

THE READING REVOLUTION

HOW STATES ARE SCALING LITERACY REFORM

BY LYNN OLSON

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Independent Analysis, Innovative Ideas

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About FutureEd

FutureEd is an independent, solution-oriented think tank at Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy, committed to bringing fresh energy to the causes of excellence, equity, and efficiency in K-12 and higher education. Follow us on Twitter at @FutureEdGU

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Foreword
2	What the Science Says
4	State-Level Leadership
5	Retraining Teachers
7	Sustained Support
8	High Quality Teaching Materials
11	Measuring Progress
14	Tackling Teacher Preparation
16	Screening Students
18	Sustainability
20	Recommendations
21	Appendix
40	Endnotes

FOREWORD

Enthusiasm for the science of reading, a body of research pointing to the importance of understanding letter-sound relationships as the basic building block of literacy, is exploding, upending the decades-long dominance of “whole-language” instruction and its misguided proposition that by saturating students in a literature-rich environment, most would learn to read without explicit, sequenced instruction.

Instead, years of research have shown students need to be taught five core components of literacy: hearing and manipulating the smallest units of sound in speech; sounding out words by understanding the relationship between letters or groups of letters and their sound; reading accurately with appropriate speed and expression; language and vocabulary skills; and comprehension.

Spurred by parents, civil rights leaders, advocacy groups and the media in response to years of troublingly low scores on national reading tests and more recently extensive learning loss during the pandemic, several states, including Mississippi and Tennessee, places not known for their high-performing education systems, have made dramatic strides in introducing literacy reforms based on the science of reading. The challenge now is to translate these policy initiatives into effective classroom practices, scaling instruction based on the science of reading in the nation’s vast, decentralized system of more than 13,000 public school districts.

To that end, this FutureEd report, researched and written by Senior Fellow Lynn Olson, tells the story of how Mississippi, Tennessee and other states in the vanguard of today’s reading revolution have redesigned reading instruction and raised student achievement in thousands of public schools through bold, state-level leadership—demonstrating that with the right ingredients, change can happen in public education on a large scale, smart policy can drive higher performance, and bipartisan school reform is possible even in today’s fraught political climate.

FutureEd Policy Analyst Bella DiMarco conducted an extensive scan of states’ reading-related legislative initiatives for the project, as well as collected information from state department of education web sites, providing a detailed portrait of the reading revolution’s evolution in state capitals in recent years. We’ve compiled Bella’s research in an appendix to the report. Bella also researched and wrote the sidebar on the steps educators need to take to make reading instruction successful for English Language Learners.

Associate Director Phyllis Jordan managed the editorial process for the project and Molly Breen, Jackie Arthur and Nathalie Kirsch contributed their editorial expertise.

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Thomas Toch
Director, FutureEd

Students were working on rhyming words during a recent lesson in Shannon Mull’s pre-kindergarten classroom at Jones Brummett Elementary School in Lebanon, Tennessee, near Nashville. “Made-fade,” Mull suggested, and then “soup-coop,” only to have a student sing out “poop” to a burst of giggles. Next Mull’s 4-year-old charges worked on adding a long “e” sound to the ends of words, turning “chunk” into “chunky” and “speed” into “speedy.”

Down the hall, kindergarten teacher Kelly Marlin was building students’ vocabulary and background knowledge about what life was like for people in Colonial America, while first grade teacher Tiffany McHenry demonstrated how to decode compound words such as “rainbow” and “mailbox” and explained the different spelling of the “g” sound in “gift” and “egg.”

Mull, Martin, McHenry and their Brummett colleagues were teaching their students to read by systematically introducing them to the relationships between sounds and letters in words that a body of research known as the science of reading has found to be a key to literacy. Yet the strategy was neglected for decades in favor of “balanced literacy,” a widely used reading method that taught young children to memorize words based on simple texts with predictable patterns or to guess words based on their context, pictures, and sentence structure.

Enthusiasm for the science of reading is exploding, fueled by parents, civil rights leaders, advocacy groups and the media in response to troublingly low scores on national reading tests and extensive learning loss during the pandemic. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reported last year that only a third of U.S. fourth graders are proficient readers and more than a third lack even basic literacy.¹

A FutureEd analysis has found that in the past five years, 30 states in every part of the country, with leaders from both political parties, have passed laws on literacy instructions, including requirements that instruction in the early grades be based on the science of reading and measures shaping how teachers and prospective teachers are trained, as well as the curriculum they use, how students are assessed, and whether they are promoted to the next grade. Nine states approved or expanded such measures this year alone, and at least five others are exploring similar steps in what amounts to a sea change in how reading is taught.

The challenge now is to translate these policy initiatives into effective classroom practices, scaling instruction based on the science of reading in the nation’s vast, decentralized system of more than 13,000 public school districts.

This report is designed to support that work, highlighting the strategies states in the vanguard of today’s reading revolution have used to help their schools redesign reading instruction and raise student achievement. These include Mississippi and Tennessee, not known for their high-performing educational systems.

The stakes couldn’t be higher, with early literacy providing the foundation for subsequent success in school and beyond.² But the work in Tennessee,

Mississippi and elsewhere suggests that with the right ingredients, change can happen in public education on a large scale, smart policy can drive higher performance, and bipartisan school reform is possible even in today's fraught political climate.

What the Science Says

At its core, the science of reading demonstrates that learning to read is a complex process that demands the integration of many skills that do not develop naturally.

Mastering these skills requires systematic instruction in five areas: phonemic awareness (being able to hear and manipulate the smallest units of sound in speech), phonics (sounding out words by understanding the relationship between letters or groups of letters and their sounds), fluency (being able to read accurately with appropriate speed and expression), oral language and vocabulary skills (including understanding academic vocabulary), and reading comprehension.³ The science of reading has sometimes been characterized as a phonics-only approach, but experts deem each of the five components as equally important to the science-based strategy. "You have to build vocabulary, oral language, and background knowledge of what students are reading about at the same time that you build phonics skills," says Emily Solari, a professor in the reading education program at the University of Virginia. Research also supports instruction in reading and writing as mutually reinforcing.⁴

Yet due to the decades-long dominance of balanced literacy, also known as whole-language instruction, few teachers have been trained to deliver the comprehensive science of reading model of instruction. Teachers relying on whole-language instruction wrongly assumed that by saturating students in a literature-rich environment, most children would learn to read without explicit, sequenced instruction. (See *The Reading Wars sidebar on page 2.*)

THE READING WARS

Teaching young children to read may seem like a straightforward enterprise. But for decades, debates over the right way to start students on the path to literacy have roiled the nation's classrooms.

The "reading wars" date to at least the 1955 publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read—and What You Can Do About It*, a book-length exposé on American reading by Rudolf Flesch. Flesch attacked what was then called the "whole word" method, which focused on teaching young children to memorize whole words by sight, as epitomized in the popular Dick and Jane readers, rather than sound them out using phonics.

During the 1950s, phonics gained in popularity because of the number of children who struggled with the whole-word approach. But by the late 1970s, a backlash began among educators who worried that a narrow focus on phonics ignored the importance of making meaning from texts and nourishing the joy of reading.

These concerns were elevated by the "back to basics" approach in many schools serving low-income and minority students, which often focused on basic reading and math skills to the exclusion of more challenging instruction. This led to the "whole language" movement, which stressed exposing students to a literature-rich environment and understanding words in context and downplayed direct instruction in letter-sound relationships. While the intent may have been good, it set up a false dichotomy between mastering fundamental phonics skills and other aspects of reading.

By the early 1980s, when I was a young reporter at Education Week, the opposing camps in the reading world were deeply entrenched. My first assignment was to attend the annual meeting of the International Reading Association where debates raged between whole-language proponents such as Kenneth S. Goodman at the University of Arizona and phonics proponents including Jeanne Chall, a Harvard researcher and author of the 1983 book *Stages of Reading Development*.

The whole-language approach gained further momentum with the introduction of Reading Recovery in the mid-1980s, a one-on-one instructional program for struggling readers based on the research by Marie Clay of New Zealand. Clay created a program to teach poor readers based on what she had observed among good readers, including the use of what came to be known as the "three-cueing" strategy for teaching students to guess words based on their context, pictures, and sentence structure.

Those strategies were later incorporated into two hugely popular reading programs: the Units of Study developed by Lucy Calkins, a professor at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Guided Reading Instruction developed by Irene Fountas and Gaye-Sue Pinnell at Ohio State. As journalist Emily Hanford chronicled in her recent podcast series, *Sold a Story*, those materials trained millions of teachers in faulty ideas about how to teach young children to read.¹

In 1998, in an effort to build support for research-based teaching strategies, the National Academy of Sciences published “Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children,” a committee report chaired by Harvard researcher Catherine E. Snow that summarized two decades of research on how young children learn to read, concluding that early reading instruction should include both direct teaching about letter-sound relationships as well as a focus on the communicative purposes and personal value of reading.²

Two years later, a National Reading Panel Report, a congressionally mandated study that drew heavily on the National Academy’s findings, outlined five critical elements of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.³

President George W. Bush, a Republican, had been a strong proponent of scientifically based reading instruction during his time as governor of Texas. During his campaign, he promised to promote the science of reading as governor and president, based on the Texas Reading Initiative. That promise led to the federal Reading First Initiative, passed in December 2001 with bipartisan support as part of the No Child Left Behind Act. The program provided grants to states to help schools use reading programs based on scientific research and led to an increase in phonics-based reading instruction.

But in 2005, three publishers of reading curricula—the Reading Recovery Council of North America, Success for All, and Dr. Cupp Readers—filed complaints with the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Education charging that their programs had been unfairly shut out of the Reading First program and that some of the panelists brought in by federal officials to review state grant proposals had direct ties to other vendors.

In September 2006, an audit by the Department of Education’s Office of the Inspector General found the Reading First program was mismanaged, citing potential conflicts of interest among contractors and panelists reviewing programs. By the end of 2007, Democrats in Congress had cut the program’s budget by more than 60 percent and within a few years, the program was defunct.

Ironically, a study of the program by the Institute of Education Sciences found it was making a difference in the nation’s classrooms, producing a “positive and statistically significant impact on the amount of instructional time spent on the five essential components of reading instruction” and on teachers’ instructional practices.⁴ The study also found a “positive and statistically significant impact” on decoding among grade one students. But the study did not find a statistically significant impact on student reading comprehension in grades one through three. Despite the program’s successes, the media generally interpreted the study to mean that the program had failed.

One result of Reading First was that phonics—part of the Republican Party platform during the Bush presidential campaign—became heavily associated with one political party and with a few highly scripted reading curricula. But while Governor Phil Bryant of Mississippi, Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee and other Republican governors have led the initial round of state reading legislation based on the science of reading in recent years, Democrats have increasingly supported similar measures, making science-based reading instruction a rare bipartisan education reform.

¹ *Sold a Story* is an independent investigative journalism project from American Public Media. The six-episode podcast, plus two bonus podcasts, by education reporter Emily Hanford, has some 5 million downloads.

² National Research Council. 1998. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/6023>.

³ National Reading Panel (U.S.) & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (U.S.). (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*.

⁴ Gamse, B.C., Jacob, R.T., Horst, M., Boulay, B., & Unlu, F. (2008). *Reading First Impact Study Final Report Executive Summary* (NCEE 2009-4039). Washington DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education.

