Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

**TO:** Members of the Education Policy Committee

**FROM:** Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools

**DATE:** October 13, 2026

**SUBJECT:** PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy
**Request to Adopt**

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

**Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness**
**Goal: Every student graduates high school college and career ready.**
Outcome:

3.A Increase the percentage of grade 3 students scoring proficient in reading.

3.B. Increase the percentage of grades 3-8 students scoring proficient in reading.

3.H Increase the percentage of students demonstrating growth on statewide assessments at each grade level and in each student group.

**Purpose**

The Maryland PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy serves as a transformative lever for change across our state's educational landscape, establishing a clear, unified trajectory toward lifelong reading success for every student. Rooted in an unyielding commitment to evidence-based instruction and the Science of Reading, this policy establishes a clear literacy vision while empowering educators through a robust system of support, high-quality instructional materials, and actionable guidance. It institutes a coherent assessment system designed to identify reading difficulties early and mobilize targeted, proactive interventions. Crucially, the policy elevates families as essential partners in their child's literacy journey through transparent communication and collaborative engagement. Together, these structures build an equitable foundation that prepares all learners to thrive, an urgent imperative given the literacy challenges facing Maryland today.

The purpose of the Maryland Comprehensive Literacy Policy is to ensure a coherent, statewide approach to literacy development from PreK through grade 12 by aligning evidence-based instruction, high-quality materials, and targeted supports across all grade bands. This policy expands Maryland's PreK–3 Early Literacy Policy to establish consistent expectations and guidance for literacy teaching and learning in grades 4–12, ensuring every student has access to strong instruction that builds proficiency, deepens comprehension, and supports success in college and career by setting a strong literacy foundation that is sustained for all students to keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, writing, and academic demands.

**Background**

Since 2013, Maryland students' reading performance fell from third to twentieth (2024 scores) in the nation on the Grade 4 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment and from sixth to twenty-first nationally on the Grade 8 NAEP Reading Assessment. The overall proficiency score for grades 3-8 and 10 on the 2024-2025 English Language Arts Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) was 50.8% with student group scores below the composite average for multilingual learners (11.1%), students with disabilities (14.6%), Hispanic (33.7%), economically disadvantaged (34.5%), Black (39.4%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (44.9%), and males (46.5%) while other subgroups performed above average including Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (54.7%), females (55.2%), two or more races (59.4%), White (67.9%), and Asian (75.3%). This alarming gap underscores the urgent need to comprehensively address reading proficiency at all grade levels, particularly for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, those living in poverty, and students of color.

In January 2024, the Maryland State Board of Education tasked the State Superintendent of Schools with drafting a comprehensive literacy policy aligned with the Science of Reading for the Board's approval. As a result, the Maryland State Department of Education's Literacy Branch developed the Comprehensive PreK-3 Literacy Policy. After receiving and applying substantial feedback from local education agencies, community members, and literacy advocacy groups, the policy was approved by the Maryland State Board of Education in October 2024.

The Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy is designed to promote instructional equity, enhance literacy outcomes, and build a strong foundation for future success. The Maryland State Department of Education recognizes that the policy is evolving to become more comprehensive to meet the diverse needs of all Maryland students and is committed to providing updates on policy implementation and receiving feedback to better serve local education agencies through implementation.

**Executive Summary**

Provide an overview of the public comments received on the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy regarding the overall restructuring, the timeline, the consideration of special populations, the content, and general comments.

**Action**

The Maryland State Department of Education requests the adoption of the Maryland PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy.

**Attachments**

PreK-12 Literacy Policy_Redlined Copy

PreK-12 Literacy Policy_Clean Copy

PreK-12 Literacy Policy_EPC Slide Deck

PreK-12 Literacy Policy_Public Comment Summary

PreK-12 Literacy Policy_Public Comment

Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# Comprehensive PreK-~~3~~ 12 Literacy Policy

# Version 3

Division of Instructional Programs/Office of Literacy Programs and Initiatives

~~Fall 2024~~ August 2026

## MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.**
State Superintendent of Schools

~~**Deann Collins, Ed.D.**~~
~~Deputy State Superintendent~~
~~Office of Teaching and Learning~~

