Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore Pennsylvania’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>
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<th>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION</strong></td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED</strong></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 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

7 out of 18

STATE POLICY ADOPTION

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- Pennsylvania State Literacy Plan
Science of Reading (SOR) Training

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers science of reading training 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:

- 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 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 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.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should expand policy to require all K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- In adopting this policy, Pennsylvania should ensure there is an implementation plan for rollout that is clearly communicated to all educators.
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 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.
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 education, elementary–middle level, PK–12 Special Education, English as a Second Language, and Reading Specialist. ([PDE, Structured Literacy (SL) Program Framework Guidelines](#))

- By August 2024, EPPs must integrate the structured literacy competencies/ standards for the certification programs. ([PDE, Structured Literacy (SL) Program Framework Guidelines](#))

**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.
**IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL**

**PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED**

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

**EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE**

证据 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)](http://www.nctq.org/pennsylvania))

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**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 minimal direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - Ready to Learn Block Grant ($295,500)
  - 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

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 require a state-approved universal reading screener to be administered to K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.

- Pennsylvania DOES provide resources to districts with guidance on assessments, including diagnostics. (PDE, Focus on Effective Assessment)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should require a state-approved universal reading screener to be administered to all K–3 students three times per year to identify students at risk for reading failure.
Screener for Characteristics of Dyslexia

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Pennsylvania HAS NOT approved a screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
• Pennsylvania DID create a Dyslexia Screening and Early Intervention Pilot Program, using evidence-based screening and instruction, as well as intervention for students found to be at risk for future reading difficulties.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Pennsylvania should expand policy to require schools to administer a state-approved screener for characteristics of dyslexia that assesses 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 1st and 2nd grade.
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:

• Pennsylvania HAS NOT established a policy relating to parental notification.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Following approval of a universal screener and dyslexia screener to be administered to students, Pennsylvania should further 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

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 require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.

• 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; however, the state does not provide guidance or a vetted and approved list of materials.

• 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 a 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
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, through policy, guidance, training, or other avenues, prohibit or discourage the use of instructional materials that include three-cueing.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Pennsylvania should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing.
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–3rd grade, as determined by the school entity, to be given additional instructional opportunities through a grade-level learning plan developed by the school entity.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to establishing policy relating to universal reading screeners, Pennsylvania should require schools to develop and implement an individual reading plan for students who are identified as having a reading deficiency within 30 days of receiving screening results.
- Further, 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.

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

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 relating to the use of evidence-based science of reading interventions for students who have been identified as having a reading deficiency.

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 a vetted and approved list.
Summer Reading Camps

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Pennsylvania DOES NOT have a policy requiring districts to offer summer reading camps to rising 1st–4th grade students at risk of reading failure.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

- Pennsylvania should further require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.
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.
Implementing 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 expand policy to require that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided be retained.
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 4th 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 4th grade including achieving a predetermined level on the state reading assessment, passing an alternative assessment or retest, or successfully demonstrating sufficient 3rd grade reading skills through a portfolio of student work.
Good Cause Exemptions for Some Students

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

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