Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore Nebraska’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.

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</td>
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<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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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 Nebraska’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.

ADOPITION IMPLEMENTATION

9 out of 18

STATE POLICYADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Nebraska Reading Improvement Act
- NebraskaREADS
- Nebraska 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:

• Nebraska DOES offer Lexia LETRS training through the NeMTSS. ([NeMTSS Framework, Lexia LETRS 2023–24 professional learning opportunity](#))

• Nebraska DOES offer other professional learning opportunities through the NeMTSS website.

• Nebraska DOES provide guidance for educators on the NebraskaREADS webpage.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Nebraska should expand policy to 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:

- Nebraska DOES NOT provide for literacy coaches in policy.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should expand policy to provide for literacy coaches that are trained in the science of reading to provide job-embedded professional development and coaching to K–3 teachers.

- Nebraska should ensure that literacy coaches are addressed in policy and 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.
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:

• Nebraska DOES NOT have standards for educator preparation programs that are aligned to the science of reading. (NCTQ, Nebraska Summary 2023)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Nebraska should ensure EPP required coursework is aligned to the science of reading and prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.

• In additional evidence-based literacy instruction, coursework should also include 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:

- Nebraska DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading, but the assessment combines reading with all other subjects: Praxis Elementary Education: Curriculum and Instruction Assessment. This licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. (NCTQ, Nebraska 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

- Nebraska should expand policy to require elementary education candidates to pass a science of reading aligned assessment 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:

• Nebraska HAS NOT provided direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles.

• Nebraska DID provide $5 million to the Department of Economic Development for tutoring programs that support reading for READ Nebraska.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

A state-approved universal reading screener is administered to K–3 students 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:

• Nebraska HAS adopted a list of state-approved universal reading screeners for K–3 students. (See also NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions)

• Nebraska DOES require the universal reading screener to be administered three times per year. (NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions)

• Nebraska DOES monitor identification of students as having reading deficiencies through an annual report to the Nebraska Department of Education. (NebraskaREADS, Nebraska Reading Improvement Act)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.
Screener 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:

- Nebraska HAS NOT approved a screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
- Nebraska HAS created a Dyslexia Guide to provide guidance and support for schools and families to understand dyslexia.
- Nebraska DOES provide that schools should use a diagnostic assessment that is administered to students who are receiving evidence-based targeted instruction because the student scored below benchmark on the approved universal screener. ([NDE, Dyslexia Guide](#))
- Beginning with the 2023–2024 school year, Nebraska DOES require each public school district to report to the state certain data collected relating to learning disabilities, including dyslexia, which will include the number of students in each public school evaluated for a specific learning disability. ([NebraskaREADS, Nebraska Reading Improvement Act](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should expand policy to require a state approved screener to be administered by districts to identify characteristics of dyslexia in students.
- The screener approved by the state should 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 screener should, at minimum, be administered to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties within 30 days of each administration of the state-approved universal reading screener and/or dyslexia screener.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Nebraska DOES require schools to notify parents of a difficulty with early literacy skills. (NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts)

- Nebraska DOES require parent notification of a reading deficiency, in writing or electronic form, no later than 15 days after the identification of a student. (NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions)
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:

- Nebraska DOES provide guidance and resources to support the identification and selection of high-quality instructional materials aligned to science of reading and state standards. (Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative, Why Materials Matter)

- Nebraska DOES provide a list of ELA instructional materials that have been reviewed by the Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative.

- Through the NeMTSS, Nebraska DOES offer a program comparison tool that allows schools and educators to make informed decisions about what programs should be used in their school or classroom.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

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

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Nebraska 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:

• Nebraska DOES require schools to provide students identified with reading deficiencies with an Individualized Reading Improvement Plan. (NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions)

• Nebraska DOES require schools to notify parents of Individualized Reading Improvement Plans. (NebraskaREADS, IRIP Templates; NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Nebraska should require schools to develop Individualized Reading Improvement Plans within 30 days of receiving screening results.
Regular 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:

- Nebraska DOES track district/school monitoring of students’ progress within a MTSS. (NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts)

- Nebraska DOES require, through the Nebraska MTSS and Individual Reading Improvement Plans, information from diagnostic tools and other data to be used to inform instruction. (NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts)

- Nebraska DOES require all interventions used within the MTSS framework to be evidence-based. (NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts)
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:

- Nebraska DOES require interventions to be based on scientific research and best practice, aligned to the science of reading. ([NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts](#))
- Nebraska DOES provide guidance to educators and schools on selecting interventions.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should establish a vetted and approved list of interventions that schools may adopt that are grounded in the science of reading.
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:

- Nebraska DOES require opportunities for summer learning to be offered to students in 1st–3rd grade who have been identified as having a reading deficiency, which could include summer reading programs. (NebraskaREADS, Summer Reading Opportunities)
- Nebraska DOES provide resources for both families and educators relating to summer reading opportunities.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should 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.
- Nebraska should require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state or district provides online resources to parents to support reading at home.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Nebraska DOES provide information on home supports for early literacy development. ([NebraskaREADS, Individual Reading Improvement Plans (IRIPs) – Guidance for Districts](#))
- Nebraska HAS created a Read-At-Home Plan for Student Success guidance document for families with students who have been identified as having a reading deficiency, but these plans are not required.

RESOURCES

- [NebraskaREADS, Family Resources](#)
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:

- Nebraska DOES NOT have a policy requiring retention of students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should amend policy to require retention of students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options.
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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In establishing a retention policy, Nebraska 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:

- Nebraska DOES NOT have a policy requiring retention of students unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options and DOES NOT have a policy providing good cause exemptions.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In establishing a retention policy, Nebraska 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.

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