



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore California's adoption and implementation of the 18 Early Literacy Fundamental Principles.






CA

PRINCIPLE ADOPTION
IMPLEMENTATION



Early Literacy Policy Implementation Rubric

Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy establishes support and intensive reading interventions for all K–3 students to ensure they read on grade level by the end of 3rd grade. The policy also requires 3rd grade students to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to 4th grade. For students severely below grade level and who do not qualify for a good cause exemption, retention provides struggling readers the additional time and intensive interventions they need to catch up with their peers.

 <p>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</p> <p> ABOVE & BEYOND BADGE: This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.</p>
 <p>PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</p>
 <p>FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</p>
 <p>PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is not adopted in policy, does not meet minimum implementation requirements or is grant-based and not sustainable.</p>

Early Literacy Policy Implementation Rubric

PURPOSE

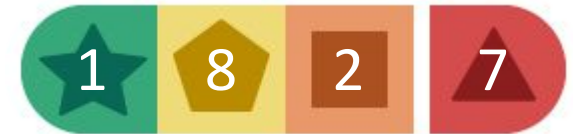
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component of the four fundamental principle areas, which are:

1. [Supports for Teachers & Policy](#)
2. [Assessment & Parent Notification](#)
3. [Instruction & Intervention](#)
4. [Retention & Intensive Intervention](#)

This report summarizes evidence of California's early literacy policy implementation using an implementation rubric designed to gauge state progress toward full implementation of early literacy policies. Each of the fundamental principles is addressed in a separate table.

ADOPTION IMPLEMENTATION

11 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [California Education Code 48070, et al. Promotion and Retention](#)
- [California Education Code 53000, et al. Comprehensive Reading Leadership Program](#)
- [California Education Code 60640, et al. California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress](#)
- [CDE, California Literacy](#)

Science of Reading (SOR) Training



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle requires the following: State-adopted science of reading training is required for all K–3 teachers and administrators, and an implementation plan for rollout is clearly communicated to all educators.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT *require* K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- No later than September 30, 2026, California [policy](#) WILL require the State Board to approve, and the Department of Education to post, criteria and guidance for the selection or development of inservice professional development programs for teaching literacy, which are aligned to the science of reading, and focus on the teaching of students in Transitional Kindergarten and K–5 students. The State Board must also post a list of programs that meet this new criteria.
- California [policy](#) WILL require the Department of Education to make funding available to train certificated and classified staff who provide literacy instruction using the professional development programs that meet the criteria and guidance for inservice professional development programs established by the state. California DID [appropriate](#) \$200 million for this purpose through the 2029–2030 fiscal year.
- By 2029, California [policy](#) WILL require local educational agencies to report to the Department the number of teachers receiving professional development and which program was used.
- California DOES provide funding through [legislation](#) for training for literacy coaches and reading specialists, for those districts that have not otherwise received funding through the Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists Grant Program.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to *require* all K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- In adopting this policy, California should ensure there is an implementation plan for rollout that is clearly communicated to all educators.

Literacy Coaches



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Funding is provided to the Superintendent for allocation to local educational agencies meeting certain criteria for the Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists Grant Program.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California HAS provided funding for the [Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists program](#), for eligible school sites to develop school literacy programs and employ and train literacy coaches and reading and literacy specialists. Additional [funds](#) were allocated in 2023-2024 to additional school sites that did not receive funding under the initial program. (See [CDE, Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists 2022–2029](#))
- California DID provide additional [funding](#), totaling \$215 million, in 2025 to expand the Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists Grant, and then added a third cohort and a new lead agency. (See also [CDE, Literacy Coaches and Reading specialists 2022–2029](#))
- California [policy](#) DOES suggest, but does not require, that all coaches must be trained in the science of reading.
- California [policy](#) DOES allow LEAs to opt out of participation in the Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists program.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should ensure that a literacy coach that is trained in the science of reading is *assigned to each elementary school* to provide job-embedded training and coaching to K–3 teachers.

Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Alignment



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

EPP required coursework is aligned to the science of reading and includes evidence-based literacy instruction.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that address all components of scientifically-based reading; however, programs that were reviewed by NCTQ were most likely to cover comprehension and least likely to cover phonemic awareness. ([NCTQ, California Summary 2023](#); see also [Senate Bill 488, California Legislature \(2021\)](#))
- By January 1, 2028, California [policy](#) WILL require program standards and teaching performance expectations for the preparation of candidates for the reading and literacy leadership specialist credential and the reading and literacy added authorization to include preparation on how to deliver instruction and support teachers to deliver instruction through effective means for teaching literacy. Legislation requires this preparation to include alignment to the English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework and evidence-based means of teaching foundational reading skills, aligned to the science of reading, and be aligned to the state's dyslexia guidelines.
- By September 1, 2028, California [policy](#) WILL require program standards for the professional preparation of candidates for a preliminary services credential with a specialization in administrative services to include preparation on how to support teachers in delivering instruction through effective means for teaching literacy.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to ensure that EPP required coursework is aligned to the science of reading and prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.
- California should further require that coursework includes evidence-based literacy instruction, how to administer reading assessments, and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.

Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Assessment



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Elementary education candidates must take an assessment that is aligned to the science of reading, but the results may not impact licensure.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES require educator candidates to pass licensure tests that are aligned to the science of reading. Beginning October 2025, California offers two options for licensure tests: Foundations of Reading and Commission-approved performance assessments that include literacy instruction. ([California Educator Credentialing Assessments, RICA Transition Frequently Asked Questions](#))
- California DOES allow the following Commission-approved performance [assessments](#) to be used by elementary education candidates to obtain teacher licensure: CalTPA Literacy Performance Assessment; Education Specialist CalTPA Literacy Performance Assessment; edTPA Multiple Subject Literacy with Mathematics; edTPA Education Specialist Specialist; MMSN/ESN, or FAST; and Site Visitation Project with Literacy Performance Assessment.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- While California requires a licensure test that addresses reading, all required assessments that elementary education candidates must take should be clearly aligned to the science of reading.

Funding for Literacy Efforts



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Funding is dedicated to some but not all early literacy fundamental principles and may be temporary or grant based.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - Funding for literacy coaches and reading specialists
 - Funding to create a list of universal reading screeners
 - Funding for educator training on the administration of universal reading screeners
 - Funding to develop a literacy roadmap
 - Funding to support evidence-based professional learning for elementary educators

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should determine the adequate funding level to ensure implementation of the fundamental principles are fully funded.



Universal Reading Screener



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

States require districts to adopt a universal reading screener to be administered at least one time per year with optional mid-year and end-of-year screening.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California [policy](#) DID require the State Board to appoint an independent [panel](#) of experts to create an approved list of screening instruments to screen students in Kindergarten–2nd grade.
- California [policy](#) DOES require the governing bodies of local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to adopt one or more screening instruments from the list. The state adopted a [list](#) of screening instruments in December 2024. (See also [CDE, Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel](#); [CDE, California Literacy: Screening](#))
- California [policy](#) DOES require local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to assess each student using the adopted screening assessment one time per year. (See also [CDE, Letter: Approved List of Screening Instruments to Assess Students for Risk of Reading Difficulties \(December 2024\)](#))
- California [policy](#) DOES allow parents to opt their student out of the screening, providing the opt out is given in writing. ([CDE, Screening for Risk of Reading Difficulties FAQs](#))

RESOURCES

- [CDE, Letter: Screening Students for Risk of Reading Difficulties \(December 2024\)](#)
- [CDE, Adoption Toolkit – Reading Difficulties Risk Screener \(2024\)](#)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require a state-approved universal reading screener to be administered to *all* K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.

Screeners for Characteristics of Dyslexia



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

A state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia assesses the following skills as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding, and oral reading fluency. The screener is, at minimum, administered to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of first and second grade.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California [policy](#) DID require the State Board to appoint an independent panel of experts to create an approved list of screening instruments to screen students in Kindergarten–2nd grade, which included consideration of whether the screening instrument has use of a direct measurement to determine if a student is at risk of a reading difficulty, including dyslexia. The [list](#) was approved in December 2024.
- In December 2024, California [approved](#) Multitudes, created by the UCSF Dyslexia Center, as a tool that public schools can use to spot early signs of reading problems including dyslexia. It is available in English and Spanish and has real-time dashboards and information to guide interventions for individual students as well as classrooms. California DID [adopt](#) a total of four screeners for characteristics of dyslexia.
- California [policy](#) DOES require local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to assess each student using an adopted screening assessment one time per year. (See also [CDE, Letter: Approved List of Screening Instruments to Assess Students for Risk of Reading Difficulties \(December 2024\)](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

Parental Notification



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties based on the state-approved universal reading screener and/or dyslexia screener results. Timeline and frequency of parental notification may vary.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California [policy](#) DOES require parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties within 45 days of administration of the screener.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to expanding policy relating to universal reading screeners, California should further expand policy to require parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties within 30 days of each administration of the state approved universal reading screener and dyslexia screener.

