and data collection.
- Methods used to assess student levels of reading proficiency
- The system of interventions utilized at SRMCS
- Information on Dyslexia and Convergence Insufficiency.
- How SRMCS notifies parents about reading proficiency or need for intervention and parental involvement opportunities
- A description of professional development opportunities specific to literacy

## **Literacy Goals and Objectives**

Every student at Swan River Montessori Charter School will be reading at grade level by the completion of third grade.

Objective 1: SRMCS Montessori Reading Curriculum is aligned with the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in English Language Arts.

Objective 2: SRMCS uses observations, summative assessment and formative assessments to assess grade level achievement to the state standards.

Objective 3: Teaching staff will participate in a variety of reading/oral language workshops as well as regularly held meeting to ensure consistent matriculation as well as discuss reading topics and areas of need within the curriculums used in the classrooms.

## **Curriculum and Instruction**

SRMCS provides comprehensive, scientifically-based literacy instruction to all its students through traditional Montessori lessons. Our curriculum is a balanced phonetic and whole language approach to reading. In the elementary classrooms, our daily schedules allow time for Read Aloud and Sustained Silent Reading. This allows the children to be exposed to literature above their independent reading level and to have time to read a book of their choice. Each classroom has fiction and nonfiction books that include a wide range of topics and reading levels. The children have the opportunity to choose topics they want to learn about and to read about those topics at their reading level. By giving children choices and the opportunity to read at their level they become engaged and proficient (defined as being skillful in the command of fundamentals deriving from practice and familiarity) in reading.

We know successful readers should be immersed in language through reading, writing, listening and speaking. We include all four in our instruction. Our curriculum addresses the five pillars of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

**Phonemic Awareness**, the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the smallest units of sounds, begins in our early childhood and kindergarten classrooms. We use sandpaper letters to introduce sounds and letters to our youngest students. The movable alphabet is used for a wide variety of activities: initial sound, ending sound, blending sounds, and rhyming sounds to name a few.

**Phonics**, the understanding of how letters combine to make sounds and word, is also taught with the use of the movable alphabet in the early childhood and kindergarten classrooms. The children begin by building word with consonants and short vowel sounds (CVC words). Once they have mastered short vowel words, they build words with long vowel sounds using all possible letter combinations to create each sound. From long vowels they move on to consonant blends. In addition to building words with the movable alphabet, students begin reading books that contain the sounds that they have mastered.

By kindergarten, our students work through a series of activities called the Read, Write and Spell Program. This program introduces students to over sixty digraphs, pairs of letters that make one sound. The children practice reading, writing, and spelling words that contain these digraphs.

Our E1 classrooms, grades one through three, continue building phonics skills by continuing with the early reading books with controlled vocabulary and the Read, Write and Spell Program. Both of these tools are designed to help children learn the letter sound correlations necessary for reading.

**Vocabulary**, the words children must know in order to communicate, are referred to as “nomenclature” in Montessori education. All subject areas include nomenclature work. For our youngest students it begins with matching pictures or objects with their corresponding labels. As the child develops the ability to read, definitions are added to the pictures and labels. By the end of third grade, the students have studied the nomenclature of a wide variety of topics such as geometry, botany, zoology, geography, etc.

**Fluency**, the ability to read text accurately, quickly and with expression, is built by repetition in the Montessori environment. The key instructional strategy we use to build fluency is repeated reading. Starting with our Children’s House students, ages three through six, repetition of work is encouraged. Our beginning readers read labels and match them to objects or pictures. They repeat these activities until they have mastered each one before moving on to the next concept.

Our Lower Elementary students, grades first through third, also have many opportunities for repetition in reading. In each subject area (botany, zoology, geometry, geometry, etc.), they learn by reading definitions and descriptions pertaining to the subject matter. Initially, they meet with a small group and their teacher. During their lessons, they read information cards about their topic of study. After their lessons, they read the cards independently or with a friend and they match the card with the correct illustration. When they feel they have mastered the information, they match the cards with the pictures and read them to the teacher, classroom assistant, or a classroom helper. This repetition builds fluency as well as a mastery of the written information.

