



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






DE

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 Delaware'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

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STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Delaware Code, Title 14 Education, Chapter 41 Regulatory Provisions](#)
- [DDOE Digital DE: Early Literacy](#)
- [DDOE, Delaware Literacy Plan](#)
 - [DDOE, Literacy Plan: PreKindergarten to Grade 3](#)
 - See also [Delaware Literacy Coalition: Strategic Plan for Grades 4-8 \(2022\)](#)

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:

- Delaware DOES offer professional development opportunities for educators through [LETRS training](#), which includes receiving a stipend upon successful completion of the courses (2023–2024).
- Delaware DOES offer [Lexia for Leaders](#) for system and building leaders (2023–2024).
- Delaware DOES offer professional development opportunities for educators and administrators, including building and system leaders, through the [AIM Institute for Learning & Research](#), which includes receiving a stipend upon successful completion of the courses.
- Delaware HAS created an [Online Vendor Guide](#) that includes information for educators and administrators on professional development opportunities that have been vetted by DDOE and align to the science of reading.
- Delaware DOES offer educators professional learning opportunities through [micro-credentials](#), which are part of the state’s [Literacy Plan](#) and aligned to the science of reading.

Science of Reading (SOR) Training

CONTINUED

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)

- By 2027-2028, Delaware law requires school districts serving students in Kindergarten–3rd grade to demonstrate that all educators who teach reading complete professional development aligned with evidence-based reading instruction. ([DDOE, Delaware Delivers Strong Early Readers](#))
- By the end of 2023, Delaware [law](#) requires school districts to report to the state how the district will ensure educators have access to and have completed the professional development requirements.

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

- Delaware offers Early Literacy Leadership Academies (ELLA) where administrators and literacy coaches/specialists collaborate on early literacy instructional visioning, walkthrough tools, and system planning in the context of high-quality instructional materials.
- Delaware offers an Early Literacy PLC Toolkit based on the components of reading for educators to use during Professional Learning Communities to dive deeply into each component of reading (phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), apply research-based strategies, and reflect on their application, what they learning, and how to improve practices related to the science of reading.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- While Delaware requires educators who teach reading to students in K–3 to participate in science of reading training, the state should also *require* administrators to complete this training.

Literacy Coaches



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle requires the following: Literacy coaches are trained in the science of reading and are assigned to each elementary school to provide job-embedded professional development and coaching to K–3 teachers.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Beginning in 2027-2028, Delaware WILL require, according to [law](#), all literacy coaches to complete training on evidence-based reading instruction.
- Delaware HAS created literacy cadre positions that are state funded and placed in each traditional school district - while these are utilized differently in each district, and may be K–12, those who are supporting teachers have engaged in cycles of inquiry regarding the science of reading. ([DDOE, The Delaware Literacy Coalition and Literacy Cadre](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should ensure that a literacy coach that is trained in the science of reading is *assigned to each elementary school* to provide job-embedded professional development 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:

- Delaware DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that align to the science of reading. ([NCTQ, Delaware Summary 2023](#))
- Delaware DOES, through [law](#), require educator preparation programs to provide instruction in evidence-based reading instruction to prospective elementary school teachers, early childhood teachers, special education teachers, and reading specialists.
- Delaware DOES, through [law](#), require educator preparation programs to provide instruction on the administration of assessments and interpretation, as well as language-based learning disabilities.

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

- Delaware is developing a syllabus guidance tool that outlines all components necessary for the full scope of the science of reading, including the absence of three-cueing.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware EPP requirements relating to literacy should prohibit the use of course materials that use three-cueing.

Educator Preparation Program (EPP) 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:

- Delaware DOES require education candidates to pass a licensure test that addresses reading: Praxis Multiple Subjects Test, Reading and Language Arts subtest; however, this licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all required components of the science of reading. ([NCTQ, Delaware Summary 2023](#); [NCTQ, Alaska Summary 2023](#); [NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states’ licensure tests don’t signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction \(Nov. 2023\)](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require elementary education candidates to pass an assessment that is *aligned to the science of reading* to obtain teacher licensure.

