



# Early Literacy Matters

## State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






PA

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

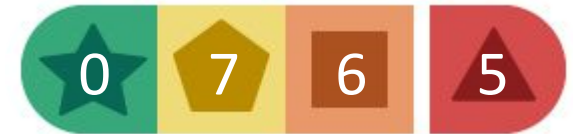
The purpose of this document is to provide an analysis of states' implementation of K–3 reading policies aligned to ExcelinEd's [fundamental principles](#) of an early literacy policy. It builds on an analysis of states' adoption of statutes and regulations establishing requirements for each component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

13 out of 18



### STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan](#)

# Science of Reading (SOR) Training



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* 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:

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to establish a professional development program focused on structured literacy for school personnel that includes in-class demonstration, modeling, and coaching support to improve reading and literacy outcomes.
- Pennsylvania HAS created a [list](#) of approved professional development programs that meet requirements in statute.
- By the 2027–2028 school year, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require school entities to approve a professional development program from a list developed by the Department to satisfy the requirements in statute relating to structured literacy.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require a continuing professional education plan which must include information on how professional development activities will improve language and literacy acquisition for all students, including the provision of training in structured literacy for professional employees who hold instructional certificates in Early Childhood, Elementary/Middle, PK–12 Special Education, English as a Second Language, and Reading Specialists.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) enacted in 2024 DOES require the Department to provide professional development on reading screening and literacy intervention approaches at no cost to a school entity or an educator.
- Pennsylvania HAS created the [Standards Aligned System](#) to improve student achievement, which includes information and resources for the structured literacy professional development the state has created pursuant to policy.

# Science of Reading (SOR) Training

**CONTINUED**

## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

#### EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require educators to complete both foundational level coursework as well as ongoing applied learning.
- By the 2027–2028 school year, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require each school entity to “demonstrate that each educator is in the process of completing approved professional development” that has been selected from the list developed by the Department.
- Pennsylvania WILL require [educators](#) to complete the required training no later than the beginning of the 2028–2029 school year. Pennsylvania defines “educators” as an “individual who has completed approved professional development” under policy and “is responsible for providing or supervising reading instruction, intervention or coaching, including an elementary teacher, school reading specialist, reading interventionist, English as a second language teacher, special education teacher, literacy coach, principal or chief school administrator.”

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.

# 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:**

- Pennsylvania DOES provide for literacy coaches in the [Teacher Support in the Structured Literacy Program](#) policy, which allows school personnel to be selected by school entities to serve as professional coaches, provided certain requirements are met.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require school personnel selected to serve as coaches to have at least three years of experience in teaching of reading and be able to demonstrate their skills in the instruction of and intervention with students, including those with dyslexia and other language-related disabilities.
- Pennsylvania DOES NOT require schools to participate in the [Teacher Support in the Structured Literacy Program](#); the program is for participating school entities.
- Pennsylvania DOES provide for instructional coaches to provide job-embedded and ongoing professional development for teachers, staff, and administration in districts; however these positions ARE NOT specific to literacy.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania 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:**

- Pennsylvania DOES have standards for teacher preparation programs that address all core components of scientifically based reading. ([NCTQ, Pennsylvania Summary 2023](#))
- Pennsylvania HAS created a structured literacy program framework. ([PDE, Structured Literacy \(SL\) Program Framework Guidelines](#))
- Pennsylvania DOES require structured literacy to be integrated in educator preparation and continuing professional development programs for employees holding certificates in Early Childhood, Elementary/Middle, PK–12 Special Education, English as a Second Language, and Reading Specialists. ([PDE, Structured Literacy \(SL\) Program Framework Guidelines](#))
- Pennsylvania DOES require EPPs to integrate the structured literacy competencies/standards for the certification programs. ([PDE, Structured Literacy \(SL\) Program Framework Guidelines](#))
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require instructors for educator preparation programs who teach reading and literacy education programs to prospective educators to be trained in foundational skills and instructional interventions based on structured literacy.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require that EPP required coursework for elementary, early childhood, and special education candidates prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing.

# Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Assessment



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

The state has not adopted policy (statute or regulation) that meets the fundamental principle for this area.

## EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Pennsylvania DOES require a licensure test that addresses reading: Pennsylvania Educator Certification Test (PECT) PreK–4, Module 2; however, this licensure test DOES NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. ([NCTQ, Pennsylvania 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

- Pennsylvania 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:

- Pennsylvania DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - \$10 million for literacy initiatives [FY 2025–2026 budget]
  - Ready to Learn Block Grant [\$1,383,481 in FY 2025–2026 budget]
  - Student teacher stipend program to support the teacher pipeline [\$30 million in FY 2025–2026 budget]
  - Training/director [\$350,000 annually]

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

# Universal Reading Screener



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following: 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:

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to establish a reading leadership council to advise the Department on the development of a list of universal reading screeners.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to develop, maintain, and publish a list of universal reading screeners.
- By the 2027–2028 school year, Pennsylvania WILL require schools to [screen](#) each student in grades K–3 for reading competency, three times each school year including once at the beginning of the school year, once during the middle of the school year, and once at the end of the school year, using a universal reading screener chosen from the state’s approved list.
- Beginning July 31, 2028, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require schools to submit annual literacy reports to the Department, which includes screening data.
- Pennsylvania DOES provide resources to districts with guidance on assessments, including diagnostics. ([PDE, Assessment and Accountability](#))

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.