**Comprehension** is obtaining the meaning from written text. As with fluency, reading comprehension starts with our earliest readers matching labels with pictures and objects. In order to correctly match label to object, the child must understand the written word. As the child progresses, the reading material gets more difficult. Whether our elementary students are reading geometry definitions and matching them to the correct diagram or reading about the parts of a fish and matching the definition to the correct picture they must understand what they are reading to successfully complete their work.

In addition to a wide variety of reading exposure, writing is an integral part of our reading studies. Students regularly write both reports and creative pieces. They read what they write to adults and other children. They are asked questions about their writing and they have to understand what they have written. In addition to their creative writing, they also do many mini research projects which require them to read nonfiction material and interpret in a paragraph, poster, play, or diorama, etc. The teaching of reading and writing are intertwined in our curriculum.

We also use the SRA Reading Laboratory Program, leveled reading cards that allow students to progress at their own rate. These cards have directed instruction that require the students to read with a purpose, reread for detail, draw conclusions about the reading, summarize what they read, and answer comprehension question about the reading. All of these skills are required for building comprehension skills.

## **Assessment**

Ideally, our students are with one teacher for three years. The Children's House students are between the ages of three and six and the Lower elementary between the ages of six and nine. This allows the teacher to follow the growth of each child for three years. In addition to teacher observation, we use several reading assessments to identify each student's strengths and weaknesses.

Each year, initial assessments (FastBridge) take place before October 1<sup>st</sup>. Those students who are at risk for not reading at grade level will receive instructional support based on recommendations of Swan River Montessori’s Child Find Team (CFT) and will be assessed as often as deemed necessary to ensure academic progress. All students are reassessed in December/January as well as before May 31<sup>st</sup> of each school year. This includes FastBridge and the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA) for Reading (3<sup>rd</sup> grade only).

Kindergarten - The following tools are used for screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring for all kindergarten students:

Targeted Grades	Name of Assessment	Assessment Publisher	Time Frame Assessment is Given	Purpose of Assessment
K-1	earlyReading	FastBridge	Fall, winter & spring	To assess the child’s Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Phonics,
1-6	CBMReading	FastBridge	Fall, winter & spring	To assess the child’ Print Concepts, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, Fluency
2-6	aReading	FastBridge	Fall, winter & spring	To assess the child’s Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, Comprehension

### **Interventions & Instructional Supports for Students Not Reading at Grade Level**

The Montessori Method is largely based on individualized, guided learning making differentiated instruction a natural part of the classroom environment. Montessori teachers are continually modifying and accommodating curriculum as part of the educational process.

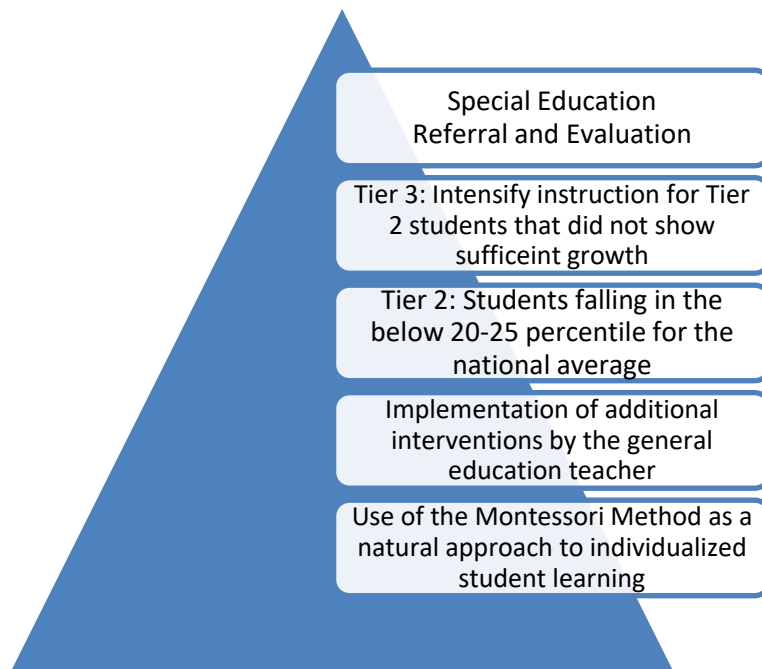
However, we recognize that some students may require support beyond the Montessori materials. Some examples of initial interventions for students not reading at grade level include, but are not limited to:

- Immediate increased individualized instruction within the general education classroom
- Individualized lesson review and repetition with a classroom adult
- Providing additional guidance on the required follow-up work
- Increased opportunities to read with an adult or an older student
- Providing frequent “check-ins” with a classroom adult to ensure work completion

Children who do not show sufficient progress on the screening/diagnostic assessments and continue to read below grade level despite interventions were used in the classroom would then be referred to the school’s Literacy Specialist who provides intensive 1:1 instruction. The Literacy Specialist is in continual communication with the child’s general education teacher, the School Director, and the child’s parents providing progress monitoring data. Two of the most common intervention programs the Literacy Specialist uses are described below.

### **SRMCS Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)**

The following diagram provides simplified insight of the general system of support provided to ALL students by SRMCS:



# Tier 2 &3 Intervention

## Tier 2: Identification, Instruction, and Monitoring

Identification: Tier 2 students are identified through universal FastBridge screenings conducted three times each school year. Students falling in the below 20-25 percentile for the national average are considered for small group instruction, Tier 2 instruction, with additional input from their teachers to confirm the need for targeted support.

Instruction: Swan River's Response to Intervention (RTI) program provides a structured framework of tiered instructional support designed to accelerate student learning. Early identification starts as early as Kindergarten, with targeted interventions provided for 20 minutes, three times per week, using research-based materials. These additional academic supports aim to help students succeed within the general education environment.

The comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction includes strategies to develop skills in the following areas:

1. Phonemic Awareness: Developing the ability to notice and manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.
2. Phonics: Understanding systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken words. Phonics instruction focuses on teaching the correspondence between letters and sounds, applying this knowledge in reading, spelling, and decoding.
3. Fluency: Building the ability to read text with speed, accuracy, and expression.
4. Vocabulary Development: Teaching vocabulary both directly and indirectly, with repetition and multiple exposures to vocabulary items.
5. Comprehension: Engaging in intentional thinking and constructing meaning through interactions between text and reader. Comprehension skills are explicitly taught by demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and implementing specific cognitive strategies to help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solving thinking processes.

Monitoring: We use Fastbridge for weekly progress monitoring (or as needed) to measure growth in targeted skills. This frequent assessment allows for timely adjustments to instruction, ensuring that interventions are effective and responsive to each student's needs.

## Tier 3: Identification, Instruction, and Monitoring

Identification: There are two ways for students to be identified for Tier 3 instruction. The first is for students already in a Tier 2 instruction group who are not meeting FastBridge progress monitoring goals and whose teachers indicate a need for intensified support. The second identification method is through the universal FastBridge screenings conducted three times each school year. Students scoring below the 5th percentile nationally are considered for Tier 3 small group instruction, with additional teacher input confirming the need for targeted support.



Instruction: Tier 3 intervention is more intensive than Tier 2 and can begin as early as Kindergarten. Targeted interventions are provided for 30 minutes three times per week or 20 minutes four to five days per week. These additional supports aim to help students succeed within the general education environment.

Monitoring: FastBridge is used for weekly progress monitoring, or as needed, to measure growth in targeted skills. This frequent assessment allows for timely adjustments to instruction, ensuring that interventions are effective and responsive to each student's needs.

## **Exiting Tier 2 or Tier 3 Instruction**

Graduation from the Tier 2 and 3 Program: When students achieve their targeted growth goals, they will be exited from the program. Students who continue to not meet their progress goals will be referred to our Special Education team for further evaluation.

## **The Child Find Team**

Any child who has received additional instructional support/interventions in the classroom or with the Literacy Specialist as described above, yet are not closing the achievement gap according to his/her assessments, are referred to the Child Find Team. This team is made up of: the special education lead teachers, the student's classroom teacher, the Literacy Specialist, and the School Director. The teaching staff and the CFT use the following guidelines and procedures when concern is raised for a student:

### **SRMCS Child Find Process**

If a teacher has concerns about a student's progress in ANY area (academic, behavioral, emotional, etc.), the following steps should be taken:

1. Contact child's parents to discuss your concerns and that you are bringing him/her to the Child Find Team.
2. Complete the Child Find form and give to Special Education team.
3. A Child Find meeting will be scheduled. Bring the following to the meeting:
  - a. Specific concerns & ideas for interventions
  - b. If possible, work samples from this child and a same-grade peer for comparison
4. Attend Child Find meeting where you will:
  - a. Share a-b from above
  - b. Team will choose 1 intervention
  - c. Special Education team will assist the teacher in creating the chart/graph, etc. for data collection
5. Two data points must be collected for a baseline (PRIOR to beginning intervention) in a 1 week period.
6. Begin 4-6 week intervention collecting a minimum of 8 data points.