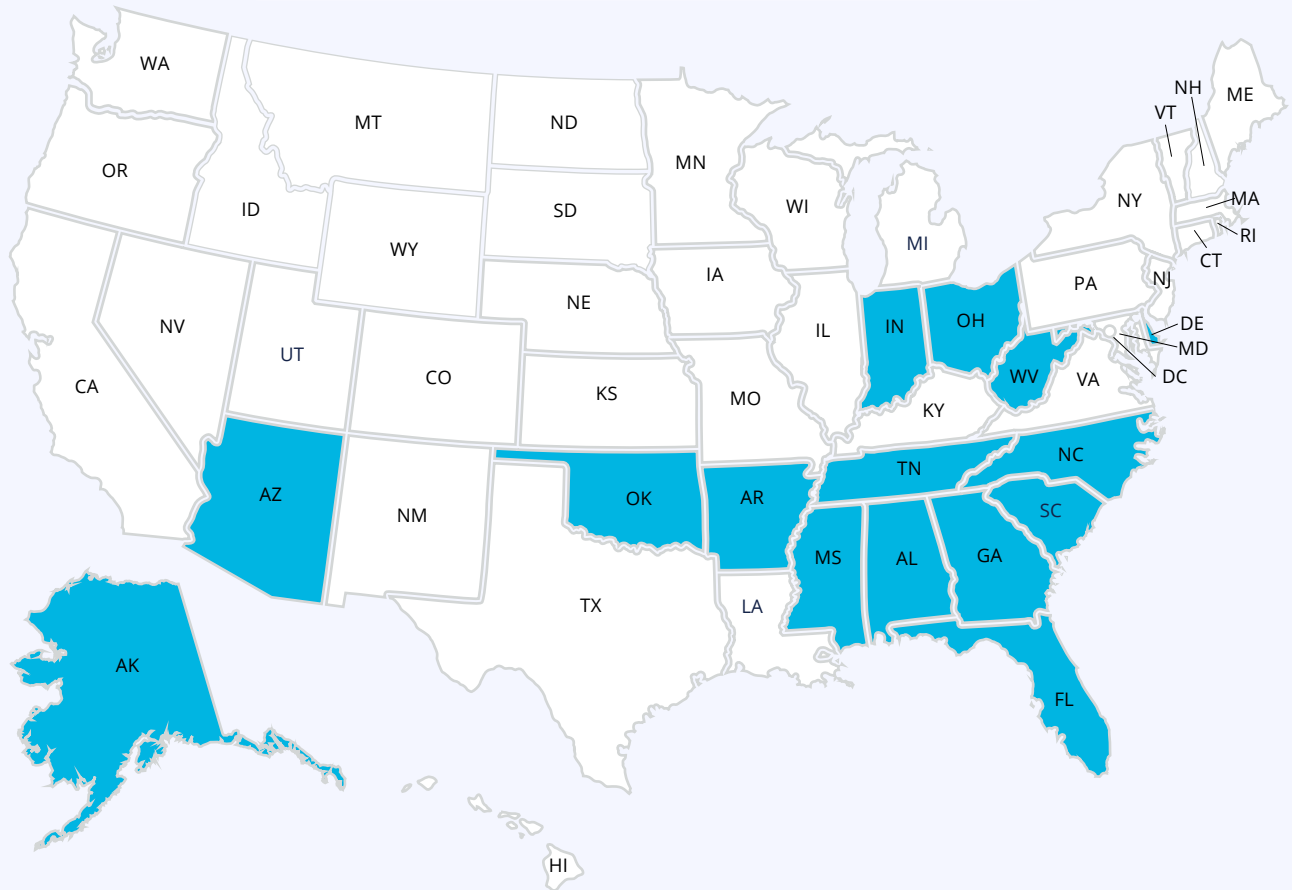
Cognitive neuroscience has shown otherwise. Using techniques such as brain scans and eye-mapping technology, researchers have studied what is happening in people’s brains while they read. That research has shown that we scan every letter of every word we read. Systematic instruction in the sounds of speech and in letter-sound relationships develops new circuits in the brain that strengthen with repeated use. Over time, students’ brains use this knowledge to recognize letter patterns and words and to store them together in long-term memory for instant retrieval, so they can read effortlessly and fluently.⁵

State-Level Leadership

Mississippi, Tennessee and other states that have brought the science of reading to their classrooms have taken coherent, comprehensive approaches, deploying their state departments of education in leadership roles to train local teachers in the science of reading, get high quality instructional materials into schools, track students’ progress, and build the science of reading into the curriculum of future teachers, among other steps.

Mississippi Republican Governor Phil Bryant signed a sweeping Literacy Based Promotion Act in 2013. Amended three years later, it required statewide training for teachers in scientifically based reading

States with Third Grade Retention Requirements



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis

instruction; literacy coaches to help teachers shift their practice; early screening and interventions for children with reading difficulties; and retention with additional supports for students who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade. (See Side Bar on Third Grade Retention, Page 18) In 2000, Mississippi students ranked next to last in the nation in fourth-grade reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. By 2022, they had catapulted to 21st and led the nation in fourth-grade reading improvement.⁶

Tennessee lawmakers passed an equally comprehensive Early Literacy Success Act in 2021 and revised the state's third-grade retention policy in the separate Tennessee Learning Loss and Student Remediation Act, which also required specific interventions for struggling students.

Notwithstanding conservatives' traditional commitment to local autonomy in education, the Republican leaders of both Mississippi and Tennessee cast their state departments of education in leading roles in their reading initiatives, and the agencies acted boldly to introduce the science of reading statewide, dictating changes in teacher licensure requirements, instructional materials, student assessments and interventions for struggling students. Where departments of education lacked internal capacity, they imported it through contracts with outside experts.

Carey Wright, the former chief academic officer of the District of Columbia Public Schools, became Mississippi's superintendent of education in November 2013, just as the state's literacy law was passed. She quickly reorganized the Mississippi Department of Education to support the law's implementation, creating a literacy division, an office of intervention services to support students who were struggling academically, and an office of early childhood education.

Penny Schwinn, the former superintendent of education in Tennessee who launched the state's

reading reforms, stressed high-quality instructional materials and aligned professional development for educators, changes in how teacher preparation programs taught candidates to teach reading, and early identification and interventions for students.

"When we looked at all the other states that had started to do this work," Schwinn told me, "they were taking one or two pieces at a time. We did a comprehensive approach, so it felt cohesive. We said, 'If we're actually going to make this change [in reading instruction], cohesion is really important.'"

A comprehensive plan led by state officials was also the cornerstone of Mississippi's work. "There is no one single strategy that will get the outcomes that we got," says Tenette Smith, executive director of elementary education and reading at the Mississippi Department of Education. "There were multiple strategies that worked together. We created a multi-layered system of supports that enabled schools and teachers to improve their understanding of reading instruction and transfer that knowledge into practice."

Retraining Teachers

Mississippi's experience illustrates how poorly trained teachers are in the science of reading. The 2013 law required the department to identify the lowest performing schools based on third-grade reading scores and to provide them with literacy coaches to help improve reading instruction. The first year, "the state legislature said we want 75 coaches in the buildings," recalls Smith. "But on reviewing about 600 applications, we realized the capacity was not there. We asked very simple questions like 'name the five components of reading,' and 'give me a strategy that you would use with a kid.' We ended up with 24 people who could answer those questions with any understanding and depth."

changes without the additional connections to curriculum and supports that Mississippi has provided.⁸

The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) launched its teacher training efforts in summer 2021 by ensuring that elementary school teachers in the state would receive 60 hours of professional development on foundational literacy skills. The state contracted with TNTP, a national nonprofit that partners with school systems to achieve their goals for students, to develop two early grades reading courses: one-week of online, asynchronous training on the science of reading, and a second week in which cohorts of teachers and coaches from individual schools met in person to apply the research in practice to their local curriculum.

The state offered the training again the following year to teachers, reading interventionists, instructional leaders, and other licensed personnel in special education and English learner classrooms. More than 90 percent of K-5 teachers in the state have completed it.

A key to getting local buy-in was the decision to pay teachers to do the state-created training. Teachers in kindergarten through grade five receive a \$1,000 stipend as an incentive for completing both courses, and teachers in kindergarten through grade two receive classroom kits of curriculum materials in addition to the stipend.

More than 99 percent of teachers have passed the assessments at the end of each course, and a TDOE survey found more than 97 percent of participants agreed that the courses prepared them to better support students in phonics-based instruction.⁹ The state also created a Secondary Literacy Training program to support teachers in the upper grades.

“The thing I’m probably most proud of is that 97 percent of teachers who have gone through our training—have been highly satisfied or satisfied with the quality of the training,” says former superintendent Schwinn. “We wanted to make

sure that the quality of what we were doing was commensurate with what a teacher should expect from the state. Oftentimes, it’s low-quality professional development. It’s not super aligned. And it’s not at a grain size that makes sense.”

Sustained Support

While initial training on scientifically based reading instruction is important, teachers need ongoing, on-the-job support if they are to make lasting changes to decades of ineffective practice. Some states, like Mississippi, have offered this support by providing a network of state-trained early literacy coaches. Others, like Tennessee, have required districts to develop early literacy plans, approved by the state, then have connected those districts and provided them with planning tools and other supports to promote sharing of best practices.

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) selects and trains its literacy coaches, known as Educators in Residence, and assigns them to schools. In addition to working with teachers on early reading instruction, the coaches do Literacy Learning Walks through buildings with school administrators to observe teaching practice and provide feedback. Following the walks, they meet with principals to review data and make recommendations.

All coaches go through a rigorous selection process, including a performance interview. They remain employees of their school district but are assigned by the department to work with individual schools across the state. MDE provides grants to the districts to cover the coaches’ salaries and benefits while they work for the department.

Importantly, MDE maintains the quality of its coaching model through monthly reports from the literacy coaches as well as biannual Learning Walks with MDE staff. MDE also conducts annual reviews of its coaches. The department supports

the professional growth of literacy coaches through monthly meetings, targeted professional development, and ongoing supports from regional literacy coordinators and assistant state literacy coordinators. In the 2022-23 school year, about 50 coaches worked with 75 schools. To date, more than 200 of Mississippi's 430 elementary schools have been served.

A study commissioned by ExcelinEd, a national education-reform organization, that included a statewide survey of Mississippi K-3 teachers, found nine in 10 agree that their professional development has improved their knowledge of and skill in research-based reading instruction and feel supported by their school administration and reading coach.¹⁰

Similarly, Schwinn's team didn't leave Tennessee's thousands of local educators to try to figure out good reading instruction on their own. Starting in the 2021-22 school year, the department created regional literacy implementation networks for districts, facilitated by external professional development providers, such as TNTP.

About a third of the state's 147 school districts are participating in these networks, each of which includes a "mentor district" chosen for its expertise in high-quality instructional materials and its ability to coach others. The networks, funded through federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grants, bring together district administrators and principals to share practice, engage in monthly walkthroughs to observe classrooms, and receive coaching on giving teachers feedback.

State officials found ways to help teachers help each other, creating Early Literacy Networks focused on pre-kindergarten through grade two, open to districts with 10 or more teachers who have completed the state early literacy training. The Early Literacy Networks include 95 districts whose

representatives meet monthly online and quarterly face-to-face to share resources and best practices.

Tennessee supported school districts' involvement in the networks via grants of between \$80,000 and \$100,000, depending on enrollment, to help them implement early reading instruction in pre-kindergarten through grade two. The networks also offer additional remote and in-person professional development for teachers in both network and non-network districts.

Schwinn's team also gave "model" districts funding to videotape their teachers' early literacy practices for posting on a state Best for All website. "It was teachers talking to teachers and doing videos of what worked for them," says Schwinn.