# Screeners for Characteristics of Dyslexia



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following: 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:

- Pennsylvania HAS NOT approved a screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to establish a reading leadership council to advise the Department on the development of a list of universal reading screeners.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to develop, maintain, and publish a list of universal reading screeners. The screeners must be aligned with the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction, including phonemic awareness, decoding, encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the universal reading screeners included on the Department's approved list to be able to identify students with characteristics of dyslexia.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require schools to administer a state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia that assesses *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.
- Pennsylvania should require the dyslexia screener to be administered, at a minimum, to all students at the end of Kindergarten and at the beginning of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

# Parental Notification



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* 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:

- By the 2027–2028 school year, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require parental notification of Kindergarten students identified with reading difficulties following the third screening at the end of the school year.
- By the 2027–2028 school year, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require parental notification of students in grades 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup> who exhibit a reading deficiency during the school year, following administration of a screener, followed by periodic updates three times per year regarding the student’s progress.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania 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 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:**

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to develop and maintain, on the state’s website, a [list of evidence-based reading instruction curricula](#) that is aligned with the state’s standards and the science of reading. Policy also allows schools to submit applications to add curriculum to the list. The Department has established a reading leadership council to advise on the development of the list.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require schools to report to the Department the reading instructional curricula that schools are using during the 2025–2026 school year.
- By 2027–2028, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require schools to adopt evidence-based reading instruction curriculum.
- Pennsylvania DOES require a participating school entity in the [Teacher Support in the Structured Literacy Program](#) to adopt high-quality instructional materials grounded in scientifically based reading research in accordance with the state academic standards approved by the State Board of Education.
- Pennsylvania DOES NOT require schools to participate in the [Teacher Support in the Structured Literacy Program](#); the program is for participating school entities.

### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards *from the state’s vetted and approved list*.
- Pennsylvania should further require districts to post their adopted materials on the district website.



# Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* 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:**

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to develop and maintain, on the state’s website, a list of evidence-based reading instruction curricula. “Evidence-based reading instruction” is defined in policy to NOT include three-cueing.
- By 2027–2028, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require schools to adopt evidence-based reading instruction curriculum.

### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing in all materials used by school districts.

# 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:

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require students who have not achieved proficiency in reading in Kindergarten–3<sup>rd</sup> grade, as determined by the school entity, to be given additional instructional opportunities through a grade-level learning plan developed by the school entity.
- By 2027–2028, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require schools to develop reading intervention plans for students in grades K–3 who are identified as having a reading deficiency based upon screening results.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require creation of the individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency on the universal screener *within 30 days* of receiving results.
- Further, Pennsylvania 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:**

- Pennsylvania HAS created a [multi-tiered system of supports](#) which is a standards-aligned, comprehensive school improvement framework to enhance academic outcomes for students.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) enacted in 2024 DOES define "universal reading screener" to be an assessment tool that is used as part of a support system, that may include a multi-tiered system of support.

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require schools to regularly monitor and document students' progress within the state's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
- Through the MTSS, Pennsylvania 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

### FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

*Full implementation of this principle requires the following:* 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:

- Pennsylvania [policy](#) DOES require the Department to develop, maintain, and publish a [list](#) of structured literacy intervention approaches that are aligned with the essential components of evidence-based reading instruction.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) enacted in 2024 DOES require the Department to establish a reading leadership council to advise the Department on the development of a list of structured literacy intervention approaches.
- Pennsylvania [policy](#) enacted in 2024 DOES require literacy intervention approaches to be evidence-based and skill-based and systematic, explicit, and intensified based on the needs of the student.
- By 2027–2028, Pennsylvania [policy](#) WILL require schools to administer universal reading screeners, which will be used to create reading intervention plans for students identified as having a reading deficiency – the reading intervention plan must include reading intervention approaches.
- Beginning July 31, 2028, schools must [report](#) literacy intervention approaches being provided to students.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require school districts to target students' needs by adopting interventions grounded in the science of reading from the state's 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:**

- Pennsylvania DOES NOT have a policy requiring 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

- Pennsylvania 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.
- Pennsylvania should further require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.

# Parent Read-At-Home Plan



## IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

### PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state or district provides online resources to parents to support reading at home.

#### EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Pennsylvania DOES provide online resources to parents to support reading at home. ([PDE, Great Literacy Websites and Apps for Parents and Kids](#))

#### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania 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.

## 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:

- Pennsylvania 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.

### CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania 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:

- Pennsylvania DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT offer at least three pathways to promotion to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand 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 to 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:

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

## CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand 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.
- Pennsylvania should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4<sup>th</sup> grade for students promoted for good cause.