7. After the intervention is completed:
  - a. The Child Find team will meet and review all data.
  - b. One of two things will happen:
    - i. The intervention worked and the use of the intervention will continue as necessary
    - ii. The intervention did not work. A second intervention is chosen. The same steps as the first intervention will be followed.
      1. 2 baseline data points without intervention in place
      2. 8+ data points with intervention in place in 4-6 week period
8. After 2<sup>nd</sup> intervention is completed:
  - a. The Child Find team will meet and review your data.
  - b. One of two things will happen:
    - i. The intervention worked and the use of the intervention will continue as necessary
    - ii. The intervention did not work. Special education evaluation is discussed
      1. Sped team contacts parents to inform them of next steps in the referral/evaluation process.

## **Screening for Dyslexia**

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that affects reading and related language-based processing skills. The severity can differ in each individual but can affect reading fluency, decoding, reading comprehension, recall, writing, spelling, and sometimes speech and can exist along with other related disorders. It is the most common learning disability among children, and its symptoms, especially if left untreated, often persist into adulthood. Without proper diagnosis and instruction, dyslexia can lead to frustration, school failure, and low self-esteem.

SRMCS uses FastBridge and the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing Second Edition (C-TOPP2) and FastBridge as assessment tools to identify students with signs of dyslexia. In the fall, all kindergarten and newly enrolled students will be screened using C-TOPP2 a suggested universal screening tool by the International Dyslexia Association. By making this a standard assessment upon enrollment, over time, all SRMCS students will have been screened for dyslexia.

Should a screening detect any signs of dyslexia, the following steps will be taken:

- The literacy specialist and the child's general education teacher would call a meeting of the Child Find Team (CFT) to discuss the data provided by the screening.

- If the team agrees that there are distinct signs of dyslexia, a member of the team will contact the child's parent(s) to discuss the concern. A meeting may be requested by either party.
- The literacy specialist would provide information regarding dyslexia and may encourage the parent(s) to seek the opinion of a medical professional to determine whether there are physical problems, such as vision problems, that are causing or contributing to the child's condition. It would be the decision of the doctor to refer the family to specialists who can diagnose and treat learning disorders. These may include an educational specialist, an educational psychologist, or a speech therapist.
- Should the medical professional make recommendations for accommodations or modifications in the school setting, SRMCS staff will create a plan to ensure they are followed.
- If deemed appropriate by the CFT, this child may be recommended for 1:1 in-school tutoring with the literacy specialist.

## **Screening for Convergence Insufficiency**

Convergence insufficiency (CI) is a condition in which your eyes are unable to work together when looking at nearby objects. This condition causes one eye to turn outward instead of inward with the other eye creating double or blurred vision. Convergence insufficiency is usually diagnosed in school-age children and adolescents. It can cause difficulty reading, for which parents or teachers might suspect the child has learning difficulties rather than an eye disorder.

All SRMCS staff receive information related to identifying possible symptoms of CI which include, but are not limited to:

- Tired, sore or uncomfortable eyes (eyestrain)
- Headaches
- Double vision
- Difficulty reading (floating words, losing place when reading, reading slowly)
- Squinting, rubbing or closing of one eye
- Reading avoidance and/or avoidance to complete schoolwork

Should a teacher note any of these symptoms and/or the student is complaining of symptoms, the following steps will be taken:

- The teacher would consult with the school's literacy specialist who is a certified screener for dyslexia and other learning disorders. If deemed appropriate, the literacy specialist may use one or more assessment tools to collect data on the student's reading ability taking note of any CI symptoms or other concerning manifestations.