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:

- Delaware DOES direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of SOME early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - \$60 million per year by 2025, which includes \$55 million in opportunity funding and \$5 million in mental health and reading support, targeted for students who are low income and English learners. ([DDOE, Opportunity Funding](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware 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 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:

- Delaware HAS created a list of resources and available assessments that are aligned to the science of reading to support educators in selecting screening tools. ([DDOE, Early Literacy: Early Literacy Screening](#))
- Delaware DOES require LEAs to screen students in Kindergarten–3rd grade three times per year. ([DDOE, Delaware Delivers Strong Early Readers](#))
- Delaware HAS created [Publisher Profiles](#) that contain a section outlining screening and other assessment tools that are directly linked to the locally adopted high-quality instructional materials.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- While Delaware has created a list of assessments aligned to the science of reading and provided guidance on what assessments educators could choose to administer, Delaware should consider *approving specific screeners* that should be used to screen students and identify those who are 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 administered only to students who are flagged as at risk on the universal reading screener or upon teacher or parent request.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware HAS created a list of resources and available assessments that are aligned to the science of reading to support educators in selecting screening tools. ([DDOE, Early Literacy: Early Literacy Screening](#))
- Delaware [law](#) DOES require the universal screener to be able to identify students who have a potential reading deficiency, including identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia, which is administered three times per year in Kindergarten–3rd grade.
- Delaware [law](#) DOES require the universal screener to measure the following: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding, and oral reading fluency.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

Parental Notification



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

States require 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:

- Delaware [law](#) DOES require parent notification if a child is identified as having a reading deficiency.
- Delaware [policy](#) DOES require LEAs to establish a process to provide parents with a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) intervention plan and data that is collected.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require in policy that schools notify parents *within 30 days following identification* of a child as having a reading deficiency.
- Delaware should provide guidance or resources to support schools' communication with families.

District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle 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:

- Delaware DOES maintain a [list of evidence-based reading instruction curricula](#) for Kindergarten–3rd grade, which includes or supports the use of high-quality instructional materials. ([DDOE, Early Literacy: Early Literacy Screening - Curriculum Based Screening Tools](#))
- Delaware DOES ensure that the high-quality instructional materials support the full scope of the science of reading, aligned to the state’s HQIM Initiative. ([DDOE, Publisher Profiles](#))
- Delaware DOES provide for an [alternative curriculum process](#) for those districts and charters who would like to use resources other than those on that are high-quality instructional materials through the state’s Publisher Profiles list - this curricula is reviewed using the Reading League’s Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines. (See also [Alternative K–3 Curriculum Application](#))
- By 2027-2028, state law requires school districts serving students in K–3 to adopt a reading instruction curriculum from the list established by the DDOE. ([Delaware Education Code, 4145 Evidence-based reading curricula](#))

District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials

CONTINUED



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

- Delaware has highlighted districts adopting knowledge building HQIM through the [Knowledge Matters Tour](#).
- Delaware does monitor LEA adoption of early literacy curricula and provides technical assistance during the adoption process, if needed.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require districts to post their adopted materials on the district website.

Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state discourages the use of instructional materials that include the three-cueing systems model for teaching word reading and provides guidance and resources for districts to evaluate their own materials, but the practice is not prohibited in policy.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware DOES specify when entering the [Early Literacy website](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org) that the state does not “endorse the use of screening, interventions and curricular tools that use leveled intervention programs or the three-cueing system.”

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- While the state makes clear that the Department of Education does not endorse the use of three-cueing, Delaware should adopt a policy, in law or regulation, that clearly eliminates the use of all instructional materials that include the three-cueing systems model for teaching reading.