**Tenette Smith, Ed.D.**
~~Executive Director~~
~~Literacy Programs and Initiatives~~
**Chief Academic Officer**
**Office of Teaching and Learning**

**Wes Moore**
Governor

## MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President

**James C. Bell, Jr., Ed.D., Vice President**

~~Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang, MSN, PNP, RN-BC~~

~~Clarence C. Crawford (President Emeritus)~~

~~Abhiram Gaddam (Student Member)~~

**Lorena Wu, Student Member**

~~Susan J. Getty, Ed.D.~~

**James C. Bell, Jr., Ed.D.**

**Dr. Peggy Carr**

**Alverne "Chet" Chesterfield**

Kenny Clash

Monica Goldson, Ed.D..

Nick Greer

Dr. Irma E. Johnson

**Marcy Leonard**

Dr. Kim Lewis

~~Dr. Joan Mele-McCarthy, D.A., CCC-SLP~~

~~Rachel L. McCusker~~

Xiomara V. Medina, M.Ed.

**Nicole Murray-Lewis**

Samir Paul, Esq.

# Acknowledgments

**A sincere appreciation is offered to the following individuals who contributed time and expertise to develop this policy. Their contribution will serve the Maryland State Department of Education and the state's local education agencies in their collaborative effects to strengthen literacy outcomes for all Maryland students.**

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, OFFICE OF LITERACY PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

**Tenette Smith, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer, Office of Teaching and Learning**

**Elise Brown, Ph.D., Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Instructional Programs**

**Jill Snell, Executive Director, Literacy Programs and Initiatives**

**Laura Aberg, Ed.D. Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives**

**Meg Kinlaw, Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives**

**Suzanne Tirado, Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives**

**Jennifer Wojcik, Executive Director, Systems of Instructional Coherence**

**Christine Fulton, Director of High-Quality Instructional Materials**

**Teresa Timmons-Parrott, Ed.D., Director, Multilingual Learners and World Languages**

**Tara Downes, Ed.D., Director, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support**

Division of College and Career Pathways

**Anthony Vargas, Director, Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs**

**Rita Brandunas, Coordinator, Career Counseling**

**Kysha Egungbemi, Specialist, Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs**

Division of Special Education

**Jennifer Masoodi, J.D., Ph.D, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education**

**Molly Conner, Director, Performance Support and Technical Assistance**

**Liz Zogby, Consultant**

Office of Early Childhood

**Nykia Washington, Ed.D., Program Manager, Pre-Kindergarten and Mixed Delivery**

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Division of Assessment and Accountability

**Emily Oliver, Project Manager, Early Childhood Assessment**

Division of Educator Effectiveness

**Kelly Meadows, Assistant State Superintendent, Educator Effectiveness**

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments ..... 4

Document Control Information ..... 7

PreK-12 Policy Overview ..... 8

~~II.~~ Early Literacy PreK-3 ..... 17

~~III.~~ II. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8 ..... 33

IV. Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12 ..... 47

VII. References ..... 59

Version History ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

# Document Control Information

| | |
|---|---|
| Title: | Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy |
| File Name: | Comprehensive Literacy Policy_Clean Copy.pdf |

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

| Document Version | Date | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | October 2024 | PreK-3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education |
| 2.0 | January 2026 | Draft Adolescent Policy presented to the Maryland State Board of Education and stakeholder feedback was collected |
| 3.0 | October 2026 | PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education |

# PreK-12 Policy Overview

## A. PURPOSE

**The Maryland PreK–12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy serves as a transformative lever for change across our state's educational landscape, establishing a clear, unified trajectory toward lifelong reading success for every student. Rooted in an unyielding commitment to evidence-based instruction and the Science of Reading, this policy establishes a clear literacy vision while empowering educators through a robust system of support, high-quality instructional materials, and actionable guidance. It institutes a coherent assessment system designed to identify reading difficulties early and mobilize targeted, proactive interventions. Crucially, the policy elevates families as essential partners in their child's literacy journey through transparent communication and collaborative engagement. Together, these structures build an equitable foundation that prepares all learners to thrive, an urgent imperative given the literacy challenges facing Maryland today.**

