Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore Maryland’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.

- **FULL IMPLEMENTATION**: The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.
  - **ABOVE & BEYOND BADGE**: This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.

- **PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION**: The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.

- **FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION**: The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.

- **PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED**: The fundamental principle is not adopted in policy, does not meet minimum implementation requirements or is grant-based and not sustainable.
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 Maryland’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.

STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- COMAR 13A.03.08 Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties
- Maryland State Department of Education, Ready to Read Act
- Maryland’s Keys to Comprehensive Literacy
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:

• Maryland DOES require districts to adopt a policy related to science of reading training. Districts must complete a Blueprint Implementation Plan in accordance with state legislation that specifies how the school system plans to have 100% of PreK–3 staff trained in instructional practices related to the science of reading within the next few years, with subsequent years dedicated to maintaining that number and ensuring teachers new to the system or to the grade level receive training at their earliest opportunity. (MSDE, Ready to Read, Priority 2: Programs, Initiatives, and Strategies)

• Maryland DOES allow districts to use funding from the Maryland Leads Grants for training for all K–3 educators, special education teachers, principals, literacy specialists, and other relevant staff, provided districts implement certain focus areas enumerated in the Maryland Leads guidance document.

  • Districts were required to submit a sustainability plan with their application for Maryland Leads Grants in order to ensure that they can maintain their implementation after ESSER funds run out in 2024.

  • Currently, 23 out of 24 districts are participating in the Science of Reading funding through Maryland Leads.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

NOTEWORTHY

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

• Maryland established learning labs that allowed educators to visit schools, learn about successes and challenges relating to literacy, work with subject matter experts and collaborate on strategies and best practices in early literacy. ([Memo: The State of Science of Reading in Maryland and the State Board and MSDE’s Leadership in that Work (2023)])

RESOURCES

• MSDE, Blueprint for Maryland’s Future: Initial Implementation Plan Template

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should require all K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
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:

- Maryland HAS approved a joint proposal between the Maryland State Board of Education and the Maryland Accountability and Implementation Board to create teams of literacy experts to conduct comprehensive reviews of elementary literacy instruction in every Maryland school district. (MSDE, Literacy Expert Teams to Improve Reading Instruction Across Maryland Approved (November 2023))

- Maryland WILL require the literacy teams to support teachers, literacy coaches and district leaders to help them ensure that high-quality literacy instruction is available for every student. (MSDE, Literacy Expert Teams to Improve Reading Instruction Across Maryland Approved (November 2023))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should ensure that literacy coaches that are trained in the science of reading are assigned to each elementary school to provide job-embedded training and coaching to K–3 teachers.
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:

• Maryland DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that address all components of scientifically based reading. (NCTQ, Maryland Summary 2023)

• Maryland DOES require educator preparation programs to provide a curriculum aligned to the science of reading. (Memo: The State of Science of Reading in Maryland and the State Board and MSDE’s Leadership in that Work (2023))

• Maryland DOES require reading courses developed by institutions of higher education with teacher education programs to be state approved and offered for all programs. (MSDE, Teacher Preparation and Program Approval: Reading Requirements in Maryland)

• Maryland HAS created a list of state-approved reading and literacy courses offered by Maryland colleges and universities, including courses in foundations of reading, assessment for reading instruction and others.

• Maryland DOES require program approval site visits to include a comprehensive review of approved reading courses and the implementation of these courses. (MSDE, Teacher Preparation and Program Approval: Reading Requirements in Maryland)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should ensure that EPP required coursework prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.
**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL**

**FULL IMPLEMENTATION**

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:

- Maryland DOES require elementary education candidates to pass a science of reading aligned assessment to obtain teacher licensure: Praxis Teaching Reading: Elementary Education. ([NCTQ, Maryland Summary 2023; NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states’ licensure tests don’t signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction (Nov. 2023)](NCTQ, Maryland 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**

This principle currently meets full implementation.
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:

- Maryland DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - Grant funds through Maryland Leads, which includes the opportunity to use funds for programs focused on the science of reading ($53,252,654 for programs related to the science of reading at 22 districts).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should determine the adequate funding level to ensure implementation of the fundamental principles are fully funded.
Universal Reading Screener

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

State requires 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:

• Maryland DOES allow the district to choose the universal reading screener that will be used to screen students. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland HAS created a list of assessments that focus on K–3 reading screening measures that are aligned to evidence-based practices and have been vetted by the Maryland State Department of Education.

