

Your Question:

You asked for examples of state approaches to address student literacy.

Our Response:

In recent years, many states have enacted policies intended to improve literacy outcomes for students. These policies cover a wide range of approaches along the [continuum of prevention and intervention](#), including the development and adoption of high-quality curricula, requiring pre-service educator candidates to complete coursework and pass a reading instruction assessment prior to licensure, and professional learning for in-service educators and administrators. Below is an overview of each approach and state examples of similar policies, as well as a comparison table of states by policy area.

Literacy Curriculum Requirements

Several states have elected to create specific requirements for curricula and instructional materials related to literacy instruction. We identified **at least eight states** with policies related to literacy curricula; some require districts to adopt a curriculum from a state-approved list, while others only specify the requirements or standards around evidence- or science-based literacy instruction with which local districts must comply in their curricula. Some of these policies are recently enacted and have not taken effect. Here are descriptions of each state's policy:

- The **Alabama [Literacy Act](#)**, as amended in 2022, requires local districts to adopt a comprehensive core reading program from a list approved by the state's Literacy Task Force. This requirement goes into effect in the 2024-25 school year.
- **Arizona's [Move on When Reading](#)** program was implemented in 2013 and has undergone several amendments and revisions. Current law requires districts to adopt evidence-based literacy curricula for K-3 students and submit literacy plans to the state education agency. The state provides an annual appropriation to support implementation, and the agency is required to provide implementation guidance.
- The **Arkansas [Right to Read Act](#)**, as amended in 2019, requires the state education agency to provide a list of approved curricula and instructional materials grounded in the science of reading. Local districts must select a curriculum program from the approved list, unless they submit an alternative program to the agency supported by evidence-based research.
- **Colorado [S.B. 199](#)** (2019) requires reading curricula to be designed around teaching the "foundational reading skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency including oral skills, and reading comprehension." The bill outlines a handful of other reading instruction requirements and encourages local education providers to partner with public libraries to enhance literacy instruction.
- **Connecticut [S.B. 1202](#)** (2021) established the [Center for Literacy Research and Reading Success](#) tasked with providing schools and districts with resources and support consistent with the science of reading. By July 2022, the center must identify a list of at least five recommended literacy curricula, and local boards must adopt one by July 2023.
- **North Carolina [S.B. 387](#)** (2021) requires the state board of education to develop literacy instruction standards and a model literacy implementation plan aligned with the science of reading by June 2022. Local

districts must evaluate their literacy curricula and align it to the board standards, then submit a report to the state education agency for review. All modified literacy curricula must be in place by the 2024-25 school year.

- **Texas [H.B. 3](#)** (2019) requires school districts to “provide for the use of a phonics curriculum that uses systematic direct instruction in kindergarten through third grade to ensure all students obtain necessary early literacy skills.” The bill also requires targeted professional development aligned with districts’ literacy plans and requires K-6 teachers to demonstrate proficiency in the science of teaching reading.
- **Virginia [S.B. 616](#)** (2022) requires the department of education to develop a list of evidence-based literacy curricula and intervention programs to be approved by the state board of education. Local school boards must develop a literacy plan that uses curricula and programs from the list developed by the department, unless the department approves an alternate program consistent with evidence-based literacy instruction. This bill goes into effect in the 2024-25 school year.

Pre-Service Educator Requirements

Many states have taken steps to ensure that educators receive sufficient preparation in literacy instruction prior to entering the classroom. This may include requiring coursework specific to evidence-based literacy concepts grounded in the science of reading, as well as requiring candidates to pass a test demonstrating knowledge of such concepts as a condition of licensure.