**Since 2013, Maryland students' reading performance fell from third to twentieth (2024 scores) in the nation on the Grade 4 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment and from sixth to twenty-first nationally on the Grade 8 NAEP Reading Assessment. The overall proficiency score for grades 3-8 and 10 on the 2024-2025 English Language Arts Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) was 50.8% with student group scores below the composite average for multilingual learners (11.1%), students with disabilities (14.6%), Hispanic (33.7%), economically disadvantaged (34.5%), Black (39.4%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (44.9%), and males (46.5%) while other subgroups performed above average including Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (54.7%), females (55.2%), two or more races (59.4%), White (67.9%), and Asian (75.3%). This alarming gap underscores the urgent need to comprehensively address reading proficiency at all grade levels, particularly for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, those living in poverty, and students of color.**

**The purpose of the Maryland Comprehensive Literacy Policy is to ensure a coherent, statewide approach to literacy development from PreK through grade 12 by aligning evidence-based instruction, high-quality materials, and targeted supports across all grade bands. This policy expands Maryland's PreK–3 Early Literacy Policy to establish consistent expectations and guidance for literacy teaching and learning in grades 4–12, ensuring every student has access to strong instruction that builds proficiency, deepens comprehension, and supports success in college and career** ~~college, career, and community~~ **by setting a strong literacy foundation that is sustained for all students to keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, writing, and academic demands.**

## B. POLICY DEFINITIONS

**a. Advanced Decoding is the ability to read complex, multisyllabic words by analyzing syllable patterns, structural units (prefixes, suffixes, roots), etymology (word origin), and complex phonemic patterns (vowel teams, diphthongs). It transitions readers from sound-by-sound decoding to recognizing larger word parts, building reading automaticity, fluency, and vocabulary (Wang, et al., 2024).**

**b. Advanced Learners are students who demonstrate, or show the potential to perform at, remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to students of similar age, experience, or environment. They may demonstrate advanced performance or potential in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas; leadership; or specific academic fields. Advanced learners require and benefit from appropriately rigorous, challenging, and advanced learning opportunities that recognize their abilities, develop their potential, and promote continued growth and achievement.**

**c. At-risk** indicates an elevated likelihood of not meeting grade-level literacy expectations without additional support.

**~~d.~~ Content-Area Instruction, also referred to as Tier 1 or core instruction, high-quality, evidence-based, grade-level classroom instruction provided to all students. It is the teaching of specific academic subjects using targeted methods to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and subject-specific comprehension and writing in the content area.**

**e. Data-informed decision making is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative data alongside qualitative data.**

**f. Diagnostic, also referred to as diagnostic survey (COMAR 13A.03.08), means an assessment tool that identifies areas of need within a student's mastery of reading skills, foundational skills, or both to guide intervention.**

**g. Disciplinary Literacy refers to the habits of mind, routines and practices, texts (and how those texts are created and used), and discourses of each content area (Sedita, 2024a).**

**h. Dyslexia** ~~is a type of specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is a word level reading disorder that affects a student's ability to read text accurately and/or fluently. Dyslexia occurs in individuals who demonstrate difficulties in one or more of the following cognitive processing areas: phonological processing, working memory, rapid naming, and processing speed. This difficulty is typically unexpected relative to other information processing/cognitive abilities. Difficulties with word level reading, text reading fluency, and spelling that are associated with dyslexia are evident despite high quality classroom instruction. Secondary consequences associated with dyslexia may include reading comprehension and reduced reading experience which can impede vocabulary development and background knowledge accrual.~~ **is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important**

**at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective (IDA, 2025).**

~~i. **Dyslexia Screening** assesses critical skills that are predictors of future reading success and helps to identify students who may exhibit characteristics of dyslexia.~~

**j. Educator Preparation Program (EPP)** refers to any program within an institution of higher education (IHE) that prepares individuals for licensure as elementary, **middle, or high school** teachers, school leaders, or other educational personnel.