• Maryland DOES provide guidance on screening models for schools and selection of universal screeners. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES require all students to be screened for reading deficiencies in Kindergarten. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES specify the screening schedule is to be established by the school district – guidance specifies that best practice is to screen students within the first month of school and then students should receive additional screening in accordance with the guidance of the selected screener. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES recommend screening to occur at least three times per year through 3rd grade, in accordance with the recommendations or requirements that accompany the screener used by the school. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))
Universal Reading Screener

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)

• Maryland DOES NOT require screening of students in 1st–3rd grade if the district can demonstrate that the student who entered or transferred to a public elementary school has already been screened and demonstrates mastery of grade-level reading. (MSDE, Maryland Ready to Read Act Students with Reading Difficulties – Screenings and Interventions FAQs)

• Maryland DOES require students in 1st–3rd grade to be screened if they were previously identified as at risk, were not previously screened, demonstrate difficulty mastering grade-level reading or entered or transferred to a public elementary school. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES monitor schools’ use of universal screeners through annual data collections, which are reported to the state and posted on the state’s website – data collected includes the number of students screened and number of students identified as at risk for reading difficulties.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should approve a universal reading screener to be used by schools in the state that will be administered to all K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.
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:

• Maryland HAS NOT approved a screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
• Maryland HAS created a checklist of early warning signs of reading difficulty and dyslexia by age.
• Maryland HAS created a list of assessments that focus on K–3 reading screening measures, and SOME include dyslexia screeners.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should approve a 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.
• The approved dyslexia screener should be administered, at a minimum, to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.
Parental Notification

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

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:

- Maryland DOES require schools to notify parents within 30 days of identification of a reading deficiency, with a description of the screening results and the supplemental instruction the student will receive. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should expand policy to require administration of the universal reading screener three times per year in K–3, as well as adopt a dyslexia screener – this could strengthen Maryland’s policy of parental notification by providing parents with more information on their child’s reading difficulties.
District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials

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:

- Maryland HAS developed State Frameworks to support districts in providing high quality instructional programs in English Language Arts/Literacy – these include supporting documents and guidance for implementing Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards. ([MSDE, Maryland College and Career Ready Standards Framework English Language Arts/Literacy])

- Maryland districts ARE adopting and integrating high-quality instructional materials, through funding provided in the Maryland Leads program. ([MSDE, Maryland Leads: Grant Opportunity Guidance Document])

- Maryland DID require districts to include information about their high-quality instructional materials and adoption process in the Blueprint Implementation plans.

- Maryland DOES encourage support for leaders in the state’s Comprehensive Literacy Plan, which can occur by supporting the “identification of evidence-based high-quality literacy curriculum to be implemented with fidelity.”

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of reading and state standards from a vetted and approved list.

- Maryland 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 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:

• Maryland HAS NOT adopted a policy that bans three-cueing instructional materials.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing as part of their comprehensive literacy policy.
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:

- Maryland policy DOES require the development of a supplemental reading instructional plan for students identified as having a reading deficiency.

- Maryland DOES require schools to notify parents of students identified with reading deficiencies, which includes a description of the supplemental reading instruction that will be provided to the student. (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should expand policy to require the development and implementation of an individual reading plan for students identified as having a reading deficiency, which should be created within 30 days of identification.

- Maryland should establish a process for monitoring schools’ implementation of those plans.
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:

• Maryland DOES require educators to use a progress monitoring system to determine if supplemental instruction is working for those students identified as having a deficiency. 
  (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES require districts to establish individualized review schedules of supplemental reading instruction for each student at intervals of not more than 30 days for progress monitoring. 
  (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES require parents to be provided with regular written progress reports – these must occur quarterly or upon revisions to supplemental instruction. 
  (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

• Maryland DOES monitor student progress through an MTSS. 
  (MSDE, Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties: Implementation Guide (2022))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should expand policy to require administration of the universal reading screener three times per year in K–3, as well as adopt a dyslexia screener—the data that is produced from these screeners will then be effective in informing instruction and interventions as needed and in a timely manner.
Evidence-Based Interventions

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

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:

- Maryland HAS created a Tier II list of supplemental reading programs, and a Tier III list, compiled using research from other state Departments of Education, Education Commission of the States and other curriculum rating databases.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.
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:

• Maryland DOES NOT have a policy requiring summer reading camps for rising 1st–4th graders at risk of reading failure.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should require districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1st–4th grade students at risk of reading failure. This policy should also require all staff 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:

- Maryland DOES NOT require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Maryland should require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.
- Maryland should ensure that the strategies shared with parents target students’ needs based on data and are aligned to the science of reading.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options be promoted to 4th grade with provisions for additional support through transitional classes, tutoring and/or intensive interventions.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Maryland policy DOES require students who do not meet the minimum reading level as required by the State Board for the previous grade or has not met a minimum grade level competency to be kept in the current grade OR enrolled in an appropriate reading assistance program.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Maryland should strengthen policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided 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:

• Maryland DOES NOT offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• In establishing a retention policy, Maryland should offer 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:

• Maryland DOES NOT allow specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• In establishing a retention policy, Maryland should allow 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.

• Maryland should provide that, when a student is allowed to be promoted with a good cause exemption, intensive interventions should continue.