



# Early Literacy Matters






## State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore North Dakota'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 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The policy also requires 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> 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><b>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</b></p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</p> <p> <b>ABOVE &amp; BEYOND BADGE:</b> This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.</p>
 <p><b>PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION</b></p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</p>
 <p><b>FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION</b></p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</p>
 <p><b>PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED</b></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

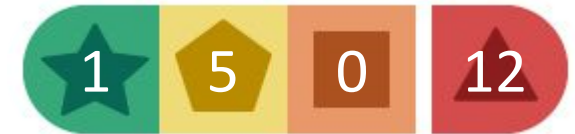
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component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

- [NDCC 15.1-21.12.1 Reading Curriculum – Content – Professional Development](#)
- [NDCC 15.1-32-26 Dyslexia screening and intervention – Report to legislative management – Professional development](#)
- [NDCC 15.1-13 Teacher Licensing](#)
- [Administrative Rules 67-31 Reading Curriculum](#)
- [North Dakota Literacy Plan](#)

# 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:

- North Dakota [policy](#) DOES require teachers in K–3 and principals of public and nonpublic schools with K–3 students to attend teacher-approved professional development training, aligned to the science of reading.
- North Dakota HAS adopted science of reading training for K–3 teachers and administrators. ([NDDPI, ND Science of Reading, Professional Learning](#))
- North Dakota DOES monitor district training of K–3 public and nonpublic elementary school teachers and principals by requiring an annual report to the state. ([NDDPI, Reading Curriculum & PD Annual Report](#))
- North Dakota HAS partnered with the [North Dakota Regional Education Association](#) to provide statewide professional learning opportunities to meet the literacy requirements in the state.

## RESOURCES

- [NDDPI, Guidance and Fast Facts](#)
- [NDDPI, Reading Curriculum & PD Annual Report – Webinars](#)

## 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT have a policy relating to reading coaches.
- North Dakota DOES require every school district to have a student performance strategist for every 400 students in grades K–3, which may include either a coach or an interventionist. ([NDCC 15.1-07-32 Student performance strategist – Verification – Qualifications](#))
- North Dakota DOES offer an [Instructional Coaches Academy](#) for new instructional coaches through the ND RISE Coaches Academy; however, there is no evidence that the state has continued its prior literacy coaching cadre initiative.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota 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:

- North Dakota DOES have standards for educator preparation programs that address the components of the science of reading. ([NCTQ, North Dakota Summary \(2023\)](#))
- North Dakota [policy](#) DOES require candidates for teacher licensure who will be certified as early childhood or elementary teachers to demonstrate competencies in beginning reading instruction based on scientifically research-based best practices. The competencies also include knowledge on how to assess student reading ability and how to identify and correct reading difficulties. ([NDESPB, Reading Competencies: House Bill 1231](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should expand policy to require that educator preparation program coursework prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing instructional strategies.

# 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:

- North Dakota DOES require licensure tests that address reading: Praxis Elementary Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; however, these licensure tests DO NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. ([NCTQ, North Dakota 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

- North Dakota should 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

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:

- North Dakota DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles, which includes:
  - \$1,000,000 allocated by legislators for the 2025–2027 biennium to continue to provide science of reading opportunities in the state through Regional Education Associations
  - \$300,000 allocated for dyslexia professional development
- North Dakota DID provide funding for LETRS training for elementary buildings serving K–3 students through 2025.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should determine the adequate funding level to ensure implementation of the fundamental principles are fully funded.

# Universal Reading Screener



## 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT require the state to approve a universal reading screener to be administered to K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk of reading difficulties.
- North Dakota [law](#) DOES require schools to administer interim assessments to students in grades K–10 for literacy and mathematics at least two times per year. ([NDDPI, Interim Assessments](#))
- North Dakota DOES require schools to use the state-provided interim assessment or use an interim assessment from the state-approved vendor list – assessment information is to be shared with the state longitudinal data system. ([NDDPI, Interim Assessments](#))
- North Dakota DOES monitor districts’ administration of a reading screener, as districts must annually report the assessment instruments that are being used to diagnose reading development and comprehension in Kindergarten–3<sup>rd</sup> grade. ([NDDPI, Reading Curriculum & Professional Development Webinar #3 Curriculum and Assessment \(slides\)](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should expand policy to require the state to approve a universal reading screener to be administered to 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.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- North Dakota HAS approved screeners for characteristics of dyslexia for students under the age of 7. ([NDDPI, Dyslexia](#))
- North Dakota DOES require districts to only use tools from the approved list. ([NDDPI, Dyslexia](#))
- North Dakota DOES require the approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia to assess the following skills: phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling. ([NDCC 15.1-32-26 Dyslexia screening and intervention – Report to legislative management – Professional development](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should expand policy to require a state approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia to be administered to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.
- North Dakota should require state approved screeners to screen for all of the following skills as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding, and oral reading fluency.

