



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






MT

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

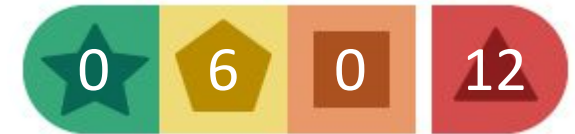
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component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

6 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Montana Office of Public Instruction, English Language Arts & Literacy Standards](#)
- [Montana Office of Public Instruction, Reading and Early Literacy](#)

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:

- Montana DOES NOT require K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- Montana DOES provide resources and information for educators relating to professional learning and development. ([Montana Office of Public Instruction, English Language Arts & Literacy Standards: Professional Learning](#))
- Montana IS offering an [Early Targeted Intervention Learning Series](#) for those PreK–3rd grade educators implementing Early Literacy Targeted Intervention Classroom Programs and any other educator wanting to participate.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana should adopt a policy to require all K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- In adopting this policy, Montana 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:

- Montana DOES NOT require literacy coaches that are trained in the science of reading to be assigned to each elementary school to provide job-embedded professional development and coaching to K–3 teachers.
- Montana HAS provided 33 schools with literacy coaches through discretionary grants from the [Montana Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program \(MCLSDP\)](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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

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:

- Montana DOES NOT have standards for educator preparation programs that address core components of scientifically based reading. ([NCTQ, Montana Summary 2023](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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.
- Montana 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.

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:

- Montana DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading: Praxis Elementary Education: Content Knowledge; however, this licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. ([NCTQ, Montana 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

- Montana should expand policy to 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

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Minimal 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:

- Montana DOES NOT provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles.
- Montana [law](#) DOES establish funding for early literacy interventions in the form of a summer “jump start” program, home-based interventions, and four-year-old classroom-based interventions.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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 at least one time per year with optional mid-year and end-of-year screening.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Montana DOES NOT require a state-approved universal reading screener to be administered to K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.
- Montana [law](#) DOES require the Board of Public Education to establish an evaluation methodology to determine, based on a child's age or grade level, whether the child is above, at, or below a developmental trajectory leading to reading proficiency on completion of 3rd grade. A child may not be evaluated for the early literacy programs unless requested by the child's parent or guardian.
- The trustees may administer the evaluation methodology in April, May, or June to a child who will be 4 years of age or older on or before the following September 10th and who has not yet entered 3rd grade.
- The Montana Early Literacy and Numeracy Advisory Council HAS recommended a [list of screening tools and interventions](#), but there is no requirement to be aligned to the science of reading. (See also [Montana Office of Public Instruction, Early Literacy Targeted Interventions – Approved Evaluation Methodology Tools](#))
- Montana DOES provide resources relating to assessments, including formative, summative, and interim assessments as well as further details on the Smarter Balanced assessments. ([Montana Office of Public Instruction, English Language Arts & Literacy Standards: Assessments](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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

PARTIAL 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:

- The [Montana Dyslexia Screening and Intervention Act](#) DOES require schools to administer [screeners](#) to identify students for characteristics of dyslexia in the *first year that the child is admitted to a school* up to 2nd grade.
- The Montana Early Literacy and Numeracy Advisory Council HAS recommended a [list of screening tools and interventions](#), but there is no requirement to be aligned to the science of reading.
- Montana DOES require the [screener](#) to assess phonological and phonemic awareness skills.
- Montana HAS created resources for schools to use to select screeners that can identify characteristics of dyslexia. ([Montana Office of Public Instruction, Dyslexia: Dyslexia Screening Resources](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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.
- Montana 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:

- Montana DOES NOT have a policy relating to universal reading screeners and dyslexia screeners, and also DOES NOT have a parental notification policy requiring notification to parents of students identified with reading difficulties.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

- Montana DOES NOT require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.
- Montana DOES NOT provide guidance and resources to support the identification and selection of HQIM aligned to science of reading.
- Montana DOES provide guidance for selecting English Language Arts materials. ([Montana Office of Public Instruction, English Language Arts & Literacy Standards: ELA Resources](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana should adopt a 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.
- Montana 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:

- Montana 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

- Montana 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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.
- Montana 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

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:

- Montana HAS created a MTSS framework for school improvement to provide students with the best opportunity to maximize achievement academically. ([Montana Office of Public Instruction, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\)](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Following expansion of policy relating to the use of universal reading screeners and dyslexia screeners to identify students who may have deficiencies in reading, Montana should then expand policy to require schools to regularly monitor and document students' progress within a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
- Through the MTSS, Montana should require schools to use data to inform instruction and interventions as needed and in a timely manner. Note that monitoring can take many forms, including observations, screeners, assessments, and student work.

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:

- Montana [law](#) DOES provide parents with *voluntary* early literacy interventions for their children.
- Montana DOES NOT require school districts to target students' needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading.
- The Montana Early Literacy and Numeracy Advisory Council HAS recommended a [list of screening tools and interventions](#), but there is no requirement to be aligned to the science of reading.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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.
- Montana should expand policy to require interventions for students identified as at risk for reading difficulties; interventions should not be voluntary.

Summer Reading Camps



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state provides for summer reading camps in policy, but it is optional and not required of schools.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Montana DOES NOT have a policy requiring districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1st–4th grade students at risk of reading failure.
- Montana DOES provide funding for a voluntary [Jump Start Program](#) during the summer and preceding a child's entry into Kindergarten, 1st grade, 2nd grade, or 3rd grade. The program must be at least 4 weeks in duration and provide at least 120 instructional hours.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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.
- Montana 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:

- Montana 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

- Montana 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, Montana should require strategies that are shared with parents to target students’ needs based on data and be 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:

- Montana 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.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana 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:

- Montana DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Montana should expand policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options 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:

- Montana DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT allow specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