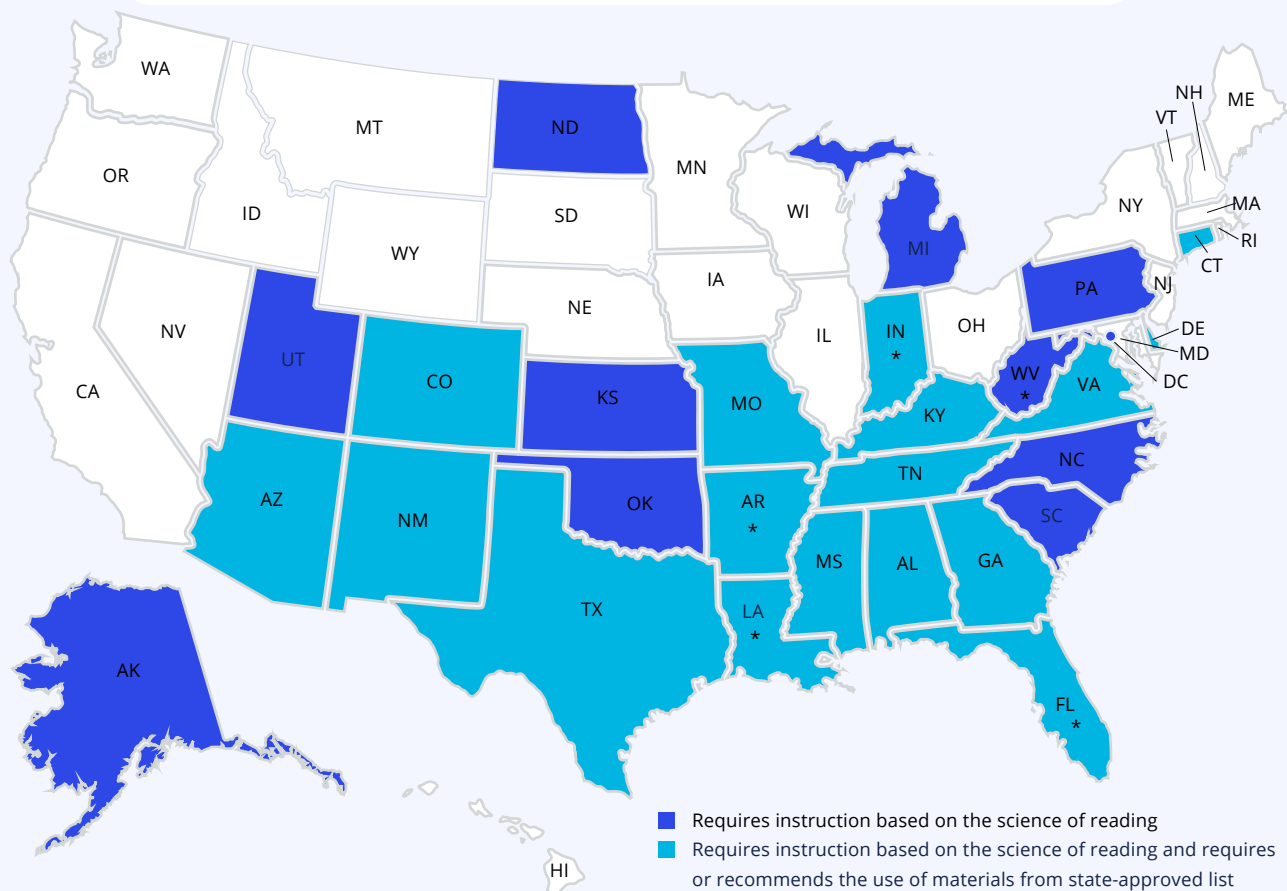
High-Quality Teaching Materials

Mississippi and Tennessee also ensure that teachers and students get high-quality teaching tools grounded in the science of reading. This is where many state reading policies fall flat due to the long-standing tradition of leaving curriculum choices entirely up to local schools.

"For me, the curriculum is a critical lever," says Solari, the University of Virginia professor. "You can have the best-trained teacher on earth, who had exactly what they need in their educator-preparation program, but if they get into their classroom and they do not have the appropriate tools to implement what they know, it's going to be much more difficult."

Tennessee adopted a list of high-quality English Language Arts materials in 2020 and requires districts to use materials from that list as part of an early literacy plan they had to submit for state approval. But state education officials weren't convinced all the materials on the list were good enough on early literacy.

States Mandating Science of Reading Curriculum and Instruction



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis

So, working with district leaders, teachers, and nationally recognized literacy experts David and Meredith Liben, the Department of Education developed a free, optional Tennessee Foundational Skills Curriculum to supplement gaps in pre-kindergarten through grade two. Teachers, districts, and parents can download the supplement at any time. The state also provides districts with a toolkit to help develop a research-based early literacy plan.

“For us, the curriculum, having high-quality instructional materials, has been a game changer—that and the training the state provided,” says Penny Thompson, the instructional coordinator and pre-kindergarten director for Lebanon Special School District, just outside Nashville.

Before adopting the Amplify Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) curriculum three years ago, the district was using a curriculum without a strong phonics component, leaving teachers to search for supplementary materials online. “It was disheartening,” says Pam Sampson, director of teaching and learning for the district, which serves over 4,200 students in grades pre-kindergarten through eight. “We would go into different classrooms and see very different things. There was no consistency.”

In contrast, CKLA provides daily 60-minute lessons in foundational skills—including phonics and phonemic awareness—and 60 minutes dedicated to knowledge-building, for a total of two hours of

literacy instruction. All Lebanon elementary schools have a 150- to 180-minute literacy block daily to include other opportunities for reading, writing, and language development.

Unlike many places, Lebanon's reading scores have bounced back to pre-pandemic levels. "I think it's having that high-quality curriculum in English language arts plus a lot of the training that teachers have received and being consistent with it," says Sampson.

The 9,300-student Murfreesboro City Schools (MCS) district, about 30 miles south of Nashville, uses a different high-quality curriculum from the state-approved list—EL Education—as the spine for its early literacy work. Prior to that, says Kathy Daugherty, the coordinator of reading for grades pre-kindergarten through two, the district did not have an English language arts curriculum. "There wasn't systematic, sequential instruction because teachers were grabbing materials from everywhere."

When Trey Duke became director of MCS in 2021, reading scores had been flat for years, with only about a third of students reading proficiently. "We can't be OK with that," he recalls, "so literacy became a mantra for me." Duke insisted that teachers use the curriculum and provided intensive support for them to do so. Ninety-nine percent of the district's primary teachers and academic interventionists have completed the state's foundational literacy training. Duke hired two separate literacy specialists, one for grades prekindergarten through two and one for grades three through six, to support teachers.

All the professional learning that teachers receive now is grounded in the materials they use in the classroom. Weekly, grade-level Professional Learning Communities use a prepare-to-teach cycle that steps through a coordinated sequence: understanding and delivering the week's upcoming lesson starting with a high-level overview of the unit, taking the student assessment, internalizing the

lesson's goals and rigor, rehearsing the lesson, and then teaching and reflecting on what has happened by looking at student work and instructional data from classroom observations.

This year, the district created an instructional-materials-implementation team at the district level that meets four times annually—and includes Duke, the literacy coordinators, teachers, coaches, and the district's data lead—to talk about implementation from a district perspective. A representative from the state department of education joins those meetings.

The shifts are evident at Black Fox Elementary School, which serves about 850 students in grades pre-kindergarten through six, about 30 percent of whom are Hispanic, 30 percent African American, and 30 percent White, and nearly 20 percent of whom are English Language Learners.

During a one-hour Skills Block, students receive 20 minutes of explicit instruction in phonics, then practice what they have learned in small groups based on needs identified through benchmark assessments. While one group works with the teacher, other students work independently using "decodable readers," small books that let students apply the new spelling patterns they just learned to read words containing that pattern and other previously learned patterns.

"I love the decodables because they open the door for every single student to be able to read," says kindergarten teacher Aubrey Sanderson. "When they sit down in front of that book, if they don't know a word, it's not like, 'well, you didn't memorize it; let's move on.' It's 'let's use your tools to sound out that word.' With the decodables, we're working on a specific sound, a pattern, a skill, and they're getting time to practice that, so they are really getting it."

Adds grade two teacher Francesca Graffeo, "Since we've been doing the science of reading, I've seen so much growth so quickly compared to years past.

Just having more of the tools and strategies is really helping empower these students.”

Like Tennessee, Mississippi adopted a recommended list of high-quality ELA materials in 2021. Targeted schools must develop a data-driven School Literacy Action Plan using a high-quality curriculum from the state-approved list and provide a 90- to 120-minute, uninterrupted reading block daily focused on the five components of reading instruction and writing. Teachers are expected to meet regularly in professional learning communities to collaboratively analyze student data, learn new content, and plan for instruction, with support from their literacy coach.

But even in states such as Mississippi and Tennessee that publish state-approved lists of high-quality curriculum materials, encouraging teachers to abandon the familiar can be difficult.

Before Mississippi published a recommended list of high-quality ELA materials, teachers typically went online to search for materials that would address beginning reading. “We’ve taught people how to pull from here and there, and they continue to want to do that and not trust the core materials,” says Wynn, the state literacy director. To address the issue, the state’s newest regional literacy trainings focus on how to implement the science of reading in classrooms that have adopted high-quality instructional materials. The state incentivizes districts to purchase materials from the approved list by exempting those materials from a competitive bidding process.

Other states are taking more aggressive action to ensure that teachers do not use curriculum materials that include ineffective reading practices.

In 2021, Arkansas passed a law banning three-cueing, which encourages students to guess words based on context, sentence structure, and pictures, as the primary basis for teaching word recognition. Starting in the 2023-24 school year, districts can lose

10 percent of state funding for not complying and charter schools can lose their reauthorization.

Louisiana, Florida, West Virginia and Indiana have also banned curriculum materials that include three-cueing strategies, and other states are considering it. “It’s important,” says Kymyona Burk, a senior policy fellow at ExcelinEd and the former literacy director for the Mississippi Department of Education, “because many teachers go to professional development on the science of reading and then come back to their classrooms and have materials that do not align with this new knowledge.”

Yet the bans have spurred opposition among teacher unions that prioritize teachers’ professional autonomy. “To ban any type of teaching is a slap in the face to educators,” Melissa Cropper, president of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, told *Education Week*, after legislators in that state proposed to ban three-cueing.¹¹

Measuring Progress

The goal of most early literacy legislation is to ensure students are reading proficiently by the end of grade three. But relying solely on state test scores to see if reading instruction is improving in classrooms is too little too late. It may take years to see such changes at scale. As a result, both Mississippi and Tennessee have developed classroom-observation tools to capture how well teachers are implementing the new reading strategies, helping district and state officials target their support.

Tennessee customized the Instructional Practice Guide (IPG) developed by Student Achievement Partners, a national nonprofit, to measure the quality of reading instruction, identify areas for improvement, and track progress across the state. “That framework is the communications glue so

that everybody understands what good instruction looks like and what we're working toward," says Lisa Coons, recent chief academic officer for the department and current superintendent of public instruction in Virginia.

The IPG has proven a crucial information tool for school districts.

Lebanon Special School District conducts classroom walkthroughs with school principals using the IPG to help familiarize them with scientifically based reading instruction. "That was the missing piece, and we really wanted to lean into that with principals and learning leaders," says Thompson. "We're able to gather data through the walkthroughs and look at trends," adds Sampson. "We feel that if we can have our leadership trained, they will sustain it."

