



Early Literacy Matters






State-by-State Policy Implementation Report

Explore Virginia'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.

 <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 Virginia'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

- [Virginia Acts of Assembly 2023 Session, Chapter 645](#)
- [Virginia Code 22.1-253.13:1, et al Standards of Quality](#)
- [VDOE, English, Reading, & Literacy](#)

Science of Reading (SOR) Training



IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL 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:

- Virginia [law](#) DOES require all K–8 educators to participate in [training](#) in evidence-based literacy instruction aligned to science-based reading research. (See also [VDOE, Virginia Literacy Updates \(November 2024\)](#))
- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require the Department to provide technical assistance, including literacy coaching to local school divisions to provide training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instructions for students in K–8.
- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require the Department to establish a list of training that is approved by the Board and further requires the Department to provide resources to local school divisions to ensure that each division is able to provide professional development to teachers and reading specialists and that professional development should be provided at no cost.
- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require local districts to provide high-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction from the list developed and resources provided by the Department.
- Virginia [law](#) DOES require professional development for each elementary school principal and each teacher with an endorsement in early/primary education preschool–3rd grade, elementary education, preschool–6th grade, special education general curriculum Kindergarten–12th grade, special education deaf and hard of hearing preschool–12th grade, special education blindness/visual impairments preschool–12th grade, English as a second language preschool–12th grade, or as a reading specialist that builds proficiency in evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research in order to aid in the licensure renewal process for such individuals.

Science of Reading (SOR) Training

CONTINUED

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FULL IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE (CONTINUED)

- Virginia [law](#) DOES require high-quality professional development and training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction, from the list developed and the resources provided by the Department for (1) each teacher with an endorsement in middle education 6th–8th grade who teaches English and (2) each middle school principal and teacher with an endorsement in middle education 6th–8th grade who teaches mathematics, science, or history, and social science that builds an awareness of evidence-based literacy instruction and science-based reading research.

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:

- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require each local school board to employ one reading specialist for each 550 students in grades K–5 and one reading specialist for each 1,100 students in grades 6–8.
- Virginia DOES require all reading specialists to receive training in evidence-based literacy instruction that is aligned with science-based reading research. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Updates \(November 2024\)](#))
- Virginia DOES require K–5 Reading Specialists to attend Reading Institutes and complete Canvas modules. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Updates \(November 2024\)](#))
- Virginia DOES require every reading specialist, in consultation with classroom teachers, to coordinate and oversee intervention for students not meeting literacy benchmarks and to develop and monitor student progress on student reading plans. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Act](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia 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:

- Virginia DOES have standards for educator preparation programs that address all components of scientifically based reading; however, the state only provides minimal details for some of the standards. ([NCTQ, Virginia Summary 2023](#))
- Virginia DOES require every educator preparation program to provide coursework to teachers and reading specialists that focuses on evidence-based literacy instruction. ([The Virginia Literacy Act – One Pager](#))
- Virginia [law](#) DOES require coursework that includes training on how to administer reading assessments and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should expand policy to require EPP coursework for elementary, early childhood, and special education candidates 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:

- Virginia DOES require licensure tests that address reading and are aligned to the science of reading: Praxis Elementary Education: Teaching Reading: Elementary. ([NCTQ, Virginia 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

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:

- Virginia DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
 - Early Intervention Reading Initiative (funding for intervention services for students in Kindergarten–3rd grade)
 - Funding for implementation of literacy instruction aligned with science-based reading research – funds used to support literacy coaching, professional development, technical assistance, and implementation of the statewide literacy screener, etc. ([FY25 budget](#))
 - 2025–2026 [Literacy Grant](#) priorities include the English Learner Literacy Network, the Students with Disabilities Literacy Network, and family engagement resources

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia 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:

- Virginia DOES require K–3 students to be screened using a single comprehensive literacy screener – the Virginia Language and Literacy Screening System (VALLSS). ([VDOE, 2025–2026 VALLSS: Grades K-3 Assessment Calendar](#))
- Virginia DOES [screen](#) all students at least *two times per year*, as follows:
 - Fall: K–2nd grade students must be screened in the Fall and 3rd grade students must be screened in the Fall if they are new to the state or received summer intervention services;
 - Mid-Year: Mid-year screening is required in grades K–2 and mid-year screening is optional for 3rd grade students who are moderate risk and low risk. Mid-year screening is required for 3rd grade students who are at high risk from the Fall;
 - Spring: K–1 students must be screened in the Spring; Grade 2 students at moderate or high risk must be screened in the Spring; and all 3rd grade students must take the Reading SOL Assessment in the Spring and screening is encouraged for 3rd grade students who were high or moderate risk at Fall and/or mid-year.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should expand policy to require the state-approved universal reading screener to be administered to 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:

- Virginia HAS NOT adopted policy to screen students for characteristics of dyslexia.
- Virginia DOES require use of a literacy screener that assesses many of the [characteristics of dyslexia](#) that must be administered at the beginning of Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade.
- Virginia policy DOES define “dyslexia” as part of the [Regulations Governing Special Education Programs for Children with Disabilities in Virginia](#) and further requires evaluations and interventions for students, if a disability is identified. (See, for example, [8VAC20-81-70 Evaluation and reevaluation](#); see also [VDOE, Dyslexia: Defined in the Virginia Regulations](#))
- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require reading specialists to have training in identification and appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia.