- The teacher would contact the child's parent(s) to discuss the concern. A meeting may be requested by either party.
- The teacher and literacy specialist would provide information regarding CI and may encourage the parent(s) to seek the opinion of an eye care professional such as ophthalmologist or optometrist.
- Should the eye care professional make recommendations for accommodations or modifications in the school setting, SRMCS staff will create a plan to ensure they are followed.
- If deemed appropriate by the CFT, this child may be recommended for 1:1 in-school tutoring with the literacy specialist.

## **Parent Notification and Involvement**

The teachers of SRMCS hold conferences with all families a minimum of two times per year in the fall and spring. A progress report is given to the parents at the time of each conference and a final report is sent home at the end of the school year. If the student is at risk for not reading at grade level, it is discussed at these conferences or, if timing is not aligned, a special parent meeting may be called. The parents are also given recommendations of activities they can do at home to help their child improve his/her reading skills. The recommendations would include some or all of the following:

- Practice Fry words at home. The teacher would supply a list or cards with the words on them.
- Read aloud to an adult at home and/or adult read aloud to the child.
- Home reading packets that could include books, Read Write, and Spell work, and/or SRA work.
- Have the child dictate a story to an adult or older sibling, then have the child read the story aloud.
- Silent reading time at home – 10 minutes per grade.
- Parents of students at risk for not being proficient in reading will receive notification with specific assessment results that indicate the lack of proficiency.

## **English Language Learners**

Every student enrolling at SRMCS receives an Enrollment Data Form prior to his/her first day of school. On this form, the parent(s) of the incoming student must identify the primary language spoken in the home environment. Should any other language other than English be indicated,

the school director, the general education teacher, and the parents would be called to a meeting to discuss any potential language-learner needs the child may have, including the need for a translator should it be necessary.

If a parent indicates that the primary language spoken at home is English, but school staff believe there are language-learner needs, a meeting would be called to discuss concerns and procedures that may need to be put in place to support the student.

SRMCS does not currently have any students who are ELL (English Language Learners) and, therefore, does not have an English Learner Program at this time.

### **Teacher Support and Training**

Each year the teachers are surveyed for their professional development needs. SRMCS teaching staff has and will continue to participate in a variety of professional development activities that focus on reading. These include Science of Reading, Orton-Gillingham Workshops, Wilson Training as well as many in-house workshops that focus on reading and the Minnesota Academic Language Arts Standards.

The staff also meets twice per month with 1) their grade level peer teachers to discuss topics pertaining to their specific age groups and 2) with all the general education lead teachers. The primary objective for these meetings is to ensure core curriculum is being provided consistently between classrooms and grade levels and students are matriculating with comparable skills. Also included in these meetings are discussions about literacy instruction allowing the teachers a platform to share ideas, ask questions, and convey concerns with their co-workers. The School Director is present at these meetings to provide guidance and support where it is needed.

It should also be noted, that all SRMCS lead teachers not only have a traditional 4 year degree from a college or university and appropriate licensure, but also have Montessori certification covering all subject areas, including literacy instruction. Obtaining this certification requires at least one additional year of schooling per Montessori level (EC-K Children's House, Elementary Level One for 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, and/or Elementary Level Two for 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> grade). Thus, our teaching staff is educated substantially beyond the minimum requirements of a teaching position in a traditional public school district.

### **Communication System for Stakeholders**

In an effort to maintain high-quality literacy instruction and provide consistent, useful data to SRMCS stakeholders and the Minnesota Department of Education, this literacy plan is made accessible on the school's website at <http://www.swanrivermontessori.org/about-us/school-policies/> (OR

[www.swanrivermontessori.org](http://www.swanrivermontessori.org) > About Us > School Plans, Annual Reports & Policies) tab year-round. A hard copy is also available upon stakeholder request.

This document is reviewed and updated by the School Director and the SRMCS Board of Directors at least annually. This document is submitted annually to the Commissioner of Education via the Minnesota Department of Education website.

Comments, feedback, or questions? Please contact the School Director, Ms. Annette Vemuri.

Phone:	763.271.7926	Email:	director@swanrivermontessori.org
Mail:	500 Maple Street Monticello MN 55362	Fax:	763.295.0075