



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






IL

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

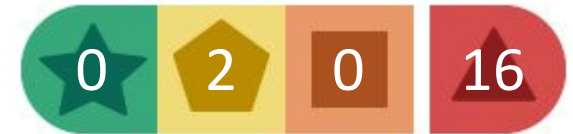
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component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

2 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [ILCS 5/10-20.9a Final grade; promotion](#)
- [15 ILCS 322 Illinois Literacy Act](#)
- [ISBE, Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#)

Science of Reading (SOR) Training



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers science of reading training or requires districts to adopt a policy to identify science of reading training, providers of the training, and personnel who will be trained. Participation in science of reading training may be optional for teachers and/or administrators.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Illinois DOES NOT require K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in science of reading training.
- Illinois DOES provide a list of [approved professional development providers](#).
- Illinois [policy](#) DOES require the State Board to develop and make training opportunities *available* to educators in the science of reading that are aligned with the comprehensive literacy plan. (See [ISBE, Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan: Professional Learning](#))
- Illinois IS offering professional learning modules focused on evidence-based reading instruction as well as a capacity builders series, with key topics focused on evidence-based literacy efforts for school leaders and classroom teachers. (See [ISBE, Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan: Professional Learning](#))

NOTEWORTHY

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

- Through the state’s [Comprehensive Literacy Plan](#), Illinois has created a literacy framework that is aligned to the science of reading and serves as a tool for educators in the state.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

Literacy Coaches



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:

- Illinois [policy](#) DOES require the State Board to adopt [guidance](#) on evidence-based practices for effective structures for training and deploying literacy coaches to support teachers in public school districts. (See also [ISBE, Literacy Coaching Checklist](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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:

- Illinois DOES have [standards for teacher preparation programs](#) that address all core components of scientifically based reading; however, programs are most likely to cover comprehension and least likely to cover phonemic awareness. ([NCTQ, Illinois Summary 2023](#))
- Illinois HAS created a [Community of Practice](#) for educator preparation programs, focused on strengthening literacy instruction within teacher preparation programs in the state. According to the Illinois State Board, the Community of Practice “promotes effective literacy instruction within educator preparation programs and supports the design and refinement of a statewide rubric to evaluate alignment with literacy preparation standards and the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan, ensuring future educators are prepared to deliver high-quality literacy instruction.”

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois should further require that coursework includes evidence-based literacy instruction and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.

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:

- Illinois DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading: Illinois Licensure Testing System Elementary Education; however, this licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. ([NCTQ, Illinois Summary 2023](#); [NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states' licensure tests don't signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction \(Nov. 2023\)](#))
- By July 1, 2026, the elementary education teacher licensure content test must include “bilingualism, biliteracy, oral language development, foundational literacy skills, and developmentally appropriate higher-order comprehension and on which a valid and reliable language and literacy sub score can be determined.” ([105 ILCS 5/21B-30 Educator testing](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

Funding for Literacy Efforts



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:

- Illinois HAS provided minimal direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - Funding ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000 per district to support the creation, revision, and implementation of [local literacy plans](#)
 - The state previously provided funding through the Reading Improvement Block Grant, but the block grant legislation is [repealed](#) as of January 1, 2026.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

Universal Reading Screener



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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require administration of a state-approved universal reading screener to K–3 students.
- Illinois [policy](#) DOES provide for administration of a common observational tool for all students in Kindergarten, which should include multiple developmental domains, including literacy.
- Illinois DOES provide guidance on administration of universal screeners and encourages schools to screen students for foundational literacy skills three times annually. (See [ISBE, Universal Early Literacy Screening Guidance](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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

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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require schools to administer screeners to identify characteristics of dyslexia.
- Illinois HAS created a [Dyslexia Handbook](#) and [Dyslexia Toolkit](#) to provide guidance and information to educators and parents.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

Parental Notification



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:

- Illinois DOES require schools to provide notice and make available to parents the results of [statewide assessments](#) and [Kindergarten assessments](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to expanding policy relating to universal reading screeners and dyslexia screeners, Illinois 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

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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.
- Illinois DOES NOT provide guidance and resources to support the identification and selection of HQIM aligned to the science of reading.
- Illinois DOES provide guidance and resources to assist districts in the identification and selection of high-quality instructional materials which are evidence-based. ([Curriculum Evaluation Tool](#); [Literacy-Specific Addendum to the Curriculum Evaluation Tool](#))
- Illinois [policy](#) DOES provide that schools may receive technical assistance from the State Board of Education, including information regarding scientifically based research-proven curriculum and instruction.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois 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:

- Illinois 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

- Illinois 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois 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

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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require schools to regularly monitor and document students' progress within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
- Illinois DOES offer support to educators to establish an MTSS through the [Illinois MTSS Network](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois should ensure monitoring takes many forms, including observations, assessments, screeners, and student work.

Evidence-Based Interventions



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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require school districts to target students' needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading.
- Illinois [policy](#) DOES require school boards to promote a minimum of 60 minutes of reading opportunities daily for students in K–3 whose reading level is one grade level or lower than their current grade level, as determined by the school district.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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:

- Illinois 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

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois 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:

- Illinois DOES NOT require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.
- Illinois DOES provide online resources to parents to support reading at home through the [Dyslexia Handbook](#).
- Illinois HAS created a [Family Reader's Guide](#) to complement the 2024 Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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, Illinois should require strategies that are shared with parents to 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:

- Illinois DOES NOT have a policy that requires a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided be retained.
- Illinois HAS created a [promotion policy](#) that requires local school boards to adopt and enforce a promotion policy, as they deem necessary.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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:

- Illinois DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade.
- Illinois HAS created a [promotion policy](#) that requires local school boards to adopt and enforce a promotion policy, as they deem necessary.
- Illinois [policy](#) DOES provide that students determined by their local district to not qualify for promotion must be provided with remedial assistance, which may include summer bridge programs, tutoring sessions, increased instructional time, and others.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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:

- Illinois DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT allow specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade.
- Illinois HAS created a [promotion policy](#) that requires local school boards to adopt and enforce a promotion policy, as they deem necessary.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Illinois 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.
- Illinois should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