The Murfreesboro school district also does monthly walkthroughs using the IPGs to check for implementation progress and identify areas of need. "Teachers are very clear that this is the measure," says Tiffany Strelvel, the principal of Black Fox Elementary School, "It's not evaluative. It's about what practices we can celebrate and what are the next steps."

A districtwide literacy network meets monthly, including grade-level leads and classroom teachers, to spotlight successes based on data from the walkthroughs and discuss upcoming units of study. Participants share that information with their school-based PLCs. Once a month, instructional coaches and administrators can participate in a virtual affinity group to discuss trends and next steps and build school leaders' knowledge.

Last year, despite the pandemic, Murfreesboro City Schools reported its highest reading proficiency scores—40.2 percent—since the state's standards were revised in 2017. "My hope is that success breeds success and we'll see another big bump this year," says Duke.

HELPING ENGLISH LEARNERS LEARN TO READ

As states embrace the science of reading, English language learners (ELL) are often overlooked, despite their substantial and expanding presence in public education.

Just like native English speakers, students learning the language benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in foundational skills. But research suggests that English learners need additional support to become proficient readers.

"It's important to remember that English Learners are learning English at the same time as they're learning course content," says Diane August, a consultant and research professor at the University of Houston who formerly directed the Center for English Language Learners at the American Institutes for Research. "For the kids to understand what they're reading, teachers have to scaffold that content in ways that they don't need to for English-proficient kids."

This means a more explicit emphasis on oral language and vocabulary to facilitate word recognition and fluency, language development, and especially reading comprehension. "If kids can decode but don't understand what the words mean, it's not going to be very helpful. They're not going to acquire the knowledge they need," August says.

In fall 2020, English learners represented more than 10 percent of students nationally.¹ The National Education Association predicts that figure will reach 25 percent by 2025, adding additional complexities to the already challenging task of teaching the nation's students to read.²

Several states have taken measures to support English learners as they implement their newly adopted science of reading laws.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE), for example, has issued guidance for school districts implementing the state's READ Act with English learners. The state emphasizes providing additional supports for ELLs during

core literacy instruction and intervention, as well as leveraging students' home languages and cultural experiences to tailor instruction to meet individual student needs.

Particularly for languages with similarities to English (such as Spanish, which nearly 80 percent of ELL students speak), teachers can draw on the similarities and differences between the two languages, identify cognates (words that have the same origin in both languages), and focus more on the letters and sounds that don't exist in the home language or that are more likely to be challenging—strategies that experts suggest are effective tools to support English literacy.

A core component of the READ Act, as well as other states' literacy laws, is universal screening to detect reading deficiencies. Those identified as having a significant reading deficiency (SRD) are then placed on an individual READ plan and provided intensive supports. The challenge with English learners is that it is often difficult to determine if a student's reading difficulties stem from a language barrier or a decoding deficiency. To address this, the guidance suggests that districts initially assess students in both their native language (Spanish) and English to provide more comprehensive information to guide instructional decisions and determine a deficiency. The CDE has approved a list of both Spanish and English screeners that meet the READ Act requirements, from which districts have the option to choose.

"When possible, you should get information about language and literacy development in a child's home

language," says Emily Solari, a professor in the reading education program at the University of Virginia. "That is useful information to have."

While few states explicitly address English language learners in their reading laws, some have provided similar guidance to Colorado's, including Alabama, Michigan, Missouri, and New Mexico. And other states have acknowledged the English learners' needs in additional ways, from requiring that local literacy plans include ELL-specific programming to training ELL teachers in the science of reading.

Rhode Island, for example, mandates that all bilingual/dual language educators conducting any instruction in English demonstrate proficiency in the science of reading and structured literacy. South Carolina requires ESOL teachers to obtain the Read to Succeed (R2S) Literacy Teacher endorsement. And North Carolina is funding LETRS training for all elementary ELL teachers.

Implementing the science of reading for English learners, much like for native speakers, is not a one-size-fits-all approach. English learners come from diverse backgrounds, speak different languages, and come into the classroom with varying levels of proficiency and literacy in both English and their home language. Some are in English-only classrooms, while others are learning in bilingual settings.

Fortunately, research supports the conclusion that English language learners, like all students, best learn to read using approaches rooted in the science of reading.

—Bella DiMarco

¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2023). "English Learners in Public Schools." Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cgf>.

² National Education Association. (2020). English Language Learners. <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/english-language-learners>

Tackling Teacher Preparation

Focusing on the existing teacher workforce is not enough when it comes to reading instruction. One of the biggest barriers to adopting scientifically based practices are teacher-preparation programs, which have been slow to change.

A review by the National Council on Teacher Quality of nearly 700 teacher-preparation programs nationally found only 25 percent adequately address all five core components of scientifically based reading instruction, despite the fact that peer-reviewed data supporting these components first appeared in education-research journals more than two decades ago.¹² Over 40 percent of programs are still teaching multiple practices unsupported by research. One in three programs does not provide teacher candidates any practice opportunities connected to the science of reading's core components.

According to the FutureEd survey, 37 states currently require educator-preparation programs to train their students in the science of reading, typically by mandating a minimum number of credit hours or coursework or by defining the components of reading instruction.

Twenty-eight states require certain teachers, particularly elementary teachers, to pass a test of reading knowledge to earn their teaching license. In Texas, for example, all preK-6 teacher candidates must pass a standalone proficiency test—The Science of Teaching Reading (STR) Exam—for certification. Mississippi and Tennessee also require a strong licensure test.

But relatively few states have flexed their regulatory authority to push teacher-preparation programs to change, the way Tennessee, Colorado, Mississippi, and a few other states have, including by updating their state standards for educator-preparation programs to reflect the science of reading. In Mississippi, that has driven changes in

the content of the two literacy courses required for pre-service teachers.

The Tennessee law required the state's Department of Education to develop new foundational literacy skills standards for educator-preparation programs. In July 2021, the state board approved the revised standards for preparing teachers in grades pre-kindergarten through five, as well as special-education staff.

Under the new system, state officials review teacher-training programs for their alignment to the standards and can require corrective action, and ultimately deny approval, for any program that fails to incorporate the standards—cutting off the institutions from potential revenue.

There are carrots as well as sticks: Faculty can attend the state-provided early reading courses, and the majority of preparation programs for the early grades have faculty who have participated.¹³

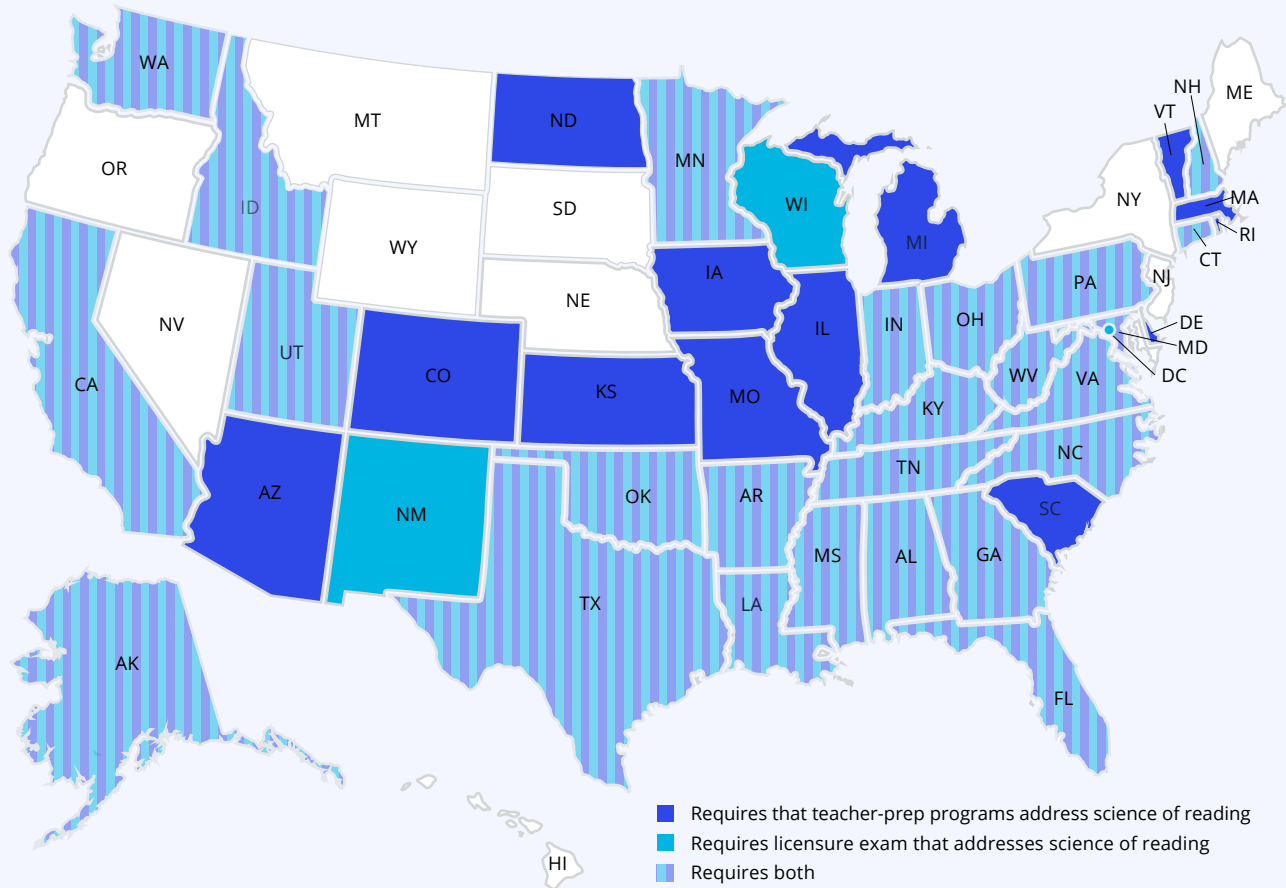
"It has helped us in getting the buy-in from our teacher-preparation providers," says Coons, the former chief academic officer in Tennessee. "They are such compliance animals that the change in standards has created more appetite."

In yet another example of the comprehensiveness of the Tennessee strategy, the state lobbied to change the content of a national teacher-certification test called edTPA to allow candidates to highlight their knowledge of how to use high-quality instructional materials to teach reading rather than creating lessons from scratch. "That was a huge win," says Coons.

Colorado similarly uses a muscular approach to improving reading instruction for prospective teachers as part of its approval process for educator-prep programs. The process includes reviewing literacy course materials and campus visits.

In the past five years, the state has reviewed 32 programs that prepare elementary, early childhood,

State Teacher-Preparation Requirements



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis

or special education teachers and given seven programs conditional approval, including the biggest training program in the state. The threat of going on probation and being unable to enroll candidates has led these institutions to significantly revise their course offerings and upgrade their reading faculty. Two institutions chose to sunset their programs because they could not meet the state standards.

Marvy Bivens, executive director of educator workforce development at the Colorado Department of Education, says, “We’ve addressed the false belief that professors and deans of education have complete academic freedom. We said, ‘No. If you’re being approved for state licensure, you have to meet our standards.’”

Other states—including Arizona and Mississippi—have offered LETRS training to teacher-education faculty and leaders of higher education institutions to help them understand the science of reading. In Mississippi, college professors who earn a certain score on the post-assessment for LETRS training can be certified as local facilitators as an added incentive. Even so, says Wynn, the state’s literacy director, “it’s still a struggle” to get teacher-preparation programs to shift practice. That resistance has a variety of sources, including entrenched ideas about how to teach reading, teachers wanting autonomy in their classrooms, and concerns that students develop an appreciation for reading, not just focus narrowly on phonics.

