



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






NJ

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 New Jersey'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

7 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [NJAC 6A:13 Programs and Practices to Support Student Achievement – 6A:13-3.4 Language Arts Literacy](#)
- [New Jersey Department of Education, New Jersey Student Learning Standards: English Language Arts](#)

Science of Reading (SOR) Training



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

State-adopted science of reading training is required for all K–3 teachers and administrators, and an implementation plan for rollout is clearly communicated to all educators.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require the Department of Education to establish a professional development program regarding evidence-based foundational literacy instruction. This must be available to all school districts at no cost and made available to all teaching staff members serving students in preschool through 6th grade, as well as school administrators.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require school districts to use the professional development program to provide training to all K–3 teachers and administrators.
- New Jersey HAS launched the [LEARning About Literacy: Professional Learning Community Series](#) to support “high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction from preschool through grade six” and to meet the requirements in [policy](#). (See also [New Jersey Department of Education, Evidence-Based Foundational Literacy and Reading Disabilities Professional Development Requirements](#))
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require the Department of Education to provide training opportunities relating to reading disabilities, including dyslexia, to school district personnel. However, there is NO requirement that these opportunities be aligned with the science of reading.
- For the 2025–2026 school year, the [LEARning About Literacy: Professional Learning Community Series](#) WILL meet the state’s dyslexia training requirements.

Science of Reading (SOR) Training

CONTINUED**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL****FULL IMPLEMENTATION****EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)**

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade, which should include training opportunities for teachers focused on the elements of intensive early literacy.

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR
STRENGTHENING POLICY**

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT provide for literacy coaches who are trained in the science of reading and are assigned to every elementary school in policy.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade, which should include use of a highly skilled literacy coach or certified teacher to coordinate training and collaboration. However, there is NO mention of training in the science of reading.
- New Jersey HAS created the [Cultivating Ongoing Achievement through Coaching in Literacy \(COACH\)](#) grant program, which is a 5-year grant program to support LEAs in hiring and training literacy coaches to support students in grades K–12, who are trained in evidence-based literacy instruction and the state’s coaching framework.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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

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:

- New Jersey DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that address all core components of scientifically based reading. However, the standards DO NOT provide details. ([NCTQ, New Jersey Summary 2023](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey should expand policy to require that EPP-required coursework for elementary, early childhood, and special education candidates is aligned to the science of reading and prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.
- New Jersey should further ensure 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:

- New Jersey DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading: Praxis Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects, Reading and Language Arts subtest; however, this licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all five core components of reading and is optional. ([NCTQ, New Jersey 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

- New Jersey should require elementary education candidates to pass an assessment that is *aligned to the science of reading* 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:

- New Jersey DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - Recent [budgets](#) provide funding for districts to acquire or develop literacy screening tools for K–3 students and educator training
 - New Jersey Tiered System of Supports – Early Reading Grant initiative
 - Funding for the Cultivating Ongoing Achievement through Coaching in Literacy (COACH) grant – 5-year program to support LEAs in hiring and training literacy coaches

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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:

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require administration of a universal reading screener two times per year to all students in K–3. (See [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#))
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require school districts to report screening data to the Department.
- New Jersey DID release [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#) to provide guidance to schools on implementing policy and selecting universal reading screeners, including a literacy screening quality evaluation worksheet with criteria that will meet the requirements in New Jersey standards.
- New Jersey also DOES provide guidance in the state's [Dyslexia Handbook](#) to help schools and educators to select a universal screener.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade, which should include a reading measure used minimally at the beginning of Kindergarten–3rd grade to determine the reading skills and strategies students have mastered.

Universal Reading Screener

CONTINUED

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require the creation of a Working Group on Student Literacy, tasked with providing recommendations on appropriate and reliable instruments for a universal literacy screening. The Department is then required to release guidance for use by districts beginning with the 2025–2026 school year regarding instruments that may be used for conducting a universal literacy screening and best practices for frequency of screening K–3rd grade and 4th–12th grade students.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey should 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

