Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report
Explore Alabama’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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Implementation</th>
<th>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Above &amp; Beyond Badge:</strong></td>
<td>This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Implementation</td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Implementation</td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle Not Adopted</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 Alabama’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

17 out of 18

- 11
- 6
- 0
- 1

STATE POLICY ADOPTION
REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Alabama Code, Title 16 Education (See 6G Alabama Literacy Act)
- ALSDE, Alabama Reading Initiative
- ALSDE, Semi-Annual Report: Alabama Reading Initiative (2023)
- ALSDE, Quick Links to Support the Alabama Literacy Act Implementation & Achievement Toward Grade-Level Reading

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Science of Reading (SOR) Training

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL 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:

- Alabama DOES offer science of reading training through a local reading specialist who provides support for all districts relating to literacy instruction, including focusing on providing training to new teachers and/or K–3 teachers who have the most “at-risk” or “struggling” students. (ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020))

- Alabama HAS adopted science of reading training for K–3 teachers through LETRS. (Lexia, Alabama Expands Use of LETRS Professional Learning Course Statewide)

- Alabama HAS adopted science of reading training for K–3 administrators through LETRS. (The Alabama Reading Initiative, Guide to 2023-2024 Comprehensive Memo)

- Alabama DOES monitor the requirement that all K–3 teachers meet state-adopted science of reading training requirement through the Comprehensive Data Report, submitted annually by districts, which collects data on the number of faculty members participating in LETRS training (considered the “gold standard”), and other trainings offered.

- Alabama HAS established an implementation plan, through various cohorts, to provide LETRS training to educators and administrators.
Science of Reading (SOR) Training

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

NOTES
• Note that Alabama’s implementation guide for the Alabama Literacy Act explains that The Literacy Task Force is working collaboratively with state public teacher preparation programs and Regional Inservice Centers to develop a state continuum of teacher development for approved science of reading.

NOTEWORTHY
The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:
• ALSDE provided a one-time stipend of $1,000 to eligible candidates who have completed the LETRS or LETRS for Early Childhood Education course and demonstrated mastery level on the Learning Platform coursework as evidenced by a score of 80% or greater. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) received $200 from the ALSDE to cover the employer benefit costs associated with the stipend. The state used ESSER II funds for FY 2023 for this. ([Memo, Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) Stipend for Mastery (2022))

RESOURCES
• ALSDE, Semi-Annual Report: Alabama Reading Initiative (2023)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY
• Alabama should 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:

• Coaches ARE trained in science of reading, as Alabama requires reading specialists to have received a bachelor’s degree or advanced coursework or professional development in the science of reading, multisensory language instruction such as Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS), or a comparable alternative training approved by the State Board of Education. ([ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))

• Coaches ARE providing job-embedded training and coaching to K–3 teachers as local reading specialists, hired by each district, provide support relating to literacy instruction, including focusing on providing training to new teachers and/or K–3 teachers who have the most “at-risk” or “struggling” students. ([ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))

• Alabama DOES assign local reading specialists (building coaches) to K–3 schools: 741 out of 762 schools agreed to hire local reading specialists and were awarded $80,000 to support such efforts. ([ALSDE, Semi-Annual Report: Alabama Reading Initiative (2023)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))

• Alabama DOES assign a regional coach to districts to support local reading specialists. ([ALSDE, Semi-Annual Report: Alabama Reading Initiative (2023)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

• Alabama created a Coaching Framework to set the standard for how many coaches in any content area conduct their work in Alabama. This evidence-based coaching framework provides a foundation for the work of Alabama Literacy Coaches, including English Learner coaches hired through the Alabama Literacy Act to support instruction in Kindergarten–3rd grade.

• Alabama currently has 741 local reading specialists (building coaches) and 93 regional coaches. (ALSDE, Semi-Annual Report: Alabama Reading Initiative (2023))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Alabama 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.
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:

- EPPs DO require coursework aligned to science of reading. (NCTQ, Alabama Summary 2023; 2024 Education Trust Fund)
- Required coursework mandates DO extend to elementary education, early childhood and special education students. (See Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-3 Teacher Education – Professional Services)

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

- House Bill 135 (2022) – a budget bill specifying that each college or university receiving an appropriation from the Education Trust Fund that operates a public teacher preparation program leading to initial certification must be in compliance with the credit hour requirements of reading or literacy coursework, based on the science of learning to read.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Alabama EPP requirements relating to literacy should prohibit the use of course materials that use three-cueing.
- Alabama’s standards for teacher preparation programs should address all components of science of reading, including fluency.
- Alabama EPP requirements relating to literacy should include instruction on how to administer reading assessments and how to identify students with reading difficulties.
**Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Assessment**

**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL**

**FULL IMPLEMENTATION**

Elementary education candidates must pass a science of reading aligned assessment to obtain teacher licensure.

**EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE**

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

- Alabama DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading: Foundations of Reading.  
  (NCTQ, Alabama Summary 2023; NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states’ licensure tests don’t signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction (Nov. 2023))

- Alabama DOES monitor required EPP science of reading assessments, through data compiled to create EPP Report Cards.  
  (ALSDE, Educator Preparation Institutional Report Card)

- Alabama DOES use education candidate science of reading scores for licensure.  
  (Alabama Foundations of Reading)

**RESOURCES**

- ALSDE, Teacher Certification
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:

- Alabama DOES direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - Funding for the Alabama Literacy Act, as part of the Education Trust Fund. In 2024, the state allocated $94.2 million to the Alabama Literacy Act, the same amount as 2023 (See page 31 of the 2024 Education Trust Fund);
  - Funding for early childhood classroom assessments;
  - Funding for professional development for educators;
  - Local reading specialist allocations, including coaching books;
  - Regional literacy specialist allocations.

RESOURCES

- The Alabama Reading Initiative, Guide to 2023-2024 Comprehensive Memo

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Alabama 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:

- Alabama HAS approved universal reading screeners to be administered to K–3 students. (See Memo, Early Years Reading and Math Assessments (2022); see also Memo, The Alabama Literacy Act Revisions (2023))

- Alabama DOES require the universal screeners to be administered three times per year and the state provides a timeline for administration of these three assessments (beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year).

- Alabama DOES monitor districts’ use of screener data to identify students at risk of reading failure as districts must submit information through the Comprehensive Data Report on the percentage of students identified as having a deficiency through the screener.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

A state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia assesses the following skills as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding and oral reading fluency. The screener is administered only to students who are flagged as at risk on the universal reading screener or upon teacher or parent request.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Alabama DOES use the state-approved universal screener, administered 3 times per year, to identify if a student has characteristics of dyslexia, which include phonological and phonemic awareness, letter naming fluency, letter sound fluency, nonsense word reading, reading accuracy, and spelling. (ALSDE, RFP Early Years Classroom Assessment for Grades K–3 Literacy and Math)

• Alabama DOES use the results of universal screenings that have been vetted and approved annually by the Literacy Task Force to “identify students who have a reading deficiency, including identifying students with characteristics of dyslexia”. (Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide (2020))

• Alabama DOES administer the dyslexia diagnostic assessment “as indicated” when a student has presented as struggling and fails to make progress through the Student Reading Improvement Plan. (The Alabama Reading Initiative, Guide to 2023-2024 Comprehensive Memo; Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide (2020))

• Alabama HAS identified additional dyslexia-specific screening recommendations and examples in the Alabama Dyslexia Resource Guide (2020).

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Alabama should make clear that any state-approved screener for dyslexia should assess all of the following skills, as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, alphabet knowledge, decoding, rapid naming, encoding, and oral reading fluency.
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:

- Alabama DOES require notice to parents of students identified with reading difficulties within 15 days of each administration of the state-approved screener.

**RESOURCES**

Preliminary 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:

- Alabama DOES provide guidance and resources to support the identification and selection of HQIM aligned to science of reading and state standards through a memo to districts.
- Alabama HAS created a vetted and approved list of high-quality instructional materials that have been approved by the Literacy Task Force based on the science of reading.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Alabama 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Alabama should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing as part of their comprehensive literacy policy.
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:

- Alabama DOES require schools to develop and implement an individual reading improvement plan for students identified as having a reading deficiency. ([ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))

- Individual reading improvement plans MUST be developed no later than 30 days after the reading deficiency is identified. ([ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020)](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org))

- Alabama DOES require parent notification of the development of an individual reading improvement plan and the state provides a [template](https://www.earlyliteracymatters.org) for this notice.
Individual Reading Plans

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

NOTEWORTHY

The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

• The state requires schools to create reading portfolios for 3rd grade students who scored at the lowest achievement level on the reading subtest of the ACAP Summative Assessment in 2nd grade. ([ALSDE, Alabama Literacy Act: Third-Grade Literacy Act Portfolio](https://example.com)) These are considered an option for promotion to 4th grade.

