

### Your Question:

You asked about literacy in pre-kindergarten through third grade, with a focus on alignment, evidence of results and assessment.

### Our Response:

This response looks at some research on third grade reading, state legislation, the success states have had and at assessment.

#### K-3 Literacy Research and State Legislation

Students not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are [four times more likely to not graduate high school than proficient readers](#). Often, students living in poverty and other at-risk groups experience literacy gaps [before kindergarten entry](#).

Several states have enacted legislation to develop third grade reading retention requirements, in response to the research and [stagnant literacy scores for fourth graders in the United States](#). These states have had varying levels of success, with the following states demonstrating some significant gains ([see pages 24-28 of this resource](#) for a list of all states with retention legislation): Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana and Minnesota — with [Mississippi making significant growth in recent years](#). Recently, the Council of Chief State School Officers released [a comprehensive report](#) on the ideal components of such laws. See below for a screenshot:

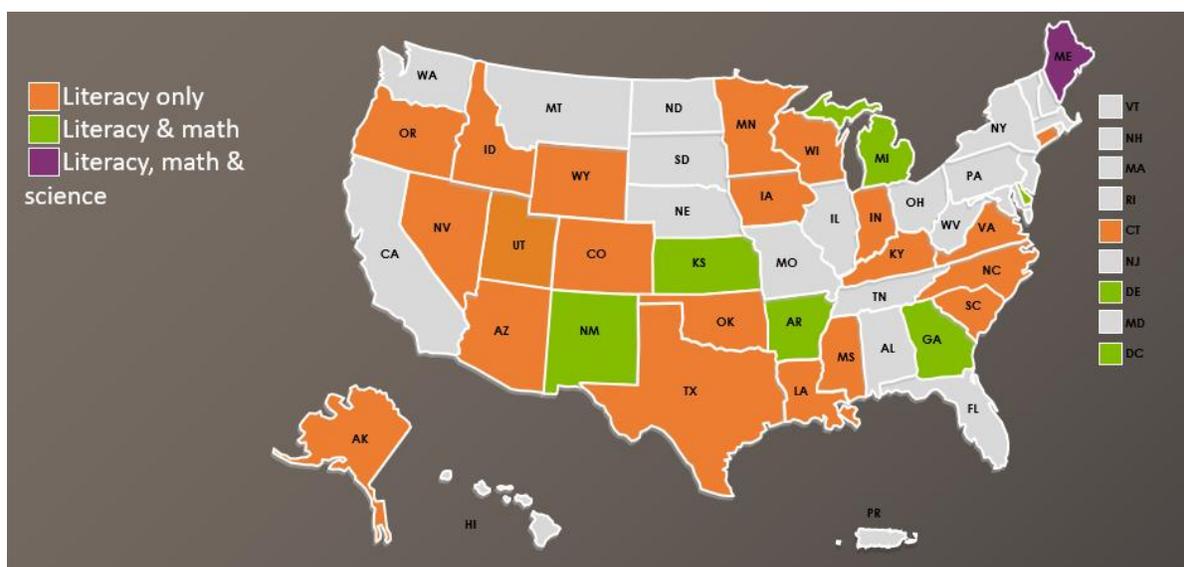
- **Prevention**
  - Science of reading-aligned (curricula, teacher licensing and professional development)
  - Plans, goals and reporting (at school-, district- and/or state-levels)
  - Statewide action (monitoring local data, goal setting, extra funds and supports for low-performing schools)
- **Intervention**
  - Screening (to identify struggling students beginning at pre-K)
  - Individual reading plans (for identified students)
  - Intervention strategies (at school- or district-level, such as summer reading programs, tutoring or curriculum changes)
  - Parental notification and involvement (for identified students)
- **Retention**
  - Statewide standard for retention (based on statewide assessments or other measures)
  - Local officials role in retention decision (e.g. superintendent, principal, teacher, reading specialist)
  - Exemptions (alternative routes to demonstrate proficiency prior to retention)
  - Post-retention (interventions or changes in student's outcomes?)

Education Commission of the States staff created the following table that maps out several states' laws and what areas they meet/don't meet to provide further examples:

Criteria	Arizona (2015)	Indiana (2012)	Mississippi (2015)	Tennessee (2013)	North Carolina (2013)	Florida (2011)
<b>Prevention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence-based Reading Instruction</li> <li>District Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science of Reading</li> <li>School Reading Plans</li> <li>Teacher PD</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science of Reading</li> <li>School Reading Plans</li> <li>State Support to Districts</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Science of Reading</li> <li>State Plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence-based Instruction</li> <li>Annual State Report</li> </ul>
<b>Intervention</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Screener Pre-K to 3</li> <li>LEA Reporting of Screening Data for Students K-3</li> <li>Required Intervention</li> <li>Parental Notification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K-3 Screener</li> <li>Individual Intervention</li> <li>Parental Notification and Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K-3 screener may be given</li> <li>Individual Intervention</li> <li>Parental Notification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Level Intervention beginning in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade</li> <li>Department of Education assistance in intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kindergarten Entry Assessment</li> <li>K-3 screener</li> <li>Required Intervention</li> <li>Parental Notification (Grades 1 and 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K-3 Screening and Diagnostic Assessments and Practice</li> <li>Intervention for Students with Substantial Deficiencies</li> <li>Parental Notification</li> <li>State Support</li> </ul>
<b>Retention</b> <small>www.ecs.org</small>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Performance</li> <li>Exemptions</li> <li>Alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Performance</li> <li>Exemptions</li> <li>Alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Performance</li> <li>Exemptions</li> <li>Alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Results <u>OR</u> Inability to Meet Standards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Performance</li> <li>Exemptions</li> <li>Alternatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on Assessment Performance</li> <li>Exemptions</li> <li>Alternatives</li> </ul>

### K-3 Assessment

In our initial scan of alignment of P-3 literacy, states have typically only created legislation/statute in the K-3 space, as pre-kindergarten typically falls under a different jurisdiction (outside of K-12). Below is a map based on an [Education Commission of the States 50-State Comparison on K-3 Assessments](#). There are 21 states that focus on K-2 literacy, with 6 states and the District of Columbia adding math (as [early numeracy is a significant predictor of later academic success](#), even more predictive than early literacy skills) and Maine adding science as well.



To dive into K-3 assessment more deeply, several states have been taking a comprehensive look at their systems:

Education Commission of the States strives to respond to information requests within 24 hours. This document reflects our best efforts but it may not reflect exhaustive research. Please let us know if you would like a more comprehensive response. Our staff is also available to provide unbiased advice on policy plans, consult on proposed legislation and testify at legislative hearings as third-party experts.

- Alabama.** 2019 HB 388 created the [Alabama Literacy Act](#), a comprehensive bill that will develop a K-3 literacy approach that includes professional development in literacy instruction, coaching, assessment and more. This bill is being phased in currently and will require retention for third graders not reading proficiently, starting with the 2021-2022 school year. It also created an interim committee to support its development. In a presentation to this group, I discussed what criteria should be considered for their literacy screening in K-3 grades (to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes). See screenshot below:

Criteria	Definitions
Classification Accuracy	Extent to which a screening tool is able to accurately classify students into at risk/not at risk categories
Generalizability	Extent to which results generated from one population can be applied to another population (i.e. larger, more representative samples)
Reliability	Consistency across administrations, times and forms
Validity	Does the assessment measure what it is intended to measure?
Disaggregated Reliability, Validity and Classification for Diverse Populations	Data are disaggregated and reported separately for specific sub-groups (e.g. English learners, students from low-income families)

The points above, when met, ensure that literacy screening tools are accurate, valid and reliable and can be trusted. Alabama is in the process of selecting diagnostic assessments (a more in-depth assessment used to determine eligibility for specialized intervention/programming) and formative assessments (ongoing assessments used to inform instruction) for K-3.

- Connecticut.** The Connecticut Department of Education has developed [a comprehensive list](#) of approved, research-based K-3 screening assessments. This may be helpful in unpacking what these screeners should be looking for and which companies meet the mark.
- Michigan.** The 2019-2020 school year marks the beginning of Michigan’s third grade retention law. To prepare teachers, principals, coaches and other district leaders, the Michigan Department of Education prepared [an implementation guide](#), with FAQs, strategies for family engagement and more.
- Mississippi.** Mississippi has seen recent success in fourth grade literacy scores, as mentioned earlier. This may be partially attributed to the state’s transparent and well-outreached resources for teachers and others on selecting and using K-3 literacy assessment tools. See two screenshots below as examples:

REQUIRED SCREENERS AND ASSESSMENTS Grades PK-3					
Screeners	PK	K	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Universal Screener		✓	✓	✓	✓
Dyslexia Screener		✓	✓		
Brigance	✓				
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment	✓	✓			
Mississippi Academic Assessment Program					✓

DOMAIN	KINDERGARTEN	1ST GRADE	2ND GRADE	3RD GRADE
Phonological / Phonemic Awareness	Required	Required	n/a	n/a
Letter Naming Fluency	Required	Required	n/a	n/a
Phonics	Required	Required	Required	Required
Word Recognition Fluency	<i>Recommended</i>	Required	Required	Required
Listening Comprehension	<i>Recommended</i>	n/a	n/a	n/a
Reading Comprehension	n/a	Required	Required	Required
Oral Reading Fluency	n/a	Required (mid-year)	Required	Required
Vocabulary	<i>Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended</i>	<i>Recommended</i>

I realize this is a lot of information, but the key takeaway when considering how to develop improved P-3 literacy systems is to begin by taking a look at what's in place in terms of state legislation. Education Commission of the States is more than happy to continue this conversation to support state efforts; please reach out to let us know how we can further support.