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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT require schools to administer a state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require schools to screen for characteristics of dyslexia where dyslexia is suspected, but the state makes clear that New Jersey school districts have autonomy in making decisions about diagnostic tools and instructional programs. (See [The New Jersey Dyslexia Handbook \(2024\)](#))
- New Jersey DOES provide educators with guidance in the state’s [Dyslexia Handbook](#) on when a dyslexia screener should be administered and a checklist of potential indicators of dyslexia. (See also [New Jersey Department of Education, Dyslexia](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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.
- New Jersey 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

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:

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties within 30 days of administration of the reading screener. This notice must include the student’s literacy screening score with a comparison to grade-level norms and information concerning the range of intervention and referral services supports, including reading intervention supports available in the district to ensure the student can meet grade-level reading proficiency goals. (See also [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#))
- New Jersey DOES provide sample family letters for student universal screening results within the [New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#).
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade, which should include methods to involve parents and family members in student learning.

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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DID require the creation of a Working Group on Student Literacy, which developed the [Working Group on Student Literacy Recommendation Report](#) with recommendations relating to high-quality literacy instructional materials.
- New Jersey DID release guidance relating to HQIM, [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials](#), which includes an HQIM rubric and implementation checklist to help districts identify and select HQIM.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DID create an [Office of Learning Equity and Academic Recovery](#), which supports districts in “developing and implementing best practices, including the use of high-quality instructional materials, for improving elementary literacy and academic recovery through research, data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and other appropriate methods.”

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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.*
- New Jersey 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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT, through policy, guidance, training, or other avenues, prohibit or discourage the use of instructional materials that include three-cueing.
- New Jersey DOES explain in [The New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to High Quality Instructional Materials](#), under the heading “Misguided Practices” that “effective materials exclude practices such as three-cueing.”

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT require the creation of individual reading plans for students identified with a reading deficiency.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require the development of action plans to provide interventions or referrals for students who are having learning difficulties. However, reading IS NOT specifically mentioned in this policy.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to establishing policy relating to universal reading screeners, New Jersey should 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.
- Further, New Jersey should establish a process for monitoring the implementation of those 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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT track district/school monitoring of students' progress within a MTSS.
- New Jersey HAS created a [New Jersey Tiered System of Supports](#) to improve student achievement.
- The New Jersey Department of Education and Rutgers University HAVE created a New Jersey Tiered System of Supports – Early Reading program, using federal funds from the State Personnel Development Grant. This program is optional for districts. (See [New Jersey Department of Education, NJTSS-ER Grant](#))
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require the review of the effectiveness of each intervention and referral services action plan, as well as modification to that plan where necessary, as part of the intervention and referral services program in each school building, but this is NOT specific to literacy.
- The [New Jersey Literacy Framework: A Guide to Evidence-Based Literacy Practices & Universal Screeners](#) DOES provide guidance on the NJTSS as an evidence-based framework for improving student achievement and provides resources from the NJTSS-ER.

Regularly Monitor Student Progress

CONTINUED**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL****PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION****EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)**

- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade. This should include consistent and adequate opportunities for educators to analyze student work, interim progress measures, and assessment results, and plan any modifications, if needed.

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR
STRENGTHENING POLICY**

- Following expansion of policy to require administration of universal reading screeners three times per year, New Jersey 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, New Jersey 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

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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT have a policy relating to the use of evidence-based science of reading interventions for students who have been identified as having a reading deficiency.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require schools to provide students with “necessary supports as determined by the district” that are “consistent with the district’s intervention and referral services as required” by State Board regulations, following the universal reading screening.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for PreKindergarten–3rd grade, which should include uninterrupted language arts literacy blocks with specific instructional strategies.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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:

- New Jersey 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

- New Jersey 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.
- New Jersey should further require all staff at summer reading camps 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:

- New Jersey DOES NOT require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.
- New Jersey DOES provide [family guides](#) for families to learn more about literacy and what children should know in each grade.
- New Jersey and the SPAN Parent Advocacy Network HAVE partnered to provide families access to [free resources and training](#) relating to literacy.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require high-need school districts, where less than 85% of total students have achieved proficiency in language arts literacy on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge (NJ ASK) 3, to provide an intensive early literacy program for Pre-Kindergarten–3rd grade, which should include methods to involve parents and family members in student learning.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

- New Jersey 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.
- New Jersey [policy](#) DOES require local boards of education to adopt policies and procedures for student promotion and remediation.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- New Jersey 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.
- New Jersey should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