Based on statutes and administrative regulations from our [50-State Comparison on K-3 Policies](#) and enactments from the most recent legislative sessions, we identified **at least 21 states** that require coursework specific to evidence-based literacy concepts grounded in the science of reading for all teachers of certain grade levels. As of 2021, the National Council on Teacher Quality identified [at least 21 states](#) that require educator candidates to pass a test that measures knowledge of the science of reading. Of those states, eight require candidates to pass the [Foundations of Reading Test](#). Here are examples of these policies:

- **Arkansas [S.B. 328](#)** (2017) required candidates for elementary education or special education licensure to pass the Foundations of Reading assessment, with a focus on “the acquisition of knowledge of essential components of beginning reading instruction based on the science of reading.”
- **Florida [administrative law](#)** requires educator preparation programs to include “scientifically researched and evidence-based reading instructional strategies appropriate to the candidate’s teacher preparation program area” in their curricula. These curricula must be aligned with the state’s [Reading Endorsement Competencies](#).
- **Kentucky [S.B. 9](#)** (2022) requires teacher preparation programs for early childhood or elementary education to provide evidence-based reading instructional programming related to reading instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. By 2024-25, the bill requires all ECE or elementary teachers seeking certification to pass an exam on reading instruction.
- **North Carolina [S.B. 387](#)** (2021) codified the definition of “Science of Reading” using concepts and terminology from the pillars of reading — including phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency and vocabulary — and required coursework in the Science of Reading for elementary educator preparation programs.
- **West Virginia [administrative law](#)** requires each elementary education teacher preparation program to contain “a minimum of 9 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

Another strategy states use to bolster educator expertise in literacy instruction is requiring professional development for all in-service educators serving certain grades. Based on statutes and administrative regulations from our [50-State Comparison on K-3 Policies](#) and enactments from the most recent legislative sessions, we identified **at least 12 states** with these policies. Here are examples:

- **Mississippi [code](#)** requires in-service training in comprehensive, research-based reading methods for all public K-3 teachers.
- **Nevada [administrative law](#)** requires K-4 teachers to complete professional development in evidence-based practices for literacy instruction and intervention, screening and identification of dyslexia and other reading disabilities, and the use of assessment and data to improve literacy instruction.
- The **South Carolina [Read to Succeed Act](#)** requires all early childhood and elementary education teachers to earn a literacy add-on endorsement within 10 years of certification by taking at least two courses or six credit hours every five years in coursework approved by the state agency that includes foundations, assessment and instructional strategies. Middle and secondary teachers must complete at least one course within five years of certification.
- The **Tennessee [Literacy Success Act](#)** (2021) requires the department of education to develop at least one professional development course on foundational literacy skills instruction that is available at no cost. By 2023, all K-5 teachers must complete at least one such course.
- **Utah [S.B. 127](#)** (2022) requires all K-3 teachers and elementary principals to complete an early literacy professional learning opportunity by 2025. It also requires districts to apply for grant funding to provide the required training.

State Policy Comparison

State	Curriculum Development or Adoption	Pre-Service Coursework	Testing for Licensure	In-Service Professional Development
Alabama	X		X	X
Alaska			X	
Arizona	X	X		X
Arkansas	X	X	X	X
California		X	X	
Colorado	X		X	X
Connecticut	X	X	X	
Delaware		X		
Florida		X	X	
Georgia		X		
Indiana		X		
Kentucky		X		X
Louisiana		X		
Maryland		X	X	
Michigan		X	X	
Minnesota			X	

Mississippi			X	X
Missouri		X		
Nevada				X
New Hampshire			X	
New Mexico			X	
North Carolina	X	X	X	X
Ohio		X	X	
Oklahoma			X	
South Carolina		X		X
Tennessee		X	X	X
Texas	X		X	
Utah		X		X
Virginia	X	X	X	
West Virginia		X	X	
Wisconsin		X	X	
Wyoming				X

Related Resources

- [ECS 50-State Comparison: State K-3 Policies](#) – This database contains information about state literacy policies in educator training, prevention and intervention strategies, and assessments.
- [More States Are Making the ‘Science of Reading’ a Policy Priority](#) – Education Week, October 2021.