Screening Students

Even when schools get reading instruction right, some students will need extra help. English language learners, for example, may need additional work on spoken language or help learning vocabulary and background knowledge. *(See sidebar on page 12.)*

Thirty-five states require districts to screen early elementary students two to three times a year for dyslexia or potential reading difficulties and provide interventions. Studies show that early intervention works best to help children counter a wide range of reading difficulties, collectively known as dyslexia.¹⁴

But a 2021 study by FutureEd found that the quality of early screening tools varies widely, with many relying on teachers to make subjective judgments based on their observations.¹⁵

Tennessee’s law requires the department to provide a free universal screener to districts but does not require districts to use it because vendors and districts pushed back against mandating a single instrument. Though nine in 10 districts now use Pearson’s aimswebPlus, other school systems,

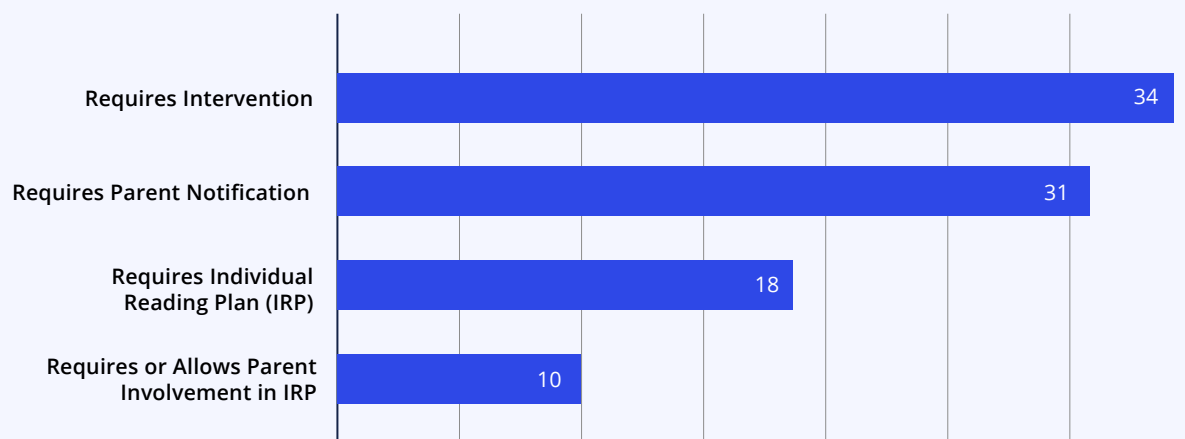
including Lebanon, continue to use different measures. Many of these screening instruments are not aligned with the high-quality instructional materials that teachers use in classrooms, says Coons.

Only a handful of states, FutureEd found, including Alaska, Idaho, North Carolina, and Virginia, have one state-approved screening tool that all districts must use. A third of states leave it entirely up to districts to decide.

Similarly, though 34 states require schools to provide interventions for students identified as having reading difficulties based on screening tests, the types of interventions vary widely, including one-on-one instruction, small-group tutoring, extended learning time, and summer reading camps. Eighteen states require individual reading plans for students identified with a reading challenge.

Louisiana requires that within 30 days of being identified as having literacy skills that are below grade level based on a literacy screener, students must have an individual reading improvement plan created by the teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent or legal guardian.

States with Intervention Requirements for Struggling Readers



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis

NUMBER OF STATES

The plans must describe the evidence-based reading intervention services the student will receive and give suggestions for strategies parents can use at home.

Interventions may include daily targeted small-group instruction; before- and after-school literacy intervention provided by a teacher or tutor with specialized literacy training; summer programs, including summer reading camps; and at-home literacy programs such as workshops for parents and web-based literacy activities.

North Carolina also requires an individual reading plan for students identified with reading difficulties, including offering a summer reading camp to first and second graders. Students retained in third grade must be provided with a teacher with demonstrated student reading outcomes and be placed in an accelerated reading class or a transitional combined third and fourth grade class as appropriate. Classroom instruction must include at least 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted instruction based on the science of reading.

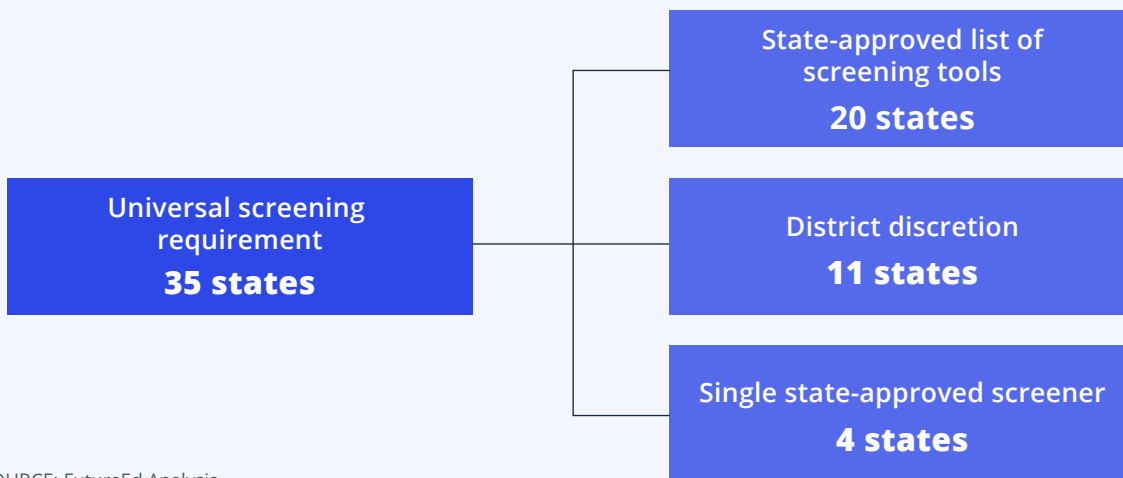
Too often, however, the interventions that students receive are not connected with the curriculum

they are using in their regular classroom, creating incoherence and confusion. “One of the most important things we’re seeing is that if tutoring is not connected to the classroom, it’s really not having the impact in literacy,” says Coons. “So, if I’m doing foundational skills in the classroom, if the foundational skills I’m doing in tutoring are not connected, it’s not going to transfer.”

Beginning in the 2020-21 school year, Tennessee used some of its federal Covid-recovery funds to invest in TN ALL Corps, which provides grants to districts to create high-dosage tutoring programs that use a research-based model. Currently, 87 districts are participating in the program. The state trains all tutors in scientifically based reading instruction and provides them with a foundational literacy skills curriculum for grades one to three.

Despite legislation in 31 states requiring that parents be notified if their child has reading difficulties, and 10 states requiring parent involvement in developing a child’s individual reading plan, many worry that schools have not done enough to help parents understand their child’s reading performance and what to do about

States with Universal Screening Policies



SOURCE: FutureEd Analysis

it—one reason that pandemic-related tutoring slots remained unfilled in many districts last summer.

Sustainability

Like Tennessee, many states have used federal Covid-relief funding or federal Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grants to help jump-start their early literacy efforts.

CLSD is a federal grant program focused on advancing literacy skills for students from birth through grade 12, with an emphasis on disadvantaged students. In fall 2019, 13 states were awarded five-year grants, ranging from Alaska to Rhode Island. Another 11 states won grants in a second round. But to be sustainable over time, states need to have a dedicated funding source or build literacy work into per-pupil spending.

Tennessee leveraged some \$80 million in one-time federal Covid-relief funding and \$40 million in federal grants to launch its statewide science of reading training efforts and invest in optional reading resources and supports at no cost to districts. The state's funding formula now includes permanent support for early literacy instruction in grades kindergarten through three, support for summer and tutoring programs for students who are struggling, and notably, bonus money for every additional child a district gets to grade level in reading.

Mississippi lawmakers allocated \$9.5 million for the first year of the state's early literacy efforts and have appropriated \$15 million annually ever since. Arizona has an Early Literacy Program Fund, funded at \$12 million in fiscal year 2022, with districts receiving \$145 per student in grades kindergarten through three. Virginia is allocating money through its student-funding formula for districts to hire one reading specialist for every 550 students in grades pre-kindergarten through three.

SHOULD STRUGGLING READERS REPEAT GRADE THREE?

Policies requiring schools to retain students in grade three if they are not reading proficiently are one of the most controversial aspects of state early literacy laws. Fifteen states, including Mississippi and Tennessee, have such requirements, while other states allow for retention but do not require it. At least six states implemented these laws in the past five years. But at least two states have repealed such requirements during the same period, reflecting policymakers' ambivalence about the strategy.

Tennessee's policy goes into effect for this year's grade three students.

This spring, the state showed its largest single-year increase in the percentage of grade three students scoring proficient in reading on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program—40 percent. But that leaves up to 60 percent of students facing uncertainty over whether they will be promoted to the next grade level. Some of these students may move up to grade four next fall under exemptions that range from English language learners who have received less than two years of ELL instruction, or students who successfully complete a summer reading program.

But the large number of students requiring interventions raises questions about whether Tennessee implemented the retention policy too quickly after adopting its comprehensive reading reforms and whether basing retention decisions on a single state test makes sense.

A 1999 consensus report from the National Research Council advises against making consequential decisions about students based on a single measure like Tennessee's state English language arts test.¹

Conflicting Research

Research on the impact of retention policies is mixed. Studies from the 1990s concluded that retained students perform worse than promoted peers. This includes increased risk of chronic absenteeism and dropping out of school.²

But more recent studies suggest the strategy may be more effective in the earlier grades if it is accompanied by intensive supports tailored to student needs.

A 2023 study by researchers Kirsten Slungaard Mumma and Marcus A. Winters from Boston University examined the first cohort of Mississippi students subject to the state's grade three retention policy.³ It compared test scores, absences, and special-education status for about 4,700 grade six students who had scored just above and just below the 2015 state cut score that determined promotion when they were in grade three.

It found that repeating grade three led to substantially higher grade six ELA scores, largely driven by positive effects for Black and Hispanic students, and had no significant impact on math scores, absences, or the likelihood of being identified for special education. The study could not disentangle the added year of instruction from other features of Mississippi's comprehensive approach to providing literacy-focused supports and interventions to students.

A 2023 review of the research by John Westall and Amy Cummings from Michigan State University examined the effects of states' early literacy policies between 2009 and 2018. They found that those states which included grade retention among their policies saw higher gains on state tests, with the greatest gains in states with comprehensive policies that also included teacher training, funding, and additional student supports.⁴

Another recent analysis, by Umut Ozek and Louis T. Mariano for the Brookings Institution, found that retaining students in middle or high school typically leads to worse results, including higher levels of student disengagement. But they found that retaining elementary school students may yield more positive results, particularly when accompanied by instructional supports tailored to the needs of retained students.

Competing Concerns

Susan B. Neuman, a specialist in early literacy development at New York University and the former assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education under President George W. Bush, points out that retention is costly and that many children, especially in rural areas, risk being assigned the same teacher using the same unsuccessful teaching methods the second time around, sapping their motivation and reducing their chances of success.

In contrast, Kymyona Burk, a senior policy fellow at ExcelinEd and the former literacy director for the Mississippi

Department of Education, argues that the daunting prospect of retaining students puts pressure on school districts to teach effectively. "The goal is that students are ready before they even get to the retention component," says Burk. "Our first administration, we got 85 percent of our students to pass the assessment."

Like Tennessee, most states with required retention policies attempt to reconcile such tensions by exempting some students, most often English learners, students with disabilities, and second-time repeaters. Alaska requires parents to sign a waiver acknowledging that their child is not prepared for grade four and agreeing that they will participate in individual programming over the summer. Georgia permits parents or teachers to appeal retentions via a school-level "placement committee."

