Early Literacy Matters
State-by-State Policy Implementation Report
Explore Wisconsin’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>
<th>Principle Not Adopted</th>
<th>The fundamental principle is not adopted in policy, does not meet minimum implementation requirements or is grant-based and not sustainable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Future Implementation</td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy with a future date for implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial Implementation</td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, but there is limited evidence of implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Implementation</td>
<td>The fundamental principle is adopted in policy, and there is evidence of full implementation.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**ABOVE & BEYOND BADGE:**
This badge recognizes efforts that exceed full implementation.
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 Wisconsin’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.

ADOPITION IMPLEMENTATION

15 out of 18

STATE POLICY ADOPTION

REFERENCE MATERIALS

- 2023 Wisconsin Act 20
- Wisconsin DPI, Wisconsin Reads
Science of Reading (SOR) Training

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- By July 1, 2025, Wisconsin WILL require all Kindergarten–3rd grade teachers to begin a reading training program. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin HAS adopted science of reading training for educators. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ; The Center for Effective Reading Instruction, Accredited Independent Teacher Training Programs)
- By July 1, 2025, Wisconsin WILL require administrators, including district reading specialists and principals for Kindergarten–3rd grade, to complete a reading training, offered by the Leadership in Literacy Institute or a provider that meets specific requirements. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin HAS adopted science of reading training for administrators. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.
Full implementation of this principle requires the following: Literacy coaches are trained in the science of reading and are assigned to each elementary school to provide job-embedded professional development and coaching to K–3 teachers.

Evidence/Guidance

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

- Wisconsin policy established in 2023 DOES create a literacy coaching program to improve literacy outcomes in the state.
- Wisconsin policy DOES require individuals serving as literacy coaches to have knowledge and expertise in science-based early literacy instruction.
- Wisconsin policy DOES assign literacy coaches to schools and districts based on scores on the standardized reading tests and those schools that request a coach.
- Wisconsin DOES require a minimum of 3 coaches in each CESA region and a minimum of 2 coaches in a private school. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin DOES provide funding through 2025–2026 for early literacy coaches. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin policy DOES require each school district to employ a reading specialist certified by the department to coordinate a comprehensive reading curriculum for Kindergarten–12th grade.

Consideration(s) for Strengthening Policy

- Wisconsin 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:**

- Wisconsin policy DOES require all educator preparation programs to demonstrate that it provides instruction that prepares teachers to teach reading and language arts using science-based early reading instruction.

- Wisconsin policy DOES specify that all educator preparation programs must demonstrate that it does NOT provide instruction on teaching reading and language arts that incorporates three-cueing.

- Wisconsin DOES have standards for educator preparation programs relating to reading; however, the standards DO NOT address all core components of scientifically based reading instruction. ([NCTQ, Wisconsin Summary 2023](#))

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY**

- Wisconsin should further ensure EPP required coursework includes evidence-based literacy instruction, how to administer reading assessments, and how to identify students with reading difficulties, such as dyslexia.
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:


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:

- Wisconsin DOES provide direct funding specifically to support state and/or local implementation of early literacy fundamental principles. These include:
  - Funding for literacy programs
  - Funding for early literacy assessments
  - Funding for literacy coaches (through 2025–2026)

- Wisconsin policy DOES provide for a maximum reimbursement grant of 50% of the purchase price of early literacy instructional materials appearing on the state’s recommended list (currently under development) with the caveat that these grants will also be prorated based on the number of districts that apply. Funding is available until 2026.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Wisconsin should determine the adequate funding level to ensure implementation of the fundamental principles are fully funded.
Universal Reading Screener

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Beginning in 2024–2025, Wisconsin WILL require a universal reading screener to be administered to students in Kindergarten–3rd grade, three times per year. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Wisconsin policy WILL require each school board and the operator of each independent charter school to annually assess the early literacy skills of each pupil enrolled in four-year-old Kindergarten in the school district or in the independent charter school at least two times during the school year using a fundamental skills screening assessment selected by the department.

• Wisconsin IS working on approving a single reading readiness screener that meets the requirements in policy. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.
Screener 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 a minimum, administered to all students at the end of Kindergarten and the beginning of 1st and 2nd grade.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Beginning in 2024–2025, Wisconsin WILL require schools to administer diagnostic reading assessments for any student scoring below the 25th percentile of the reading readiness screener within 10 days. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Beginning in 2024–2025, Wisconsin WILL require schools to administer diagnostic reading assessments if a child has characteristics of dyslexia and a parent or teacher requests the diagnostic reading assessment – this must occur within 20 days of the request. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Wisconsin WILL publish and maintain a list of diagnostic assessments, as recommended by the curriculum council. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Wisconsin WILL require diagnostic reading assessments to assess the following skills, as developmentally appropriate: rapid naming, phonological awareness, word recognition, spelling, vocabulary, listening comprehension, oral reading fluency, and reading comprehension. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

RESOURCES

• Wisconsin DPI, Informational Guidebook on Dyslexia and Related Conditions

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Wisconsin 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, not just to those students identified as at risk on the universal reading screener.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Beginning in 2024–2025, Wisconsin WILL require districts to notify parents with the results of the reading readiness screener no later than 15 days after the assessment is scored.  
  ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](https://www.dpi.wi.gov/act20faq))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.
District Adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

Full implementation of this principle requires the following: 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 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:

- Wisconsin DOES require all schools to provide science-based early literacy instruction in both universal and intervention settings. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin policy DOES require the council on early literacy curricula to recommend literacy curricula and instructional materials for use in Kindergarten–3rd grade.
- Wisconsin HAS requested submissions for early literacy instructional materials for review and recommendation to the DPI with a goal of creating a recommended list of early literacy instructional materials. (Wisconsin DPI, Wisconsin Reads)
- Wisconsin DOES NOT require districts to use the materials from the early literacy curricula lists. School boards will retain authority to select the early literacy instructional materials, so long as they meet the definition of science-based early literacy instruction. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin DOES require school districts to post an early literacy remediation plan that includes the name of the reading diagnostic assessment the district uses, the reading interventions used to address dyslexia, how the school district monitors student progress during interventions, including tools, and a description of how the district uses assessment results to evaluate early literacy instruction, as well as a description of the parent notification policy. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Wisconsin 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.
- Wisconsin should further require districts to post their adopted materials on the district website.
Elimination of Three-Cueing Instructional Materials

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Wisconsin policy DOES prohibit literacy coaches from using or promoting instruction that includes three-cueing.
- Wisconsin policy from 2023 DOES specify that all educator preparation programs must demonstrate that it does NOT provide instruction on teaching reading and language arts that incorporates three-cueing.
- Wisconsin DOES provide guidance on the definition of three-cueing and the requirements of policy relating to the prohibition on three-cueing. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](https://www.dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/2023-03/Act.20.FAQ.pdf))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Wisconsin DOES require any K–3 student scoring below the 25th percentile on the reading readiness screener (implemented in 2024–2025) to receive a personal reading plan. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Wisconsin policy WILL require that 1) if the pupil is identified as at-risk based on the first universal screening assessment or based on a diagnostic assessment, the personal reading plan must be created no later than the third Friday of November, and 2) if the pupil is identified as at-risk based on the second or third universal screening assessment or based on a diagnostic assessment, the personal reading plan must be created within 10 days after the applicable screening assessment is administered.

• Wisconsin DOES require schools to provide a copy of the personal reading plan to parents and provide progress updates after 10 weeks. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

• Wisconsin DOES require schools to monitor student reading development progress weekly. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.
Regularly Monitor Student Progress

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL
FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Wisconsin HAS established a framework for an equitable multi-level system of supports. (Wisconsin DPI, Wisconsin’s Framework for Equitable Multi-Level Systems of Supports)
- Wisconsin DOES require any K–3 student scoring below the 25th percentile on the reading readiness screener (implemented in 2024–2025) to receive a personal reading plan. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin DOES require schools to monitor student reading development progress weekly. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

At this time, we have no considerations for strengthening this principle.
Evidence-Based Interventions

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires school districts to target students’ needs by adopting evidence-based interventions grounded in the science of reading and may provide guidance in the selection of the interventions. Interventions are provided before, during, or after school.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Wisconsin DOES require interventions to be evidence-based. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](https://www.dpi.wi.gov/learn/policies/act-20-faq))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Wisconsin 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.
IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

PARTIAL IMPLEMENTATION

The state requires districts to offer summer reading camps to students at risk of reading failure to remEDIATE learning loss and/or build reading skills.

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

- Wisconsin 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.
- Wisconsin policy DOES provide for a summer reading program as a requirement for students promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> grade who had personal reading plans during 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and who did not complete the personal reading plan.

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Wisconsin 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.
- Wisconsin should further require all staff at summer reading camps to be trained in the science of reading.
Parent Read-At-Home Plan

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION

EVIDENCE/GUIDANCE

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

• Wisconsin DOES require any K–3 student scoring below the 25th percentile on the reading readiness screener (implemented in 2024–2025) to receive a personal reading plan, which must include strategies the student’s parent can use at home to help the student achieve grade-level literacy skills. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

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

• By July 1, 2025, Wisconsin WILL NOT require schools to retain 3rd grade students based on reading assessment scores. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](#))

• Wisconsin DOES require DPI to create a model policy for promoting students from 3rd to 4th grade that includes reading achievement criteria. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](#))

• Wisconsin DOES require each school district to adopt and implement their own policy for promotion. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](#))

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

• Wisconsin should expand policy to require that a student who is unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills on the state test-based options 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:

- By July 1, 2025, Wisconsin WILL NOT require schools to retain 3rd grade students based on reading assessment scores. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](#))

- Wisconsin WILL require certain interventions for 3rd grade students promoted to 4th grade while still on a personal reading plan, including providing the student with intensive instructional services, progress monitoring, and supports; providing the student with an intensive summer reading program each summer until the student scores at grade-level in reading on a summative assessment; and notifying the parent that the child has not exited the personal reading plan with a description of the services and supports that will be provided. ([Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ](#))

**CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY**

- Wisconsin 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 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.
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:

- By July 1, 2025, Wisconsin WILL NOT require schools to retain 3rd grade students based on reading assessment scores. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)
- Wisconsin WILL provide for good cause exceptions for intensive interventions of students in 4th grade or above, including exceptions for children identified as limited English proficient, children who score proficient in reading on an alternative standardized assessment, children with an IEP, and children who receive intensive interventions and were previously retained. (Wisconsin DPI, Act 20 FAQ)

CONSIDERATION(S) FOR STRENGTHENING POLICY

- Wisconsin 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.