**k. Enrichment refers to experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for advanced students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development (Renzulli, 2021; Kaplan, 2019).**

**l. Equitable Access ensures that literacy instruction, rooted in the Science of Reading, is applied thoughtfully to meet the diverse needs of learners who come to school with varying experiences, backgrounds, and developmental needs. This approach, sensitive to each individual, ensures that all students, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged and underserved groups, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (ML) are given access the support, resources, and opportunities necessary to achieve the skills and knowledge for literacy success, regardless of their starting point. Equitable access focuses on ensuring that students who have been historically excluded are intentionally included in literacy instruction and enrichment opportunities, with structures in place to support their success (95 Percent Group, 2026).**

**m. Evidence-based** ~~refers to programs or practices that have demonstrated a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on well-designed and well-implemented studies, quasi-experimental studies, or correlational studies with statistical control for selection bias.~~ **means an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on (I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; (II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or (III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).**

**n. Family-Friendly Language** refers to language that is accessible and easy to understand for families, and that is responsive to their cultural and linguistic needs. It avoids jargon, ~~and~~ acronyms, and **deficit-based language**. It can also include language that is inclusive of all family members, and that avoids making assumptions about their identities or relationships.

**o. Good-Cause Exemptions** allow students to be exempt from retention to 3rd grade for valid reasons, but such students remain eligible for ~~reading camps,~~ instructional supports, **such as reading camps,** services, and appropriate reading interventions based on their age and reading ability.

**p. High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) are grade-level, standards-aligned instructional materials that are used to build knowledge and skills for all students in a language affirming and culturally responsive way (MSDE, 2026).**

**q. Instructional Equity** is a practice that ensures an inclusive academic environment, addresses persistent disparities, examines biases, dismantles unfair systems, and provides every student with access to personalized, high-quality learning opportunities to reach their full potential.

**r.** **Intensive Support** refers to Tier 3 support provided to students identified as needing more explicit and intensive instruction. Tier 3 instruction should not take place during ~~core~~ **Tier 1** instructional time **in a core content area.**

**s.** **Leveled Texts are text that have been assigned to a reading level based on various factors: vocabulary, number of different words, support from context, support from pictures, page layout or written material that has been modified to match a specific reading ability or grade level. Leveled texts can hinder literacy progress by reducing decoding skill application and restricting students' access to complex, grade-level content which limits exposure to academic vocabulary and critical thinking (Pondiscio & Mahnken, 2014; Shanahan, 2025).**

**t.** **Literacy** is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, achieve goals, and develop knowledge and potential. It involves reading, writing, speaking, and listening in ways that allow effective communication and comprehension of the world **(White & McCloskey, 2005).**

**u.** **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)** is a framework for enhancing academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for all students. MTSS provides supports for students with reading challenges, addressing identified needs with varying intensities and durations. The MTSS framework includes:

1. **Tier 1:** On-grade level, standards-aligned ~~general~~ instruction for all students. It should occur within the core instructional block ~~and be delivered through whole group or small group settings,~~ with direct and explicit instruction **using LEA-selected HQIM**. All students should be provided access to **Tier 1** instruction (Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, etc.).
2. **Tier 2:** In addition to core instruction, Tier 2 support involves small group interventions that align with evidence-based practices used in Tier 1 instruction.
3. **Tier 3:** For students not demonstrating growth in Tier 2, Tier 3 provides diagnostic-based, explicit interventions tailored to their needs.

**v.** **Reading Difficulties** refers to a student's challenges with decoding, language comprehension, or both; which affect their ability to achieve grade-level reading proficiency.

**w.** **Reading Intervention, which may also be referred to as supplemental instruction, means evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and developmentally appropriate instruction provided in addition to core coursework and aligned with Tier 1 instruction. In grades PreK-3, intervention will focus on mastery of foundational literacy skills, including phonological or phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, writing, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum (National Reading Panel [NPR], 2000). In grades 4-12, intervention may address foundational literacy skills as needed, or advanced decoding** ~~(multisyllabic word reading and morphology/word study, advanced spelling)~~**, fluency, syntax/grammar, academic language, vocabulary/knowledge, writing and comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum expectations (Kamil et al., 2008). Reading intervention targets specific reading skills using evidence-based strategies, including individual/small group instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, and technology-assisted learning paired with face-to-face supports.**