To Trey Duke, director of Tennessee's 9,300-student Murfreesboro City Schools district, retaining students on the basis of a single test score is most troublesome. "My biggest fear," he says, "is that we're going to pull a large number of kids into this net but not capture the right kids. Our state test is not a reading assessment. If we're going to go down this path, we need to use multiple measures."

Missouri does that, requiring parents and the appropriate school staff to make the decision "based on a consideration of all relevant factors, including the reading deficiency, the student's progress in other subject areas, and the student's overall intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development."

Tennessee Governor Bill Lee has embraced this strategy as well, recently signing a measure to amend the state's grade three retention law, effective the 2023-24 school year, to require, among other things, another benchmark test to factor into retention decisions.

—Lynn Olson

¹ National Research Council. (1999). *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/6336>.

² National Research Council.

³ Slungaard Mumma, K. & Winters, M.A. (2023). *The Effect of Retention Under Mississippi's Test-Based Promotion Policy*. Boston: Boston University Wheelock College of Education & Human Development, Wheelock Educational Policy Center.

⁴ Westall, J. & Cummings, A. (June 2023). *The Effects of Early Literacy Policies on Student Achievement*. Lansing, Michigan: Education Policy Innovation Collaborative, Michigan State University.

⁵ Ozek, U. & Mariano, L.T. (March 27, 2023). "Can Grade Retention Help with COVID-19 Learning Recovery in Schools?" Washington D.C.: Brown Center Chalkboard, Brookings Institution.

Having a realistic implementation timeline also matters, given the depth of change in teacher mindsets and practices that is required. “I hope legislators don’t feel like we can just outlaw three-cueing and tell teachers to get certified in the science of reading and, maybe, provide a little money and we’re done,” says Kerri Briggs, the former assistant secretary for elementary and

secondary education under President George W. Bush and now chief of staff in the Houston Independent School District. “That’s a great start, but it’s not enough.” Says Solari, speaking about Virginia’s efforts: “This is a five- or ten-year process to saturate the state by pushing on all the levers in the system. You can’t change just one thing and expect to move the needle on literacy.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taken together, the following recommendations represent a blueprint for states to introduce literacy reforms based on the science of reading.

- States should design a comprehensive, cohesive plan as Mississippi and Tennessee have done that pulls multiple levers over multiple years.
- Initial statewide training and ongoing support for educators linked to high quality instructional materials are crucial, as these support sustained changes in classroom practice. The actual state approach may vary, from state-trained literacy coaches in Mississippi to regional literacy coordinators and on-the-ground reading specialists in Virginia to support for district implementation networks in Tennessee.
- Lightweight tools to monitor trends in implementation, such as the classroom walkthroughs and instructional rubrics used in Mississippi and Tennessee, can help track progress. These tools should not be used to evaluate teachers, but rather to indicate where additional support is needed.
- To identify students who need extra help, states should require high-quality early literacy screeners administered three times a year as well as ongoing monitoring of student progress. States need to improve the quality of these early literacy screeners and limit the number of screeners used across districts, as Tennessee has tried to do, preferably settling on a single instrument that enables cross-district and cross-school comparisons.
- Parents should be notified when their child has a reading difficulty, including information on the interventions available, and receive regular updates on their child’s progress. Any interventions should be aligned to the curriculum used during core instruction, so that students can more readily transfer their knowledge and skills and be prepared for upcoming lessons.
- States should use their regulatory authority to prod teacher preparation programs to align with the science of reading, as Tennessee and Colorado have done. Teacher candidates should demonstrate that they understand the science of reading, how to teach reading, and how to select and use high-quality English language arts materials.
- States’ primary focus should be on preventing students from failing grade three reading rather than retaining those who aren’t successful. If school districts do retain students, their policies should require multiple measures of student performance and ensure that students who repeat a grade get individualized, evidence-based support that differs from the instruction they received the previous year; students should not get “more of the same” with the expectation of better results.
- States need dedicated funding to build and sustain the infrastructure needed to support the science of reading, including reallocating federal, state, and local resources and providing financial incentives for school districts,

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Alabama 2019: H.B.388 (Alabama Literacy Act) 2022: H.B.135, H.B.220, S.B.200</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to provide a comprehensive core reading program based on the science of reading and that develops foundational skills. The State Superintendent must convene a Literacy Task Force to provide recommendations. The state currently recommends two programs.</p>	<p>Professional Development Districts are required to provide professional development and coaching on the science of reading. Regional and local literacy specialists are assigned to schools and required to develop targeted daily coaching support and organize and provide targeted ongoing professional learning.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Public teacher preparation programs leading to the attainment of an initial elementary teaching certification must require at least nine credit hours of reading or literacy coursework based on the science of learning to read, including multisensory strategies in foundational reading skills. The state requires elementary teacher candidates to take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Requires universal screening for reading deficiencies and dyslexia in K-3 at the beginning, middle and end of each school year. The state recommends two screeners for districts to adopt.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including students with disabilities, ELL w/ less than two years of instruction in English, students with intensive reading instruction for two or more years and still have deficiency or those previously retained for two years.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Alaska 2022: H.B. 114 (Alaska Reads Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to use materials based on the science of reading for grades K-3. Each district will submit for approval the curriculum used for core ELA instruction.</p>	<p>Professional Development K-3 teachers are required to undergo training and demonstrate proficiency in evidence-based instruction. Multiple options for PD. Lowest performing 25% of schools receive more direct support. Reading specialists coach, train, and mentor teachers and school staff.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Before teaching K-3 students, teachers must complete coursework, training, or testing requirements, and demonstrate proficiency as determined by the department, in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, oral language skills, and reading comprehension. The state requires elementary teacher candidates to take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Districts are required screen K-3 students three times per year using statewide screening tool that evaluates phonemic awareness, letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, and letter word sound fluency of students in kindergarten; letter word sound fluency and oral reading fluency of students in grade one; vocab and oral reading fluency of students in grades two and three. Amplify's mCLASS is the state adopted literacy screener. If a district chooses to use an alternative literacy screener, they must complete a waiver that has to be approved by the department.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, unless the parent or guardian signs a waiver which acknowledges that the student is not prepared and agrees to participate in an additional 20 hours of individual reading improvement plan services the summer before 4th grade.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Arizona</p> <p>2021: S.B.1572 2022: H.B.2026</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>Schools are required to adopt evidence-based reading curricula that include the essential components of reading. The Literacy Team at the AZ Dep of Ed provides a list of vetted curricula.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p> <p>Requires training on the science of reading, including systematic phonics instruction. Requires literacy endorsement for all certificated teachers who provide literacy instruction in kindergarten programs or in any grades one through five. Schools/districts are required to include their plans for professional development in their literacy plans.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure</p> <p>All K-5 teachers who teach reading will need the K-5 Literacy Endorsement. Teachers need 90 clock hours or two university courses (6 credits): 3 semester hours of college coursework or 45 hours of approved trainings in the science of reading instruction and 3 semester hours of college coursework or 45 clock hours of approved training in reading instruction, including assessments, instructional practices, and interventions. Teachers must also receive a passing score on the Foundations of Reading exam by Pearson.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening</p> <p>Requires universal screening of pupils in prek-3 to identify pupils who have reading deficiencies. Arizona students who enter K-3 will be given a universal literacy and dyslexia screener within the first 45 calendar days and will additionally be screened during the winter and spring benchmark periods. The state approves a list of screening tools for districts to adopt.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p> <p>Retention is required, with exemptions.</p>	<p>Interventions</p> <p>Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Arkansas</p> <p>2017: S.B.502 (The Right To Read Act), S.B.328 2019: S.B.153, S.B.677 2021: S.B.349, S.B.62 2023: S.B.294 (LEARNS Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>Requires curriculum programs that are supported by the science of reading and based on instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic. Use of three-cueing is explicitly banned. The Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education is required to identify and create a list of approved materials, resources, and curriculum programs.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p> <p>School district must provide professional development in scientific reading instruction for elementary or special education teachers. Districts are required to provide professional development to educators in one of the prescribed pathways to obtain a proficiency credential. Public schools with a “D” or “F” rating will have literacy coaches to support teachers and promote evidence-based literacy instruction aligned to the Science of Reading.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure</p> <p>Requires that graduates of Elementary Education (K-6) and Special Education (K-12) demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction. Teachers are required to pass the approved stand-alone reading assessment that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening</p> <p>Requires universal K-3 screening.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p> <p>Retention is required for students who don't meet the third-grade reading standard by the 2025-26 school year. Students with limited English proficiency, disabilities or students who were already retained in kindergarten through third grade are exempt.</p>	<p>Interventions</p> <p>Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>California 2021: S.B.488</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs are required to address the science of reading. Teachers are required to take licensure exam that assesses the science of reading.</p>
<p>Colorado <i>Amendments to 2012 READ Act</i> 2019: S.B.19-199 2021: S.B.21-151 2022: S.B.22-004</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to provide instructional programming that is evidence-based and scientifically-based and focused on phonemic awareness; phonics; vocabulary development; reading fluency, including oral skills; and reading comprehension. The department is required to identify evidence-based instructional programs for use by LEAs.</p>	<p>Professional Development K-3 teachers and reading specialists must complete training based in the science of reading. The state provides a list of approved professional development vendors, or districts can provide their own if it meets requirements of the READ Act.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs are required to offer coursework in the science of reading, including the foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension, and the skills and strategies to apply to ensure that every student learns to read.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Districts are required to screen students in grades K-3 to determine whether a student has a significant reading deficiency. The state approves a list of screening tools for districts to adopt. The state has approved both English and Spanish screening tools.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Connecticut 2021: H.B.6620 (Right to Read Act) passed as part of budget implementation bill S.B.1202</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Schools/districts are required to implement a reading curriculum model or program for grades preK-5 that is evidenced-based and scientifically-based, and focused on competency in the five areas of reading. The Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success is required to review and approve at least five reading curriculum models or programs that must be implemented by all public-school districts effective the 2023-24 school year.</p>	<p>Professional Development Teachers are provided with professional development in scientifically-based reading research and instruction. Mentor teachers will also train teachers on reading instruction.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. The Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success within the department is responsible for serving as a collaborative center for institutions of higher education. All elementary teachers must pass licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Students are required to be assessed three times per year using an assessment approved by the Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Delaware 2021: S.B.133 2022: S.B.4, H.B.304</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction By 2027-2028, school districts and charter schools serving students in grades K-3 must adopt a reading instruction curriculum from the department's approved list of evidence-based, reading instruction curricula.</p>	<p>Professional Development Requires a minimum number of hours of training or PD for elementary teachers on evidence-based strategies. The department shall provide professional learning on reading screening and literacy intervention approaches at no cost which shall be provided during the contractual day.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs which prepare elementary school, early childhood education, or special education teachers or reading specialists must provide instruction in evidence-based reading instruction.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening All public school students in grades K-3 are required to participate in universal reading screening three times each year to identify potential reading deficiencies. Districts must choose from the list of aligned universal reading screeners maintained by the Department of Education.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, unless the parent and district agree on a plan to remediate deficiencies. If there is no agreement, the student must attend summer school and demonstrate proficiency or an academic review committee determines proficiency using evidence from other approved indicators.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>DC 2021: B23-0150</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Beginning 2024-2025, each LEA is required to adopt a science-based reading program.</p>	<p>Professional Development Schools must provide PD on evidence-based instruction. DCPS shall provide all literacy educators serving K-5 students who have not already completed structured literacy training, the opportunity to receive at least 45 hours of structured literacy training over 2 consecutive years. Literacy educators will receive a stipend for participation in structured literacy training if they are not provided the training during school hours.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teachers must take licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Beginning with 2023-2024, an LEA is required to ensure that all students in grades K-2 are screened for reading difficulties. OSSE shall provide a list of recommended screening instruments that an LEA may use to identify students who are at risk of reading difficulties, which screen for the following factors: Phonological awareness; Rapid naming skills; Correspondence between sounds and letters; and Decoding.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Florida 2021: C.S./H.B.7011 2023: H.B.7039</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Requires instruction based on the science of reading and requires phonics instruction as the primary instructional strategy, rather than the three-cueing model. The Just Read, Florida! office is tasked to work with the Florida Center for Reading Research to identify scientifically researched and evidenced-based reading instructional and intervention programs.</p>	<p>Professional Development Requires all teachers who work with struggling readers to get a reading endorsement. Requires the Just Read, Florida! Office to provide training to reading coaches and school administrators on evidence-based reading strategies. Reading coaches are available to schools. Regional literacy support teams also provide supports statewide.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Those who enter teacher prep programs, for coverage areas that include reading instruction or intervention for any K-6 students, must complete all of the competencies for a reading endorsement, including the practicum, prior to graduation or completion of the program. The Just Read Florida office is required to work with teacher preparation programs. Teachers are required to take licensure exam that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening The state has established a coordinated screening and progress monitoring system.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs with less than two years of English proficiency, students with disabilities, or those who received two years of intervention and were already retained.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Georgia 2023: H.B.538 (Georgia Early Literacy Act), S.B.211</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to adopt high-quality instructional materials and instructional practices grounded in the science of reading that instruct students in foundational skills for grades K-3. The State Board of Education is required to approve a list and instructs districts to adopt materials from that list.</p>	<p>Professional Development The Department of Education is required to develop or procure training for K-3 teachers on the science of reading, structured literacy, and foundational literacy skills. All public school K-3 teachers are required to complete such training.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Requires programs create standards that ensure students completing teacher certification programs in this state graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to teach reading. By 2025, the Georgia Assessments for Certification of Educators (GACE), or any other assessment required for teacher certification, shall be aligned with developmentally appropriate evidence-based literacy instruction.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Schools are required to screen students in grades K-3 on their reading proficiency three times a year. By July 2024, the board shall approve a list of universal reading screeners for use by public schools and local school systems.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required. Parents or a teacher can appeal the decision. The school principal will then establish a placement committee to consider the appeal.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Hawaii</p>			