RESOURCES


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:

- Alabama DOES track district/school monitoring of students’ progress within a MTSS, that utilizes a data-based decision-making process, as progress monitoring results are used to “inform principals, local reading specialists, and teachers to further refine differentiated instruction.” (ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020))

- Alabama DOES provide guidance on tools that may be used for monitoring, focusing mainly on screeners.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.
Evidence-Based Interventions

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires school districts to target students’ needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading from a vetted and approved list. Interventions are provided before, during, or after school.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Alabama DOES require interventions adopted by school districts to be grounded in the science of reading and implemented during regular school hours.
- Alabama HAS released guidance for districts and the Literacy Task Force has created a vetted and approved list.
- Alabama DOES provide guidance on how LEAs must provide services for students identified with a reading deficiency before and after school, including information on additional intervention time before school or after school.
- Note that the state DOES monitor compliance with the selection of interventions for students identified as having dyslexia. (See Comprehensive Data Report)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.
Summer Reading Camps

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires 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. Staff are required to be trained in the science of reading.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Alabama DOES require districts to offer summer reading camps to Kindergarten–3rd graders. (ALSDE, Memo: Guidance for Summer Programs 2023: Planning, Implementation, Monitoring, and Funding)

- Alabama DOES monitor compliance with district’s summer reading camp offerings and participation through the Comprehensive Data Report submitted by districts annually and the state requires submission of a planning document through the ALA Monitoring site. (See, for example, Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) Quarter Three (Q3) Implementation Monitoring; see also Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) Reporting Inside PowerSchool (2023))

- Alabama DOES require districts to use staff trained in the science of reading for summer reading camps and districts must provide assurances that summer personnel are highly effective teachers of reading; and if personnel are not trained in the science of reading, the district must provide training. (See, for example, Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) Quarter Three (Q3) Implementation Monitoring)
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

NOTEWORTHY
The following aspects of the state’s work are particularly noteworthy:

• Reporting requirements for the summer reading camps include reporting whether intervention programs include direct, explicit, and systematic reading intervention services; and, at a minimum, the programs must include 60 hours of scientifically based reading instruction and intervention. (See, for example, Alabama Literacy Act (ALA) Quarter Three (Q3) Implementation Monitoring)

RESOURCES
• ALSDE, Summer Learning Programs Planning 2023 - Summary Form
Parent Read-At-Home Plan

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency. Strategies shared with parents target students’ needs based on data and are aligned with the science of reading.

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

• Alabama DOES require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents with reading deficiencies. Alabama created the as The Alabama Family Guide for Student Reading Success – Kindergarten through Third Grade: A Read-At-Home Plan.

• Alabama DOES provide additional online resources to parents to support reading at home – Alabama has created an Alabama Literacy Act Frequently Asked Questions document that provides information on several online resources to support reading at home. (See also ALSDE, The Alabama Literacy Act Implementation Guide (2020))

• Alabama DOES monitor districts' provision of online resources to parents to support reading at home; districts are required to submit Reading-At-Home Plans through the state’s quarterly monitoring of ALA. (See Memo: Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) Comprehensive Planning and Alabama Literacy Act 2019-523 (ALA) Reporting Requirements for the 2022-2023 School Year)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY
This principle currently meets full implementation.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided – and does not meet a good cause exemption – be retained.

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

• Alabama DOES require students to be retained in 3rd grade if they are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided. Alabama collects data on 3rd grade retention through the Comprehensive Data Report to ensure that districts are complying with the retention requirements.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY
This principle currently meets full implementation.
Multiple Options for Promotion

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers 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.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Alabama DOES offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade. Third grade students may demonstrate an acceptable level of reading proficiency on the reading screener, or an ALSDE-approved supplemental standardized reading assessment, or through a reading portfolio. (Alabama Literacy Act, Frequently Asked Questions for Kindergarten-3rd Grade Families; ALSDE, Alabama Literacy Act: Third-Grade Literacy Act Portfolio)
Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state allows 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. Intensive interventions are required to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Alabama DOES allow specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4th grade including exemptions for students identified as English language learners, students with disabilities, students who have received intensive reading interventions for two or more years and meet other requirements, portfolio-based promotions, supplemental assessment promotions, among others.

- Alabama DOES collect data relating to good cause exemptions through the Comprehensive Data Report that districts must submit annually.

- Alabama DOES require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.