~~**x. Reading Intervention (Elementary)** (or supplemental instruction in reading) means evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and cumulative instruction or intervention to mastery of foundational literacy skills, including phonological or phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling fluency, writing, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade-level curriculum. It encompasses evidence-based strategies to address reading challenges,~~

~~including individual/small group instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, technology-assisted learning paired with face-to-face supports, and targeting specific reading skills.~~

~~**y. Reading Intervention (Secondary)** means evidence-based, explicit, and developmentally appropriate instruction provided in addition to core coursework and targeted to identified student need. In grades 4-12, intervention may address early foundational literacy skills (phonological/phonemic awareness; basic decoding/encoding) as needed, or advanced decoding (multisyllabic word reading and morphology/word study, advanced spelling), fluency, syntax/grammar, and academic language, vocabulary/knowledge, and writing and comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum expectations. Interventions employ evidence-based strategies, including individual/small group instruction, tutoring, and technology-assisted learning paired with face-to-face supports, and target specific reading skills.~~

**z. Science of Learning is an interdisciplinary body of research spanning cognitive science, educational psychology, and instructional design to examine how humans acquire, retain, and utilize knowledge (Heal & Lee, 2026).**

**aa. Science of Reading** refers to a comprehensive body of research from fields such as cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education. This research informs effective reading instruction and intervention across grades **Pre**K-12 by focusing on how the brain processes written language **(Ciancio, 2023).**

**bb. Structured Literacy** is an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned with the Science of Reading. It features explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in areas such as phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics **(International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).**

**cc. Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)** refers to a personalized plan to help students improve their reading skills. It includes assessments, goals, instruction, and monitoring **(COMAR 13A.03.08).**

**dd. System of Assessments** refers to a comprehensive assessment system used by LEAs that includes screening, diagnostic (**formal and/or** informal), and progress monitoring. **It also includes** formative, and summative assessments **such as curriculum-based assessments and writing samples.** ~~These assessments should evaluate key indicators of future reading success, including critical prerequisite skills.~~ **(Toste et al., 2026).**

**ee. Three-cueing System** refers to teaching methods based on meaning, structure, syntax, and visual cues (MSV). ~~This system encourages students to guess words rather than focus on decoding them using letter-sounds.~~ **It is a disproven, balanced literacy strategy that encourages students to identify unfamiliar words by guessing using pictures, context clues, and sentence structure instead of explicitly sounding out the letters** which can hinder their ability to recognize words efficiently in the future **(Greene, 2024).**

**ff. Universal Design for Learning is a research-based framework for curriculum design, that includes goals, methods, materials, and assessments to reduce barriers to learning by providing students multiple accessible support options for: a) acquiring information and knowledge; b) demonstrating knowledge and skills in alternative forms of action and expression; c) engaging in learning (COMAR 13A.03.06).**

**gg. Universal Screener** is an assessment administered to all students three times a year (beginning, middle, and end) in grades **PreK-5** ~~K-3 to all students~~ **and as needed in subsequent grades** to identify or predict students **who may be** at risk for **reading difficulties or** poor reading outcomes. It is typically brief and assesses skills such as phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

**and reading comprehension,** as developmentally appropriate. ~~Adolescent literacy screeners identify older students at risk for reading difficulties by evaluating foundational and advanced literacy skills. They primarily assess word identification/decoding, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, and vocabulary~~.

**hh. Writing is the act of using letters or symbols to communicate thoughts and ideas. It is comprised of foundational skills (often called transcription skills) consisting of handwriting, keyboarding, punctuation, syntax, and spelling with the goal of developing automaticity and compositional skills consisting of planning, drafting, writing, revising, editing, and self-regulation with the goal of developing critical thinking (Graham, 2020; Sedita, 2023).**

**ii. Writing Difficulties refer to a student's challenges with writing ability at any stage, including problems with letter formation/legibility, letter spacing, spelling, fine motor coordination, rate of writing, grammar, and composition (Chung et al., 2020).**

**jj. Writing Intervention is a targeted instructional approach tailored to each student's developmental needs. For younger learners, it builds foundational transcription skills like fine motor control, posture, and orthographic awareness. As students' progress, the focus shifts to explicit instruction in advanced composition, teaching complex cognitive processes like planning, drafting, revising, and self-regulation to improve overall writing automaticity and quality (Chung et al., 2020).**

