

Cawston Primary School Plan 2025–26

September 2026

INQUIRY QUESTION:

How will our students be impacted if our school team actively supports literacy, either through direct instruction or by promoting literacy within their role?

SCANNING: What is going on for our learners?

In August 2025, we reviewed year-end data to better understand the scope of our students' literacy challenges. Currently, only 28% of students in grades 1–4 demonstrate proficiency in reading, with just 18% of Indigenous students represented in this group. Our students are below our district and provincial averages in literacy.

These numbers align with what we see in classrooms. Last year, only about 22% of students entering grade 2 were reading at grade level, down from roughly 65% in previous years. PM Benchmark assessments show that most students are reading below, or significantly below, grade level. In practice, this means many students require one-to-one support and small-group instruction just to approach independent reading levels. Teachers report that a large proportion of students cannot yet read independently, creating overreliance on read-alouds and guided reading. This year, at least 37% of students will receive targeted learner support to build reading fluency.

We also suspect a connection between reading challenges and attentiveness. Many students are entering school with lower oral language abilities, speech difficulties, and attention regulation issues. Without foundational literacy skills, academic struggles are likely to intensify as they move to SESS in grade 5. For these students, reading becomes harder, and school increasingly disconnected.

FOCUSING: What is going to give us the biggest impact?

We know our students deserve to learn to read during their time with us. Literacy is not optional. It is a foundational life skill that every student must have to thrive as an adult. The focus of our school plan is literacy.

DEVELOPING A HUNCH: What is leading to this situation? How are we contributing to it?

It has become evident that some students transition from Grade 4 to SESS without the level of preparedness needed for success in the intermediate classroom. In previous years, our school has placed greater emphasis on nurturing emotional well-being and developing social regulation skills. When we look at our own practices, we ask ourselves "are our current practices effective to meet the needs of our diverse learners?" We believe the best path forward is to seek more effective literacy programs, increase our instructional time for literacy, provide multiple access points for students, and use common strategies to support literacy, school-wide. Every learner has unique needs, which may require integrating hands-on, oral, and action-based elements into literacy learning.

LEARNING: What do we need to learn? How will we design new learning?

We need a clear picture of each student's specific literacy challenges. Start-of-year assessments are providing this data. We also need to understand the prime learning conditions for our students — conditions that vary between classes and among individuals. Once identified, we will aim to provide literacy instruction during each learner's most optimal times for engagement.

As we incorporate decolonizing approaches into our literacy interventions and lessons, we will look to our Indigenous Education Advocates and remain open to their guidance. Indigenous ways of knowing will be intentionally considered in the design of our literacy classrooms.

June 2026 Reflection:

TAKING ACTION: What can we do differently to make enough of a difference?

We believed the greatest impact would come from a non-colonial approach that considered the whole child. Students needed consistent, intensive support to regulate and fully engage in learning. Alongside literacy, we continued to foster self-regulation strategies that made learning possible.

With so many students struggling, we examined our literacy programs closely and explored new resources to strengthen our practice. We continued utilizing a range of programs, ensuring thoughtful matches between each program and individual students, while also introducing a school-wide Home Reading initiative. Our literacy coordinator supported teachers and EAs in applying targeted strategies with both individual students and entire classes, a model of differentiated literacy support. We also gave ourselves permission to devote more instructional minutes to literacy. Literacy remained our top priority because it was what our students needed most.

To maximize the value of our monthly inquiry time, we collaborated in teams of staff who served the same students. Teams included EAs, IEAs, LSTs, and classroom teachers. Teacher meetings provided time to share strategies, discuss classroom experiences, and examine how we were reaching learners. Formative assessment data, gathered in classrooms and through learner support, guided these conversations.

CHECKING: Have we made enough of a difference?

We measured progress using the Kindergarten Screener (language and early literacy skills), PM Benchmark Assessment (Grades 1–4), and the Non-Fiction Reading Assessment (Grade 4). These assessments allowed us to meet individually with students, listen to them read, ask comprehension questions, and collect data on their growth. Our Grade 4 teachers used the Foundation Skills Assessment to assess reading comprehension.

Our Learner Support Teacher tracked individual student progress in literacy using the CORE Assessment (Assessing Reading, Multiple Measures). Student voice and staff perspectives guided the evaluation of the effectiveness of classroom-based literacy programs, while parent voice helped ensure the home reading program achieved maximum impact.

Our intent was to “flip the data,” and that goal remains firmly in place. At the beginning of the 2025 school year, approximately 30% of our students demonstrated reading proficiency. As we complete our PM Benchmark assessments, this percentage has not shifted significantly, with approximately 30% of students currently reading independently and proficiently at grade level.

While this data indicates that overall proficiency rates have remained relatively stable, our CORE assessments, administered to all students in September, January, and June, reveal

substantial growth in the foundational skills required for decoding and comprehension. Throughout the year, we observed students becoming more resilient and strategic readers. They demonstrated an increased willingness to revisit unfamiliar words, apply decoding strategies, break words into manageable parts, and persevere through challenges independently.

Similarly, students who completed the Non-Fiction Reading Assessment (NFRA) showed greater persistence when responding to comprehension questions, often returning to questions they initially skipped and using evidence from the text to support their thinking.

Overall, we have seen the development of a more confident, persistent, and engaged group of readers. While reading proficiency remains an ongoing area of focus, students have made meaningful gains in the skills, habits, and mindsets that support long-term literacy success.