

Your Question:

What policy changes have states/countries made to certification and licensure which have resulted in overall gains in literacy, or successful impacts for students who are low-income, English learners or other traditionally under-served populations?

Our Response:

While many states are crafting policies to improve literacy instruction, it is difficult to directly connect these policy changes with student outcomes. However, there is a growing body of research around best practices in pre-service educator certification requirements and in-service professional development to promote robust literacy instruction. Below are some examples of state strategies in these policy areas and some additional resources that may be of interest.

Pre-Service Educator Certification

- **Arkansas** is one of [eight states](#) to require candidates for elementary education or special education licensure to pass the Foundations of Reading assessment, with a focus on the components of beginning reading instruction based on the science of reading.
- All applicants for initial **Idaho** K-12 certification must demonstrate competency in literacy instruction through an assessment administered by an accredited public higher education institution. The assessment must measure teaching skills and knowledge congruent with current research on best literacy practices for elementary or secondary students (dependent upon level of certification) and English language learners.
- Candidates seeking an [early childhood license](#) in **Ohio** for pre-k through third grade must successfully complete at least six semester hours of coursework in the teaching of reading, including at least one separate course of at least three semester hours in the teaching of phonics in the context of reading, writing and spelling.
- In **West Virginia**, each elementary education teacher preparation program must contain a minimum of nine hours of reading, including a focus on the five essential components of reading (i.e., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension) as well as how to assess students' reading ability and how to identify and correct reading difficulties.

In-Service Educator Professional Development

- The **Alabama Reading Initiative** requires in-service elementary teachers to participate in the following professional learning activities: mentoring and job shadowing with master teachers; job-embedded, classroom-based coaching in the teaching of reading; curricula and resources and more.
- Beginning in the 2021-22 school year, K-3 teachers in **Colorado** must complete evidence-based training in reading instruction. There is an [early literacy grant](#) program to provide money to local education providers to implement literacy support and intervention instruction programs, including professional development programs to assist students in K-3 to achieve reading competency.

- In **Michigan**, districts can [apply for funds](#) to support a literacy coach to assist in designing instruction and interventions; up to 5% of grant funds awarded to districts to improve literacy may be used for research-based professional development programs approved by the state education agency, and an additional 5% may be used for training in administering diagnostic screenings and interpreting assessment data.
- In-service training in **Mississippi** includes an emphasis on intensive, comprehensive and researched-based reading methods for all licensed K-3 teachers in public school districts. The education may be accomplished through self-review of suitable intensive, comprehensive and researched-based reading materials. Subject to appropriations, low-performing schools or districts may use data coaches to determine the effectiveness of data-focused professional development to help teachers and district leaders build skills in using data to inform instruction.

Additional Resources

- [Education Commission of the States' 50-State Comparison: State K-3 Policies](#) – this recently updated database contains information about state policies on educator training, prevention and intervention strategies, social and emotional and mental health supports, and more.
- [State Teacher Policy Database](#) – the National Council on Teacher Quality maintains this database, which contains information on many state educator policies including reading instruction.
- [Early Literacy Symposium](#) – earlier this year, the **Wisconsin** Legislature hosted a series of virtual study committee meetings to give an overview on the current landscape of early literacy research and policies.