Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report
Explore California’s adoption and implementation of the 18 Early Literacy Fundamental Principles.
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.

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

California’s Implementation Report
Science of Reading (SOR) Training

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 K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.

- California policy DOES provide funding for select county offices of education and school districts to conduct reading leadership training programs; however, there IS NOT a statewide, required 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.
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. ([Chapter 52](#); [CDE, Literacy Coaches and Reading Specialists 2022–28])

- California policy DOES NOT indicate 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.
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 are most likely to cover comprehension and least likely to cover phonemic awareness. ([NCTQ, California Summary 2023](#))

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.
Elementary education candidates must pass a science of reading aligned assessment to obtain teacher 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. California offers two licensure tests: Reading Introduction Competence Assessment (RICA)–Written Examination; Reading Instruction Competence Assessment (RICA)–Video Performance Assessment. (NCTQ, California Summary 2023; NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states’ licensure tests don’t signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction (Nov. 2023))

- California policy requires a change to a Literacy Performance Assessment that will replace the RICA - Written Assessment on July 1, 2025.
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 to develop a literacy roadmap

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* A state-approved universal reading screener is administered to K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- By January 31, 2024, California policy WILL require an independent panel of experts appointed by the State Board to create an approved list of screening instruments to screen students in Kindergarten–2nd grade.

- By 2025, California policy WILL require the governing bodies of local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to adopt one or more screening instruments from the list.

- Beginning in 2025–26, California policy WILL require local educational agencies serving students in Kindergarten–2nd grade to assess each student using the adopted screening assessment.

- California policy WILL allow parents to opt their student out of the screening, providing the opt out is given in writing.

RESOURCES

- [CDE, Applications Invited for Appointment to the Reading Difficulties Risk Screener Selection Panel](#)

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.
**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL**

**FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION**

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* 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:

- By January 31, 2024, California policy WILL require an independent panel of experts appointed by the State Board to create an approved list of screening instruments to screen students in Kindergarten–2nd grade, which should include 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.

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY**

- California should expand policy to require schools to administer a state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia that assess the following skills, as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding, and oral reading fluency.

- California should require the dyslexia screener to be administered, at a minimum, to all students at the end of Kindergarten and at the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle requires the following: The state requires parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties within 30 days of each administration of the state-approved universal reading screener and/or dyslexia screener.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Beginning in 2025–26, California policy WILL 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 and dyslexia 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.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state provides guidance and resources to assist districts in the identification and selection of high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.

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](#))
- California DOES NOT require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.

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 a 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.
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.

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

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle requires the following: The state requires school districts to target students’ needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading from a vetted and approved list. Interventions are provided before, during, or after school.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Beginning in 2025–26, California policy WILL require screening results to inform early intervention in the regular general education program. (Note: This does not include special education.)

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.
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 retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts’ governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• California should expand policy to require that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided be retained and receive intensive interventions.
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 retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts’ governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained and receive intensive interventions. 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 retention decisions are to be made at the local level by school districts’ governing boards.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- California should expand 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.