District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation requires the following: The state requires school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards from a vetted and approved list. Districts must post their adopted materials on the district website.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state’s policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES provide some guidance to support the identification and selection of HQIM aligned to the science of reading. ([English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve](#))
- By January 31, 2027, California [policy](#) WILL require the State Board to adopt a list of instructional materials for Kindergarten through 8th grade students in English language arts and English language development. (See also [Assembly Bill 121, Sec. 89, California Legislature \(2025\)](#))
- The [list](#) adopted by the State Board MUST align to the state’s English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework, align to evidence-based means of teaching foundational reading skills, and align to the program guidelines for dyslexia.
- Local educational agencies (LEA) MAY [adopt](#) instructional materials from the list created by the State Board or adopt other instructional materials that the LEA has certified to meet the criteria established in policy.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to *require* school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards from the state vetted and approved list.
- California should further require districts to post their adopted materials on the district website.

Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT, through policy, guidance, training, or other avenues, prohibit or discourage the use of instructional materials that include three-cueing.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing.

Individual Reading Plans



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT provide for individual reading plans for students identified as having a reading deficiency.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require schools to develop and implement an individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency within 30 days of receiving screening results.
- California should establish a process for monitoring the implementation of the individual reading plans and a timeline for notifying parents of the development of the plan.

Regularly Monitor Student Progress



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires schools to monitor students' progress within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). Monitoring can take many forms (i.e., observations, screeners, assessments, and student work).

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California HAS created a multi-tiered system of supports to monitor students' progress. ([CDE, Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#))
- California DOES NOT provide information related to literacy or reading on the MTSS website.
- California [policy](#) DOES require local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to assess each student using the adopted screening assessment, and based on results of the screening, the local educational agency must provide the student with supports and services, which may include progress monitoring.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require schools to regularly monitor and document students' progress within a multi-tiered system of supports and utilize data from the universal reading screener that should be administered to all K–3 students three times per year to inform instruction and interventions as needed and in a timely manner.
- California should ensure monitoring takes many forms, including observations, assessments, screeners, and student work.

Evidence-Based Interventions



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires school districts to target students' needs by adopting evidence-based interventions grounded in the science of reading and may provide guidance in the selection of the interventions. Interventions are provided before, during, or after school.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California [policy](#) DOES require screening results to inform early intervention in the regular general education program. (Note: This does not include special education.)
- California HAS [released](#) the Literacy Learning Pack which seeks to enhance and align literacy efforts across the state, operationalize California's approach to literacy and biliteracy, and improve literacy outcomes for all California students. This includes two new literacy tools released in Spring 2025, which includes information on interventions: [California Literacy Roadmap's Literacy Content Blocks for English-Medium Classrooms for Transitional Kindergarten through Grade Five \(TK–5\)](#) and [Preschool through Third Grade \(P–3\) Learning Progressions for Language and Literacy Development](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require school districts to target students' needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading *from a vetted and approved list*.

Summer Reading Camps



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT have a policy requiring districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1st–4th grade students at risk of reading failure.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1st–4th grade students at risk of reading failure to remediate learning loss and/or build reading skills.
- California should further require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.

Parent Read-At-Home Plan



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.
- Further, California should require strategies that are shared with parents must target students' needs based on data and are aligned with the science of reading.

Initial Determinant Retention at 3rd Grade Based on State Assessment



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT have a policy that requires a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options be retained.
- California [policy](#) DOES provide that promotion and retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts' governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained. Policy should include multiple pathways for promotion to 4th grade including achieving a predetermined level on the state reading assessment or qualifying for a good cause exemption.

Multiple Options for Promotion



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade.
- California [policy](#) DOES provide that promotion and retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts' governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained. Policy should include at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade including achieving a predetermined level on the state reading assessment, passing an alternative assessment or retest, or successfully demonstrating sufficient 3rd grade reading skills through a portfolio of student work.

Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

Evidence of the state's policy implementation and/or guidance in this area includes:

- California DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT allow specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade.
- California [policy](#) DOES provide that promotion and retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts' governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained. Policy should include specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade that recognize the special needs of some students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who were previously retained.
- California should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

