



# Early Literacy Matters

## State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






**AR**

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 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 Arkansas'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

18 out of 18



## STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Arkansas Code 6-17-429 Right to Read Act \(as amended\)](#)
- [Arkansas DESE, English Language Arts](#)
- [Arkansas DESE, R.I.S.E. Arkansas](#)
- [Arkansas Learns](#)
- See [Executive Order to Prioritize L.E.A.R.N.S. \(Literacy, Empowerment, Accountability, Readiness, Networking, and School Safety\)](#)

# Science of Reading (SOR) Training



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers science of reading professional development 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:

- Arkansas DOES require all educators employed in a teaching position that requires an elementary education (K–6) license or special education (K–12) license to demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction. ([Arkansas DESE, Prescribed Pathway Credentials](#))
- Arkansas DOES require that all other educators, including administrators, must demonstrate awareness in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction. ([Arkansas DESE, Prescribed Pathway Credentials](#))
- Arkansas DOES allow districts to use a pathway other than those already approved by the state by submitting a request for a specific independent professional development provider to be reviewed by the DESE. ([Arkansas DESE, Prescribed Pathway Credentials](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# 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:**

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require every K–3 teacher in a public school that earns a D or F rating or a low-performing public school based on the results of the K–3 literacy screener to have access to a literacy coach to support teachers and administrators.
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require the literacy coach to have expertise in the science of reading.

## RESOURCES

- [Arkansas DESE, Spotlight on Statewide Literacy Coaches](#)

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should expand policy to require that literacy coaches be *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:

- Arkansas DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that address all components of scientifically based reading. ([NCTQ, Arkansas Summary 2023](#))
- Arkansas DOES require candidates enrolled in elementary education and special education (K–12) programs to complete coursework relating to reading, including scientific reading instruction aligned to the content measured in the reading assessment. ([Arkansas DESE, Arkansas Professional Educator Pathway \(ArPEP\)](#))
- Arkansas HAS created [Foundations of Reading Competencies](#), which includes competencies relating to the identification of students with reading deficiencies and how to administer reading assessments.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should expand policy to require all coursework provided by educator preparation providers to prohibit the use of course materials that include three-cueing.

# 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:

- Arkansas DOES require education candidates to pass licensure tests that are aligned to the science of reading: Foundations of Reading. ([NCTQ, Arkansas Summary 2023](#); [NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states' licensure tests don't signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction \(Nov. 2023\)](#))

## RESOURCES

- [Arkansas DESE, Licensure Assessments](#)

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# 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:

- Arkansas DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - Funding for early intervention resources
  - Funding for literacy coaches, supplemental education services, high-impact tutoring

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas 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:

- Arkansas [policy](#) established in 2023 DOES require the DESE to identify high-quality, evidence-based literacy screeners for K–3 students and districts are to use the screeners to identify students with reading deficiencies, which must be administered during the first 30 days of school and the end of the year, as well as midyear, but only if indicated.
- Arkansas DID select the [ATLAS K–3 Screener](#) to be administered to students to identify those students at risk for reading failure.
- Arkansas DID release [beginning of the year protocol](#) for administering the state-adopted screener in 2024–25 and DOES have [guidance](#) for middle and end of year assessments.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should expand policy to require the 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

### FULL 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, at minimum, administered to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas DOES require schools to screen students using the DIBELS, or equivalent, screener, and the state requires districts to provide for additional screening assessments to measure components not measured by DIBELS, or the equivalent. ([Arkansas DESE, Dyslexia Resource Guide \(December 2017\)](#))
- Arkansas HAS created a list of dyslexia screeners that can be used to screen for the characteristics of dyslexia. ([Arkansas DESE, Dyslexia Resource Guide \(December 2017\)](#))
- Arkansas DOES require districts to screen for the following characteristics of dyslexia, as developmentally appropriate: phonological and phonemic awareness, alphabet knowledge, sound-symbol recognition, decoding skills, rapid naming, and encoding.
- Arkansas DOES require schools to screen every student in Kindergarten–2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students experiencing difficulty, as noted by a classroom teacher for characteristics of dyslexia. ([Arkansas DESE, Dyslexia Resource Guide \(December 2017\)](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should consider updating the Resource Guide, since it was last updated in 2017.

# Parental Notification



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

States require parental notification of students identified with reading difficulties based on the state-approved universal reading screener and/or dyslexia screener results. Timeline and frequency of parental notification may vary.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require schools to notify parents, in writing, in a parent-friendly manner, of their student's reading progress each time the student is assessed throughout the year using high-quality literacy screener results.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should expand policy to require 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.