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

Idaho 2021: S.1006 (Idaho Literacy Achievement and Accountability Act)	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure State board of education will review teacher preparation programs to ensure courses and graduation requirements are consistent with the Idaho comprehensive literacy plan. K-12 teacher preparation assessments will include demonstration of teaching skills and knowledge aligned with current research on best reading practices.
	Universal Screening All K-3 students are required to be assessed at least twice per year using a single statewide assessment. Students exhibiting deficiencies may be screened more often. The state uses the Idaho Reading Indicator.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.
Illinois	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs in the state must address the science of reading.
Indiana 2023: H.B.1558, H.B.1590, H.B.1638	Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to adopt curriculum or supplemental materials for reading that are aligned with the science of reading. Use of three-cueing is prohibited. The department is required to publish an advisory list of science of reading curricula on the department's website.	Professional Development Teachers are required to take training in the science of reading before earning or renewing teaching licenses. Literacy coaches are provided for two years in schools where less than 70% 3rd graders pass the reading test.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher training programs in the state will need to teach reading instruction based on the science within a few years or lose accreditation. K-3 teachers need at least 6 credit hours in scientifically-based reading instruction. Teachers are required to take licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
	Universal Screening Schools are required to screen students for reading difficulties.	Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs, students with disabilities, or previously retained twice before 4th grade.	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.
Iowa 2016: H.F.2413	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs in the state must address the science of reading.
	Universal Screening Schools are required to assess students in grades K-3 at the beginning of each school year for their level of reading or reading readiness.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Kansas 2022: H.B.2567 (Every Child Can Read Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Requires every school district to implement a literacy program based on the science of reading, designed to ensure every student learns to read by third grade.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure State appropriate funds for Pittsburg State University to assist in the development of a science of reading curricula for the state educational institutions and colleges.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening School districts are required to measure student achievement through state assessments and through other universal screening and assessment tools that are approved by the local board of education, or by KSDE.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Kentucky 2022: S.B.9 (Read to Succeed Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction School districts are required to provide evidence-based reading, intervention, and instructional strategies that emphasize phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension; connections between reading and writing acquisition; and motivation to read to address the diverse needs of students. State provides vetted HQIM.</p>	<p>Professional Development The Kentucky Department of Education created the Kentucky Reading Academies, which brings LETRS training to teachers across the state. The state also created a literacy coaching program.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure All postsecondary institutions offering teacher preparation programs are required to include evidenced-based approaches to the teaching of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension for teacher candidates. Beginning 2024-25, all new teachers seeking certification in interdisciplinary early childhood education or elementary education shall successfully pass an approved teacher preparation test.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, schools are required to screen students using a reliable and valid universal screener at least three times per year. The first must be given in the first 45 days of the school year for all kindergarten students and in the first 30 days of the school year for grades 1-3. Superintendents are required to choose at least one screening tool and one diagnostic from an approved list.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Louisiana</p> <p>2021: S.B.216, S.B.222 2022: H.B.214, H.B.852, H.B.865, H.B. 911</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to use evidence-based instruction. The use of any materials that use “three cueing” is prohibited. State reviews and vets HQIM.</p>	<p>Professional Development Teachers are required to complete one of the professional learning programs approved by the department of education based on the science of reading. Each public school shall provide literacy coaches for K-3 reading teachers.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure The State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education shall revise teacher certification requirements and the requirements of teacher education programs to require foundational literacy skills standards in all educator preparation program of all candidates seeking certification to teach K-3 students. Teacher candidates require at least 9 credit hours of foundational literacy. A K-3 applicant for initial certification must pass a rigorous test of scientifically-researched, evidence based reading instruction and intervention.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Requires students grades K-3 to be screened three times per year. School districts must select one screener to be used across grades K-3.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.</p>
<p>Maine</p>			
<p>Maryland</p> <p>2019: S.B.0734 (Ready to Read Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Each local school system must ensure that a student is screened to identify if the student is at risk for reading difficulties. Each system must choose and identify a screening instrument that is based on foundational reading skills that include phonological and phonemic awareness skills. All kindergarten students or those not previously screened are required to be screened. Grades one through three are only required for those identified with deficiency.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>Massachusetts</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading.</p>

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

Michigan 2016: H.B.4822 (Read by Grade 3)	Curriculum and Instruction Requires evidence-based core instruction for grades K-3, as well as interventions for struggling readers, that is “systematic, explicit, multisensory, and sequential.”	Professional Development The department must develop a literacy coaching system and coaches must have knowledge of scientifically based reading research. A literacy coach shall support and provide initial and ongoing professional development to teachers.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading.
	Universal Screening School districts must screen students grades K-3 to diagnose reading difficulties, inform instruction and intervention needs, and assess progress toward a growth target. Students must be assessed at least three times per school year. The first must be within the first 30 days. The department shall approve 3 or more valid and reliable screening, formative, and diagnostic reading assessment systems for selection by districts.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.
Minnesota 2021: H.F.2 (Omnibus education bill)	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development Districts must ensure that teachers have enough training to provide scientifically-based reading instruction. The state appropriated \$3 million in 2021 to provide teachers with training in evidence-based reading methods (LETRS).	Teacher Prep and Licensure Board-approved teacher preparation programs for teachers of elementary education must require instruction in applying scientifically based reading instruction. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
Mississippi 2013: S.B.2347 (Literacy-Based Promotion Act) 2016: S.B.2157, S.B. 2572	Curriculum and Instruction Schools must provide reading instruction based in the science of reading. The state reviews and vets HQIM.	Professional Development The state must provide training for teachers in scientifically-based reading instruction and intervention, and reading coaches will provide job-embedded support for teachers.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teacher candidates must pass a foundational reading test for certification to ensure they have the knowledge and skill to teach all students to read.
	Universal Screening Requires universal reading screening at least 3 times per year for students in grades K-3. The Mississippi Department of Education, in collaboration with Mississippi Reading Panel, has established an approved list of reading screeners to be used by local school districts.	Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs with less than two years of English instruction, students with disabilities, or those previously retained and receiving interventions for two years.	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

Missouri 2022: S.B.681 and 662 (Reading Instruction Act)	Curriculum and Instruction Schools serving grades K-5 must provide an evidence-based reading instruction program that meets requirements, including skill development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The department shall publish a list of curricula that ensure instruction is explicit, systematic, diagnostic, and based on the components of effective reading instruction.	Professional Development Each school district and charter school is required to provide professional development to enhance the skills of elementary teachers in responding to children’s unique reading issues and needs and to increase the use of evidence-based strategies. PD must address the essential components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.	Teacher Prep and Licensure The state board of education shall, in consultation with Missouri Advisory Board for Educator Preparation (MABEP), align literacy and reading instruction coursework for teacher education programs.
	Universal Screening LEAs are required to assess all students enrolled in K-3 at the beginning and end of each school year for their level of reading or reading readiness using an assessment from state-approved list.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.
Montana			
Nebraska 2018: L.B.1081 (Nebraska Reading Improvement Act) 2021: L.B.528 (2021)	Universal Screening Each school district is required to administer an approved reading assessment three times per year to all students in grades K-3. The Nebraska Department of Education makes public a list of reading assessments that have been approved for the following academic school year.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.
Nevada 2015: S.B.391 (Read by Grade 3) 2019: A.B.289	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development Each licensed elementary teacher who is responsible for providing instruction in reading must complete professional development developed by a licensed teacher designated as a literacy specialist. Literacy specialist are assigned at every elementary school and collaborate with the principal to develop a schedule of professional development and assist in providing such professional development.	Teacher Prep and Licensure
	Universal Screening Requires all K-3 students to be screened. The state board has approved several screeners that districts should use.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

New Hampshire	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
New Jersey			
New Mexico 2019: S.B.398 2023: H.B.481	Curriculum and Instruction The state created the Reading Materials Fund for districts to purchase materials that align with the science of reading. State provides vetted HQIM.	Professional Development All third-grade teachers, special education teachers, and interventionists supporting third grade must be enrolled in LETRS during the 22-23 SY. Instructional coaches, gifted teachers, and teachers new to K, one, or two (including Special Education and Interventionists) are also required to enroll. LEAs are encouraged to add fourth and/or fifth grade teachers as capacity allows in the schools.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
	Universal Screening All first-grade students must be screened during the first 40 days of instruction or within two weeks of enrolling. Screener data is used to identify characteristics and risk factors of reading difficulty. The state has approved screeners in both English and Spanish.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency.
New York			
North Carolina 2021: S.387 (Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021/ Read to Achieve)	Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to ensure that their core curricula are aligned to evidence-based standards by 2024-25.	Professional Development All elementary teachers, and NC pre-K program teachers, to take a professional learning course in the science of reading. The state is funding the following staff members to participate in LETRS: Homeroom classroom teachers working with prek-5 students; One administrator per school who will support/evaluate for alignment; One instructional coach per school; Lead teachers working with children in the North Carolina pre-K program and onsite administrator; Elementary EC Resource Teachers; Elementary ELL Teachers. Instructional coaches support the schoolwide integration of LETRS into PLCs and PD consistently.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Educator preparation programs in the state must provide coursework in the science of reading. For elementary school teachers, at least three continuing education credits related to literacy. Literacy credits shall include evidence-based assessment, diagnosis, and intervention strategies for students not demonstrating reading proficiency, grounded in the science of reading. Teachers must take licensure exam that assesses the science of reading.