# 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:

- North Dakota HAS NOT adopted a policy to require administration of a universal reading screener to students in K–3 at least three times per year and thus HAS NOT adopted a policy requiring parental notification.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to expanding policy to require districts to administer the state-adopted universal screener to all K–3 students three times per year, North Dakota should then require parental notification of students that are identified with reading difficulties within 30 days of the administration of that screener and the dyslexia screener.

# 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:**

- North Dakota DOES provide guidance and resources to support the identification and selection of HQIM aligned to science of reading and state standards – the Central Regional Education Association and South East Education Cooperative created a partnership to support North Dakota schools interested in using ELA curriculum materials that align to the ND state standards and the science of reading. ([NDREA, North Dakota Science of Reading: Curriculum Materials Considerations for ND Schools \(updated October 2025\)](#))
- North Dakota HAS created the ND Science of Reading Leadership Team to support the implementation and use of evidence-based instructional materials. ([NDREA, North Dakota Science of Reading: Curriculum Materials Considerations for ND Schools \(updated October 2025\)](#))
- North Dakota DOES require districts to report the reading curriculum used in schools for K–3, to ensure it is scientifically-, evidence-, and research-based. ([NDDPI, Reading Curriculum & Professional Development Webinar #3 Curriculum and Assessment \(slides\)](#))

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should expand policy to require districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials that are aligned to the science of reading and state standards from a *vetted and approved list*.
- North Dakota 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT, through policy, training, or other avenues, discourage the use of instructional materials that include three-cueing.
- North Dakota HAS released [guidance](#) on contrary practices in literacy instruction, which includes information on three-cueing.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT have a policy relating to development of individual reading plans for students who are identified as having reading deficiencies.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to adopting the universal screener principle discussed above, North Dakota should then require schools to develop and implement an individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency on the universal screener within 30 days of receiving results.
- North Dakota should then 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 allows 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:**

- North Dakota DOES track district/school monitoring of students' progress within a [MTSS](#); but note that participation in the MTSS is not required of local educational agencies. (See also [NDREA, North Dakota Science of Reading: Curriculum Materials Considerations for North Dakota Schools \(updated October 2025\)](#))
- North Dakota DOES use data to determine where resources should go to improve student learning and support staff. ([NDREA, North Dakota Science of Reading: Curriculum Materials Considerations for North Dakota Schools \(updated October 2025\)](#))

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- To strengthen the state's existing implementation of the fundamental principle of progress monitoring of students, North Dakota should adopt a universal reading screener to be administered to all K–3 students at least three times per year, which can help provide further data to inform instruction and interventions within the MTSS.

# 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT require school districts to adopt evidence-based interventions grounded in the science of reading.
- North Dakota DOES provide some [guidance](#) to districts on selecting interventions and intervention materials, as well as core and supplemental materials.
- North Dakota DOES collect information on the [interventions](#) used at each K–3 building to ensure schools are using integrated evidence-based resources to support development and comprehension, as required in [policy](#).

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should establish a vetted and approved list of interventions that are grounded in the science of reading from which districts can choose in order to target students' needs.
- North Dakota should ensure the vetted and approved list includes interventions that occur before, during, and after school.

# 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:**

- North Dakota DOES NOT require districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> grade students at risk of reading failure.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should expand policy to require districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1<sup>st</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> grade students at risk of reading failure to remediate learning loss and/or build reading skills.
- North Dakota should 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT require districts to provide read-at-home plans to parents when a student has been identified as having a reading deficiency.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota should require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified as having a reading deficiency.
- In requiring read-at-home plans, the state should require that strategies shared with parents target students' needs based on data and are aligned with the science of reading.

## Initial Determinant Retention at 3<sup>rd</sup> 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT require students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options be retained.

### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT have a retention policy and does not offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota 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 4<sup>th</sup> grade including achieving a predetermined level on the state reading assessment, passing an alternative assessment or retest, or successfully demonstrating sufficient 3<sup>rd</sup> 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:

- North Dakota DOES NOT have a retention policy and does not allow for specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- North Dakota 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 4<sup>th</sup> grade that recognize the special needs of some students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who were previously retained.
- North Dakota should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4<sup>th</sup> grade for students promoted for good cause.

