Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore Illinois’s adoption and implementation of the 18 Early Literacy Fundamental Principles.
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><strong>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</strong></th>
<th>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ABOVE &amp; BEYOND BADGE:</strong></td>
<td>This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED</strong></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 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.

- 105 ILCS 5/2-3.51 Reading Improvement Block Grant Program
- 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
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 K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in science of reading training.

• Illinois DOES provide a list of approved professional development providers.

• By January 1, 2025, Illinois policy WILL 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.

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.
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:

- By July 1, 2024, Illinois policy WILL 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.

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)

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, how to administer reading assessments, and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as 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 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.” (PA 103-0402)

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 DOES NOT provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. They previously provided funding through the Reading Improvement Block Grant but no evidence can be located to indicate it is currently funded.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

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.
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](#) 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](#))
- 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.
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.

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.
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 expand policy to require that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options be retained.
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 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 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 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.
- Illinois should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.