Individual Reading Plans



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires schools to develop and implement an individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency based upon screening results. Timeline and monitoring may vary.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware [law](#) DOES require the creation of an improvement plan for 3rd, 5th, and 8th grade students who scored Below the Standard on the state's reading assessment.
- Delaware [policy](#) DOES require the LEA problem-solving team of an intervention plan for students which must include baseline data, learning targets, type and frequency of intervention, data collection, and any other information the problem-solving team considers necessary.
- Delaware [policy](#) DOES require LEAs to provide parents with the MTSS intervention plan and data collected.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require the creation of individual reading plans for any student in Kindergarten–3rd grade to occur *within 30 days* of identification of having a reading deficiency based on screening results.
- Delaware should establish a process for monitoring the implementation of those plans and a timeline for notifying parents.

Regularly Monitor Student Progress



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires schools to regularly monitor and document students' progress within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) *and utilize the data to inform instruction and interventions as needed and in a timely manner*. 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:

- Delaware DOES track district/school monitoring of students' progress within the [MTSS](#). ([DDOE, Delaware Delivers Strong Early Readers](#))
- Delaware DOES include [data-based decision making](#) as one of the essential components within the MTSS.
- Delaware DOES provide guidance to educators on how to use data to make decisions about each students' needs through the MTSS. ([DDOE, Early Literacy: Early Literacy Screening – DE-MTSS Essential Component](#))
- Delaware DOES provide guidance and support for educators in gaining knowledge to implement the MTSS to support students. (See [DDOE, Early Literacy: Early Literacy Screening – Delaware Multi-Tiered System of Supports Self-paced Course](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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:

- Delaware [law](#) DOES require the use of interventions for students who scored below the standard on the state's reading test.
- Delaware DOES provide guidance on selecting intervention tools through a link to the [National Center on Intensive Intervention](#). (See also [DOE, DE-MTSS Essential Component: Evaluation and Selection of Academic and Nonacademic Resources, Supports, and Interventions](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require districts to target student needs by adopting interventions that are grounded in the science of reading and provided to all students in Kindergarten–3rd grade who have been identified as having a reading deficiency.
- Delaware should create a vetted and approved list of evidence-based interventions for districts to adopt.

Summer Reading Camps



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires districts to offer summer reading camps to students at risk of reading failure to remediate learning loss and/or build reading skills.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware DOES require, by [law](#), districts to offer summer reading camps for those students in 3rd, 5th, or 8th grade whose performance on state reading assessments is below the standard.
- Delaware DOES provide guidance to educators on [Summer Acceleration programs](#), which includes summer school.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require districts to offer summer reading camps to 1st–4th graders at risk of reading failure to remediate learning loss and/or build reading skills; this opportunity should not be limited to 3rd, 5th, or 8th graders.
- Delaware should ensure that staff at summer camps are 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:

- Delaware DOES provide online resources to parents to support reading at home, through the [At-Home Guide to Delivering Strong Early Readers](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should require, through policy, schools to provide read-at home plans to parents of students identified with a reading deficiency.

Initial Determinant Retention at 3rd Grade Based on State Assessment



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided – and does not meet a good cause exemption – be retained.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware [law](#) DOES require students to be retained in 3rd grade if they are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided, except in certain circumstances.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

Multiple Options for Promotion



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers *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.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware [law](#) DOES provide for promotion to 4th grade through scoring a certain level on the statewide assessment, through an individual improvement plan to remediate the areas of weakness, or by attending a summer school program and demonstrating a proficient level of performance on the assessment prior to the beginning of the next school year.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state permits districts to determine good cause exemptions for some students who do not demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state-based option for promotion to 4th grade.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Delaware [law](#) DOES provide that academic review committees, composed of educators from the student’s district, may promote a student through a determination that the student has demonstrated proficient performance relative to the state content standards using evidence from other indicators.
- Delaware [law](#) DOES provide for promotion for students who have been retained for 2 years because of academic performance.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Delaware should provide good cause exemptions for students who may have special needs, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- Delaware should require in policy that intensive interventions are required to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

