



Early Literacy Matters

State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

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






SD

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 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.

 <p>FULL IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</p> <p> ABOVE & BEYOND BADGE: This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.</p>
 <p>PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</p>
 <p>FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION</p>	<p>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</p>
 <p>PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED</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 South Dakota's early literacy policy implementation using an implementation rubric designed to gauge state progress toward full implementation of early literacy policies. Each of the fundamental principles is addressed in a separate table.

ADOPTION IMPLEMENTATION

4 out of 18



STATE POLICY ADOPTION REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [South Dakota Department of Education, Moving Literacy Forward in South Dakota](#)
- [South Dakota Literacy Framework](#)

Science of Reading (SOR) Training



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state offers science of reading training through a budget appropriation. Participation is optional for teachers and administrators.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota DOES NOT require K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- South Dakota DOES offer free professional development opportunities for educators aligned with the science of reading, including [summer foundational reading courses](#) (to be offered summer 2026), [literacy blueprint courses](#) (available in the 2025–2026 school year), and [science of reading literacy framework support courses](#). ([SD Department of Education, Literacy Professional Learning](#))
- South Dakota IS partnering with public universities in the state to design comprehensive foundational literacy courses rooted in the science of reading. These courses will seek to prepare educators with “crucial knowledge and skills needed for effective reading instruction.” ([SD Department of Education, Literacy Blueprint courses](#))

NOTEWORTHY

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

- South Dakota offers [literacy blueprint courses](#) to K–12 teachers, paraprofessionals, and specialists.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should adopt policy to require all K–3 teachers and administrators to participate in state-adopted science of reading training.
- In adopting this policy, South Dakota should ensure there is an implementation plan for rollout that is clearly communicated to all educators.

Literacy Coaches



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota DOES NOT provide for literacy coaches in policy.
- South Dakota IS offering a [Literacy Instructional Coaching](#) program – participating educators can earn a certificate in literacy coaching.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should ensure that a literacy coach that is trained in the science of reading is assigned to each elementary school to provide job-embedded training 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:

- South Dakota DOES have standards for educator preparation programs that list the core components of scientifically based reading; however, the standards DO NOT provide detail on the components. ([NCTQ, South Dakota Summary 2023](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should expand policy to require that educator preparation program coursework prohibits the use of course materials that include three-cueing instructional strategies.
- South Dakota should further ensure coursework includes evidence-based literacy instruction, how to administer reading assessments, and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.

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:

- South Dakota DOES require licensure tests that address reading: Praxis Early Childhood Education; Praxis Elementary Education: Multiple Subjects, Reading and Language Arts subtest; Praxis Elementary Education: Content Knowledge for Teaching, Reading and Language Arts—CKT subtest. However, these licensure tests DO NOT adequately address all five core components of reading. ([NCTQ, South Dakota Summary 2023](#); [NCTQ, False Assurances: Many states' licensure tests don't signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction \(Nov. 2023\)](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should require elementary education candidates to pass an assessment that is aligned to the science of reading 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:

- South Dakota DOES provide direct funding to support state and/or local implementation of science of reading professional development.
 - Funding for science of reading professional development [\$6,000,000 over four years beginning FY24]

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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



Universal Reading Screener



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota DOES NOT 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.
- South Dakota DOES provide guidance to schools and educators on administering a universal literacy screener through the state's [Literacy Framework](#). (See also [South Dakota Literacy Framework, District Guide for Implementation](#))
- Through the [District Guide for Implementation](#) of the Literacy Framework, the state DOES encourage schools to administer the reading screener three times per year.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota 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.

Screeners 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:

- South Dakota HAS NOT approved a screener for characteristics of dyslexia.
- South Dakota HAS released a [Dyslexia Handbook](#), which provides for evaluation considerations for a comprehensive dyslexia assessment.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota 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.
- South Dakota 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:

- South Dakota 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, South Dakota 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:

- South Dakota DOES NOT require school districts to adopt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the science of reading and state standards.
- South Dakota HAS created a K–5 Literacy Curriculum Analysis Tool that districts can use to analyze curriculum and materials for alignment to the science of reading. ([SD Department of Education, K–5 Literacy Curriculum Analysis Tool](#); see also [SD MTSS Manual](#) (Curriculum & Instruction Section))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota 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.
- South Dakota should further require districts to post their adopted materials on the district website.

Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota 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

- South Dakota should adopt a policy, clearly in statute or regulation, that prohibits the use of three-cueing.

Individual Reading Plans



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota DOES NOT require the creation of individual reading plans for students identified with a reading deficiency.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to establishing policy relating to universal reading screeners, South Dakota 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, South Dakota 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:

- South Dakota HAS created a multi-tiered system of supports to assist students with academic learning. ([SD Department of Education, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should expand policy to require schools to regularly monitor and document students' literacy progress within the state's multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).
- To strengthen the state's use of the MTSS, South Dakota should expand policy relating to universal reading screeners. South Dakota can then use data from the screeners in order to inform instruction and interventions, as needed.

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:

- South Dakota 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

- South Dakota 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:

- South Dakota 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

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

Parent Read-At-Home Plan



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PRINCIPLE NOT ADOPTED

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

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- South Dakota DOES NOT require schools to provide read-at-home plans to parents as soon as a student is identified with a reading deficiency.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota 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.
- Further, South Dakota should require strategies that are shared with parents to target students' needs based on data and be aligned with the science of reading.

Initial Determinant Retention at 3rd 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:

- South Dakota DOES NOT have a policy that requires a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided be retained.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained. Policy should include multiple pathways for promotion to 4th 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:

- South Dakota DOES NOT have a retention policy and DOES NOT offer at least three pathways for promotion to 4th grade.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills (on the state test-based options provided) be retained. Policy should include at least three pathways for promotion to 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- South Dakota 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.
- South Dakota should further require intensive interventions to continue in 4th grade for students promoted for good cause.

