



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






NE

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

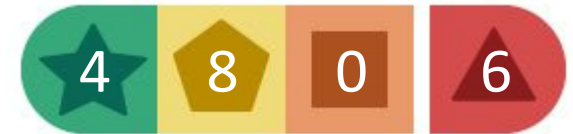
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component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

ADOPTION IMPLEMENTATION

12 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION 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 have a statewide Literacy Advisory Panel established in response to Nebraska [statute](#). The panel DID develop a comprehensive rubric outlining essential components of science of reading professional learning, leading to an [Approved Provider](#) list of vetted programs that meet the state's standards for adequately trained teachers.
- Nebraska DOES have a [statewide professional learning system](#) established through 2024 legislative funding. The [Nebraska Literacy Project](#) provides sustained training in evidence-based reading instruction and resources to help teachers support families in developing foundational reading skills through Regional Literacy Coaches.
- 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

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Literacy coaches are present in policy and trained in the science of reading, and they may provide job-embedded professional development and coaching to K–3 teachers based on student data or other models.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Nebraska [policy](#) DOES require the Department of Education to work with educational service units (ESUs) to build a regional coaching network and provide for regional coaches for elementary schools to provide job-embedded training for evidence-based reading instruction for those teachers working with K–3 students.
- Nebraska DOES have a [statewide professional learning system](#) established through 2024 legislative funding. The [Nebraska Literacy Project](#) provides sustained training in evidence-based reading instruction and resources to help teachers support families in developing foundational reading skills through Regional Literacy Coaches.
- Nebraska DOES have a series of [Instructional Practice Guides](#) adapted by the NDE. These tools help instructional leaders provide content-specific feedback through observation cycles and are used by CLSD grant recipients and Regional Literacy Coaches to assess growth in standards-aligned instruction.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska 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

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:

- Nebraska [policy](#) DOES require educator preparation programs to identify required coursework and/or competency leading to candidate demonstration of instructional strategies to encourage students to “build reading and writing skills through the application of the science of reading.”
- Nebraska DOES have guidance to support educator preparation programs in implementing [policy](#) (Rule 20). The NDE’s Rule 20 Guidance outlines the science of reading, essential educator knowledge, and implementation stages, and includes a syllabus review tool.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should expand policy to require candidates to participate in coursework that prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.

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:

- 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

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:

- Nebraska DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - Funding for regional coaches and job-embedded training relating to evidence-based reading instruction [\$1.85 million for 2024–25 through 2026–27]
 - Funding 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](#))
- Nebraska DOES have an ongoing review of its [approved universal screeners](#) in partnership with NCII and the Buros Center for Testing at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This work will strengthen the identification of reading difficulties and narrow the list of approved screeners for the [2026–2027 school year](#).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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:

- 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](#))
- Nebraska DOES require each public school district to report to the state certain data collected relating to learning disabilities, including dyslexia, which includes 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 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.
- Nebraska should require the dyslexia screener to be administered, at minimum, to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.



Parental Notification



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, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- 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](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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:

- 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](#))
- Nebraska DOES provide a list of [ELA instructional materials](#) that have been reviewed by EdReports, to be used as a resource, and not a recommended list, by schools and districts.
- 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.
- Nebraska DOES require districts awarded federal funding through the CLSD Program to select and implement high-quality, evidence-based instructional materials using guidance provided through the Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative. ([NDE, Nebraska Comprehensive Literacy State Development Program](#))

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.

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:

- Nebraska HAS NOT adopted a policy that bans three-cueing instructional materials.
- Nebraska [policy](#) DOES require schools and programs to ensure teachers are adequately trained regarding evidence-based reading instruction, which is defined to mean instruction that is aligned with scientifically based reading research and does not include the three-cueing system model of reading instruction.

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

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires 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. There is an established process for monitoring the implementation of those plans and a timeline for notifying parents of the development of the plan.

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 within 30 days of identification. ([NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions](#); [NebraskaREADS, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- Nebraska DOES require schools to notify parents of Individualized Reading Improvement Plans. ([NebraskaREADS, IRIP Templates](#); [NebraskaREADS, Frequently Asked Questions](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

Regularly 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, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- 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, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- Nebraska DOES require all interventions used within the MTSS framework to be evidence-based. ([NebraskaREADS, IRIP Guidance Document](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- Nebraska DOES provide [guidance](#) to educators and schools on selecting interventions.
- 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. This tool includes programs with varying levels of quality and is not considered an approved list.

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. (See also [NebraskaREADS, Family Resources](#))

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.

Parent Read-At-Home Plan



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, IRIP Guidance Document](#))
- 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. The [Read-At-Home Plan](#) is provided in English, Spanish, Karen, Somali, Arabic, and Vietnamese.

RESOURCES

- [NebraskaREADS, Family Resources](#)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Nebraska should expand policy to require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents that include targeting students' needs based on data and 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:

- 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 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:

- 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

- Nebraska 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:

- 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

- Nebraska 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.