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

	<p>Universal Screening All K-3 students are required to be screened 3 times per year. North Carolina’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) selected mCLASS DIBELS as the state’s K-3 Literacy Assessment.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs with less than two years of English instruction, students with disabilities, or those receiving interventions and already retained at least once.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.</p>
<p>North Dakota 2019: H.B.1461 2021: H.B.1388 2023: S.B.2284</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Requires that each school district and nonpublic school ensures its reading curriculum is scientifically-based, evidence-based, and research-based; addresses the 5 components of reading; and is systematic and direct.</p>	<p>Professional Development K-3 teachers and principals are required to receive training in scientifically-based reading instruction practices. In 2023, the state appropriated \$1,000,000 for science of reading training and instruction.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure The board shall ensure a candidate for teacher licensure demonstrates competencies in beginning reading instruction based on scientifically and research-based best practices, including the acquisition of knowledge of the essential components of beginning reading instruction.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Schools screen students for reading deficiencies and symptoms of dyslexia.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p>	<p>Interventions</p>
<p>Ohio 2012: S.B.316 (The Ohio Third Grade Reading Guarantee)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Professional Development</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teacher candidates are required to take courses in the teaching of phonics. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening All K-3 students are screened for reading difficulties, including dyslexia.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs enrolled for less than 3 years, students with disabilities, or those receiving interventions for two years and previously retained.</p>	<p>Interventions</p>

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

<p>Oklahoma 2019: S.B.601 2021: H.B.2749 2023: S.B.1118</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction Requires reading instruction be based in the science behind how students learn to read. All K-3 reading teachers in the public schools are required to incorporate into instruction the five elements of reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.</p>	<p>Professional Development School districts that receive certain state funding are required to provide professional development in the science of reading for preK-5 teachers. The state must publish a list of approved professional development programs that are evidence-based and directly address the cognitive science of how students learn to read. The Oklahoma State Department of Education has developed the Oklahoma Science of Reading Academies to provide LETRS training to Oklahoma educators at no cost. Starting in 2023-24, the department will establish a three-year pilot program to employ a literacy instructional team to support school districts.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher candidates must study the five components of reading as well as strategies for delivering “explicitly taught, sequenced” instruction. Teachers must take licensure test that assesses the science of reading. Teachers must take licensure test that assesses the science of reading.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening Requires each kindergarten student in a public school be screened at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year for reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension and to identify students at-risk for reading deficiency. The state has approved a list of universal screening tools.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs with less than 2 years of English instruction, students with disabilities, or those receiving interventions for two years and previously retained.</p>	<p>Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.</p>
<p>Oregon</p>			
<p>Pennsylvania 2022: H.B.1642</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction For participating schools. A participating school is required to adopt high-quality instructional materials grounded in scientific-based reading research in accordance with the State academic standards approved by the State Board of Education.</p>	<p>Professional Development For participating schools. The department must establish a program of professional development and applied practice in “structured literacy” for school personnel that includes in-class demonstration, modeling and coaching support to improve reading and literacy outcomes.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher preparation programs in the state must include instruction in “structured literacy” for all certification programs in early childhood, elementary/middle, special education, English as a second language, and reading specialist.</p>

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

<p>Rhode Island</p> <p>2019: H.B.5887 (Right to Read Act), S.B.1036 2022: H.B.7164</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p>	<p>Professional Development</p> <p>Districts must provide professional development in science-based reading instruction and structured literacy. Districts that don't comply by 2022-23 will be placed on probationary status. By 2023-24 all elementary teachers must demonstrate proficiency. The state provides a list of approved vendors to demonstrate proficiency.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure</p> <p>No later than 2025, teachers who complete a state-approved educator prep program must have proficient knowledge and skills to teach reading consistent with the best practices of scientific reading instruction and structured literacy. Beginning no later than 2024-25, each state-approved educator prep program must post on its website information describing its program to prepare teachers to teach reading with scientific reading instruction and structured literacy.</p>
<p>South Carolina</p> <p>2014: S.B.516 (South Carolina Read to Succeed Act)</p>	<p>Curriculum and Instruction</p> <p>Requires classroom teachers use evidence-based reading instruction that includes oral language, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.</p>	<p>Professional Development</p> <p>All teachers must complete professional development or coursework related to literacy to earn the Read to Succeed (R2S) Literacy Teacher endorsement. To earn the endorsement, educators must submit evidence of completion of four approved courses taken as college coursework (12 credit hours total, undergraduate or graduate) or professional development (240 contact hours total). The Read to Succeed team in the Office of Early Learning and Literacy provides a list of approved programs. A reading/literacy coach shall be employed in each elementary school to serve as job-embedded, stable resources for professional development throughout schools.</p>	<p>Teacher Prep and Licensure</p> <p>All South Carolina teachers must complete professional development or coursework related to literacy to earn the Read to Succeed (R2S) Literacy Teacher endorsement. All South Carolina teacher prep programs have had coursework approved to ensure that teacher candidates graduating from their programs will possess the knowledge and skills to effectively assist children in becoming proficient readers. Pre-service courses are required to align with the South Carolina literacy competencies.</p>
	<p>Universal Screening</p> <p>All districts and charter schools are required to screen all kindergarten and first grade students three times a year for potential reading difficulties. The state posts a list of approved screeners.</p>	<p>Grade Three Retention</p> <p>Retention is required, with exemptions, including ELLs with less than two years of English instruction, students with disabilities, or those receiving interventions for two years and previously retained. Students who demonstrate proficiency through reading portfolio or who participate in summer reading camp after third grade and then demonstrate proficiency are also exempt.</p>	<p>Interventions</p> <p>Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.</p>
<p>South Dakota</p>			

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

Tennessee 2021: S.B.7003 (Tennessee Literacy Success Act), S.B.7002	Curriculum and Instruction Districts are required to adopt evidence-based textbooks/ curriculum from the list approved by the state board.	Professional Development Teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade must complete at least one professional development course on foundational literacy skills approved by the department. The department will develop at least one professional development course to fulfill this requirement to be made available at no cost. Reading 360 Early Reading Training is a 60-hour course in the newest research in foundational literacy instruction.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Educator prep providers must provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on foundational literacy skills to new K-3 teacher candidates seeking licensure. Any individual who teaches or seeks to teach K-3 must pass a Tennessee reading instruction test or complete a foundational literacy skills instruction course, provided at no cost to the candidate or the EPP, to receive, advance, or renew their teaching license.
	Universal Screening Each LEA and public charter school is required to annually administer a universal reading screener to each student in grades K-3 three times per year. The department is required to provide a Tennessee universal reading screener at no cost to LEAs. Districts have the option to choose a different universal screener from the state board's approved list.	Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions.	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.
Texas 2019: H.B.3	Curriculum and Instruction Schools are required to adopt a phonics curriculum that uses systematic, direct instruction in grades K-3. TEA completed a multi-phase review of the most commonly used phonics programs and posts a list of compliant programs.	Professional Development All K-3 teachers and principals must attend a "teacher literacy achievement academy" by the end of the 2022-23 school year that provides training on effective and systematic instructional practices in reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The state has developed the Texas Reading Academies.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teacher candidates must take a proficiency exam (science of teaching reading (STR) certification exam) in evidence-based reading instruction for certification.
	Universal Screening Literacy screening is required for K-2. The state provides a list of assessment tools.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency.

APPENDIX | *State Literacy Strategies*

Utah 2022: S.B.127 (Early Literacy Outcomes Improvement)	Curriculum and Instruction LEAs are required to adopt curriculum and intervention programs based on the science of reading.	Professional Development The state department of education is required to provide and train literacy coaches for K-3 and provide statewide professional learning. All current teachers must complete an approved professional development program, and pass a literacy preparation assessment.	Teacher Prep and Licensure All preservice programs must prepare teacher candidates in the science of reading, and pass a literacy preparation assessment.
	Universal Screening Screening is required to determine if a student is lacking competency in a reading skill.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Parent notification.
Vermont	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading.
Virginia 2022: S.B.616 (Virginia Literacy Act) 2023: H.B.1526	Curriculum and Instruction Requires school divisions to use evidence-based literacy curriculum approved by the board for grades K-8. The VDOE is required to recommend instructional programs for approval by the state board. Ultimately, the board will publish an Approved Core Instructional Program Guide to support local decision-makers by providing them with a review of high-quality instructional materials grounded in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research.	Professional Development All K-3 teachers will be provided in-service training in evidence-based literacy instruction.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Higher education institutions must teach candidates how to implement evidence-based methods. All public, private, and alternative prep programs must provide training for any individual seeking initial licensure with an endorsement in a certain area, including as a reading specialist, to demonstrate mastery of science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction. Preservice teachers must pass a certification exam in reading instruction.
	Universal Screening Universal screening to determine reading difficulties is required for K-3 students routinely throughout the year using the state-approved screening tool (PALS).	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification. Parent involvement in IRP.
Washington	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.

APPENDIX | State Literacy Strategies

West Virginia 2023: H.B.3035 (Third Grade Success Act)	Curriculum and Instruction Requires county boards to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading. Bans the use of three-cueing strategies.	Professional Development Provides comprehensive training on the science of reading to ensure all K-3 teachers, early childhood classroom assistant teachers, aides and paraprofessionals, and interventionists have the knowledge and skill to teach and/or support all students to read at grade level.	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teacher prep programs must address the science of reading. Candidates must take a minimum number of credits on the essential components of reading. Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
	Universal Screening Schools must screen K-3 students within the first 30 days of school then repeated at mid-year and end-of-year. The state approves a list of screeners/ benchmarks in English Language Arts and dyslexia.	Grade Three Retention Retention is required, with exemptions, beginning 2026.	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.
Wisconsin	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development	Teacher Prep and Licensure Teachers must take a licensure test that assesses the science of reading.
	Universal Screening School districts or charter schools must annually assess K-2 students for reading readiness. Each school board and the operator of each charter school shall select the appropriate, valid, and reliable assessment of literacy fundamentals to be used. Assessments must evaluate phonemic awareness and letter sound knowledge.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions
Wyoming 2019: H.B.297 2022: S.F.0032	Curriculum and Instruction	Professional Development School districts must require district employees providing instruction in grades K-3 to receive professional development in evidence based literacy instruction and intervention, and in identifying the signs of reading difficulties.	Teacher Prep and Licensure
	Universal Screening All K-3 students must be screened at least 3 times per year for signs of dyslexia and other reading difficulties.	Grade Three Retention	Interventions Requires intervention for students identified with reading deficiency. Individual reading plan. Parent notification.

ENDNOTES

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- ¹¹ Schwartz S. & Will, M. (April 26, 2023). "Why Some Teachers' Unions Oppose 'Science of Reading' Legislation." *Education Week*.
- ¹² National Council on Teacher Quality. (2023). *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening Elementary Reading Instruction*. Washington, D.C.: National Council on Teacher Quality.
- ¹³ Wesson et al.
- ¹⁴ Torgeson, J.K. *Catch Them Before They Fall: Identification and Assessment to Prevent Reading Failure in Young Children*. New York: WETA.
- ¹⁵ Olson, L. and LePage, B. (2022). *Tough Test: The Nation's Troubled Early Assessment Landscape*. Washington, D.C.: FutureEd.

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