RESOURCES

- [Specific Learning Disability Supplementary Guide – Dyslexia; Frequently Asked Questions \(2017\)](#)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should adopt policy to *require* schools to administer state-approved screeners for characteristics of dyslexia that assess 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.
- Virginia should then require the screener to be administered, at a minimum, to students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.



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:

- Virginia [policy](#) DOES require parental notification when a student has been identified as having a reading difficulty.
- Virginia DOES provide family letter templates that schools may use to communicate information to parents. ([University of Virginia, Virginia Literacy Partnerships: Family Letter Templates for VALLSS](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- In addition to requiring administration of the universal reading screener to K–3 students, three times per year, Virginia should also 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:

- Virginia HAS adopted an approved list of K–3 core instructional programs that districts must use and that align with evidence-based literacy instruction, science-based reading research, and the Virginia Standards of Learning. ([Approved Core Instructional Programs for Grades K–5](#); [VDOE, Approved Core Instructional Program Guide 2023](#); [VDOE, Curriculum Review Process Update for the Virginia Literacy Act](#))
- Virginia [law](#) DOES require each division-wide literacy plan to be submitted to the Department and shall identify which core literacy curricula, supplemental instructional practices and programs, and intervention programs from the list developed by the Department or alternative programs approved by the Department. Each local school board shall post, maintain, and update as necessary on such school board's website a copy of its division-wide literacy plan. The Department shall post each division-wide literacy plan on its website.
- Virginia IS working with local districts that have submitted locally created core instructional programs for approval. ([VDOE, Curriculum Review Process Update for the Virginia Literacy Act](#))

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:

- Virginia [policy](#) DOES prohibit three-cueing by defining “evidence-based literacy instruction” as instruction that does not include practices that instruct students to gain meaning from print through the use of three-cueing or meaning, structure, and visual cues.
- The Virginia Department of Education DOES provide guidance that a core instructional program must not include three-cueing instructional strategies to meet expectations for approval. ([Core Instructional Program Review Rubrics](#))

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:

- Virginia DOES require students who do not meet literacy benchmarks to receive evidence-based instruction and intervention, as outlined in an individualized student reading plan. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Act](#); see [VDOE, Student Reading Plan](#); [Division Overview for Student Reading Plans](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should ensure that policy relating to individualized student reading plans requires creation of a plan within 30 days of receiving student screening results.
- Further, Virginia should ensure there is an established 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:

- Virginia screening guidelines DO indicate middle-of-year and/or end-of-year opportunities for progress monitoring for some students. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Updates \(November 2024\)](#))
- Virginia DOES require [reading specialists](#) to oversee implementation of, and monitor student progress, on the student reading plan.
- Virginia DOES have a [Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports \(VTSS\)](#) to support school divisions with implementing and sustaining a multi-tiered system of supports; however, it does not specify a focus on literacy.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should ensure that schools are regularly monitoring and documenting students' progress within the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports.
- Virginia should ensure that schools utilize data to inform instruction and interventions as needed and in a timely manner.

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:

- Virginia DOES require local school boards to provide reading intervention services to students who demonstrate deficiencies on any reading diagnostic test that meets criteria established by the VDOE, which includes evidence-based interventions that are grounded in the science of reading. ([VDOE, Virginia Literacy Updates \(November 2024\)](#); [VDOE, Memo: Changes to Code of Virginia 22.1-253.13:1 Kindergarten through Grade 3; Reading Intervention Services for Certain Students](#))
- Virginia DOES conduct reviews of intervention programs for K–8 students, in partnership with Virginia Literacy Partnerships at the University of Virginia School of Education and Human Development, to support full implementation of the Virginia Literacy Act – the approved list aligns with evidence-based literacy instruction, science-based reading research, and the Virginia Standards of Learning. ([VDOE, Intervention Instructional Program Guide & Supplemental Instructional Program Guide](#); [VDOE, Approved Core Instructional Program Guide 2023](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

This principle currently meets full implementation.

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:

- Virginia DOES NOT have a policy requiring districts to offer summer camps to students at risk of reading failure to remediate learning loss and/or build reading skills.
- Virginia [policy](#) DOES provide that summer programs may be a form of remediation used when a student is not at grade level on a subject in the 3rd–8th grade assessments.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should 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.
- Virginia 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:

- Virginia DOES provide online resources to parents to support reading at home. ([VDOE, Literacy Resources for Families and Communities](#); [VDOE, Family Literacy Webinars](#))
- Virginia DOES provide online resources, including information on screening, family letter templates, and others, through the [University of Virginia, Virginia Literacy Partnerships](#) webpage.
- Virginia 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

- Virginia 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.
- In providing the read-at-home plans, schools should be required to provide strategies with parents that target students' needs based on data and must 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Virginia should adopt policy to require that students who are unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options provided be retained and offer 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:

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

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