# District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards from a vetted and approved list. Districts and/or state must post their adopted materials on the district website.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas DOES require the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to identify and create a [list](#) of approved materials, resources, and curriculum programs for public school districts and charter schools. ([Arkansas DESE, Approved Science of Reading Curriculum](#); [Arkansas DESE, Arkansas Initiative for Instructional Materials](#))
- Arkansas DOES require the list of materials, resources, and curriculum programs to align with the science of reading and be based on instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic, including dyslexia programs and evidence-based reading intervention programs. ([Arkansas DESE, Approved Science of Reading Curriculum](#); [Arkansas DESE, Arkansas Initiative for Instructional Materials](#))
- Arkansas DID partner with EdReports to create the list of high-quality instructional materials. ([Arkansas DESE, Approved Science of Reading Curriculum](#); [Arkansas DESE, Arkansas Initiative for Instructional Materials](#))
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require creation of literacy plans that includes the curriculum program that is aligned with the science of reading and the needs of the public school district – these school-level literacy plans MUST be posted on the public school district’s website by August 1 of each year.

# District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials

**CONTINUED****IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL****FULL IMPLEMENTATION****RESOURCES**

- [Arkansas DESE, AR K–2 ELA Review Criteria](#)
- [Arkansas DESE, Literacy Curriculum Approval Process Notifications](#)

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY**

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state has *adopted a policy to eliminate* the use of all instructional materials that include the three-cueing systems model for teaching word reading *with a clear timeline for the elimination* of the use of these materials.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas DOES, through [policy](#), prohibit the use of instructional materials that include three-cueing.
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES provide for actions that the State Board may take if a school continues to use three-cueing methods.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# Individual Reading Plans



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires schools to develop and implement an individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency based upon screening results. Timeline and monitoring may vary.

### EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require schools to develop individual reading plans for each student in K–3 who does not meet the reading standard as determined by the State Board and as measured by a high-quality literacy screener or the state annual accountability assessment.
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require schools to notify parents in writing of the content of their child’s independent reading plan and progress on the independent reading plan throughout the year; however there DOES NOT appear to be a specific timeline for notification of parents.

### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas should expand policy to require schools to develop individual reading plans *within 30 days* of receiving screening results.
- Arkansas should also ensure there is an established process for monitoring the implementation of those plans and a *specific timeline* for notifying parents of the development of the plan.

# 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:**

- Arkansas DOES require schools to monitor student progress through Response to Intervention. ([Arkansas DESE, Response to Intervention](#))
- Arkansas DOES require schools to use data to inform instruction and intervention. ([Arkansas DESE, Response to Intervention](#))

## 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:**

- Arkansas DOES require school districts to adopt interventions grounded in the science of reading from a vetted and approved list of reading intervention programs. ([Arkansas DESE, Approved Science of Reading Curriculum](#); [Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education: Arkansas Literacy Curriculum Approved Programs – Reading Intervention](#))
- Arkansas DOES monitor the provision of evidence-based interventions by requiring schools to report the types of interventions used and students receiving each type of instruction.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# Summer Reading Camps



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state provides for summer reading camps in policy, but it is optional and not required of schools.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas [law](#) DOES require reading interventions for each student who does not meet the reading standard established by the state board by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, including students who are promoted with good-cause exemptions to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, during the subsequent summer and school year.
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES allow districts to offer summer reading camps for students in need of remediation in all subjects in Kindergarten–3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Arkansas 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, not just to rising 4<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- Arkansas should further require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.

# 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:**

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require schools to provide parents with a read-at-home plan to support student early literacy growth.
- Arkansas DOES require the [read-at-home plan](#) to include evidence-based science of reading strategies and tools that are aligned to the student's individual reading plan. (See also [R.I.S.E. Arkansas, Family Resources](#))

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# Initial Determinant Retention at 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Based on State Assessment



## 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:

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require students who have not met the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading standards and do not meet the good cause exemptions to be retained. (See also [Arkansas DESE, Third-Grade Promotion](#); [Arkansas DESE, Third Grade Promotion Timeline](#))
- Arkansas HAS created a [toolkit](#) with resources and training for schools to implement the Third Grade Promotion 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 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.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES provide for at least three pathways for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, including achieving a predetermined level on the state reading assessment, demonstrating they are successful and independent readers and are performing at or above grade level, and reevaluating the student, including using subsequent student assessments or alternative assessments. (See also [Arkansas DESE, Third-Grade Promotion](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

# Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FULL IMPLEMENTATION

The state allows *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. Intensive interventions are required to continue in 4<sup>th</sup> grade for students promoted for good cause.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES allow for specific good cause exemptions for promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade, including exemptions for students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who were previously retained. (See also [Arkansas DESE, Third-Grade Promotion](#))
- Arkansas [policy](#) DOES require intensive interventions to continue in 4<sup>th</sup> grade for students promoted for good cause, including at least 90 minutes of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned to the science of reading during each school day, assigning the student to a teacher with a value-added model score in the top quartile statewide in English language arts for the last three years, among others.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