## C. ~~ES~~STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

| Timeline | Activity |
|---|---|
| ~~**October 2023**~~ | ~~**PreK-3 Policy**~~<br>~~District Supervisors and Coordinators~~ |
| ~~**November 2023**~~ | ~~**PreK-3 Policy**~~<br>~~Division of Educator Effectiveness~~<br>~~Division of College and Career Pathways~~ |
| ~~**December 2023**~~ | ~~**PreK-3 Policy**~~<br>~~Chief Academic Officers~~<br>~~Maryland READS Network~~<br>~~Project for Adolescent Literacy (PAL)~~<br>~~Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE)~~<br>~~District Leaders and Educators~~ |
| **January 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Resolution (24-01) adopted by the State Board and tasked the State Superintendent of Schools with drafting a comprehensive literacy policy aligned with the Science of Reading for the Board's approval. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **June-July 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>First draft of Literacy Policy released for public comment<br>Meetings held with local education agency (LEA) staff, various community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel to discuss the policy and gather feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board |
| **July-August 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Version two of the Literacy Policy released for public comment<br>Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board |
| **August-September 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Version three of the Literacy Policy released for public comment<br>Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board<br>Public Hearing on the proposed Literacy Policy conducted during the August 27th Board meeting |
| **October 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Version four of the Literacy Policy released<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board, and request for adoption<br>**PreK-3 Literacy Policy adopted by Maryland State Board of Education** |
| **October-November 2025** | **Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>**LEA Literacy Supervisors and Coordinators**<br>**Division of Educator Effectiveness**<br>**Division of College and Career Pathways** |
| **December 2025** | **Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>**Chief Academic Officers**<br>**Maryland READS Network**<br>**Project for Adolescent Literacy (PAL)** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE)<br>LEA leaders and educators |
| January 2026 | Adolescent Literacy Policy<br>Open to public comment |
| March-April 2026 | PreK-3 Policy and Adolescent Literacy Policy Combined<br>Revisions made based on public comments and policies are combined into a PreK-12 policy |
| May-June 2026 | PreK-12 Policy Input<br>Version one was shared with stakeholders for feedback<br>Chief Academic Officers<br>Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE)<br>Institutes of Higher Education (IHE)<br>LEA literacy and advanced learners' leaders<br>LEA school leaders and educators<br>Students<br>MSDE Division of Special Education, MSDE Offices of Advanced Academics, Early Childhood Education, Educator Effectiveness, Multilingual Learner, Systems of Instructional Coherence |
| June 2026 | Revised PreK-12 Policy<br>Version two was created based on stakeholder feedback and updates presented to the State Board |
| July-September 2026 | Revised PreK-12 Policy<br>Version three was created, shared with the State Board, and public comment release was requested |
| October 2026 | MSDE Education Policy Committee<br>Request permission to adopt<br>MSDE Board of Education<br>Request permission to adopt |

# ~~II.~~ Early Literacy PreK-3

## A. PURPOSE

~~Since 2013, Maryland students have experienced a decline in reading performance, falling from third to forty-first (2022 scores) in the nation on the Grade 4 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment. This alarming gap underscores the urgent need to address reading proficiency, particularly for students with reading deficiencies difficulties, those living in poverty, multilingual learners, and students of color.~~

~~To address this challenge, a statewide Comprehensive PreK-3 Literacy Policy is essential. This policy will ensure that every all student~~s ~~receives equitable, effective, and evidence-based reading instruction, preparing them for long-term academic success. By prioritizing the core components of foundational literacy skills (phonological awareness, phonics and spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension development, etc.) for all students across Maryland, the state can provide each child with a pathway toward greater opportunity.~~ **The Early Literacy PreK-3 section lays the foundation of Maryland's continuous PreK-12 literacy system, where children develop the essential skills upon which their later literacy outcomes depend. Guided by Science of Reading research, this section ensures that all students receive systematic, explicit, and developmentally appropriate instruction, early and proactive identification of potential reading difficulties, and timely targeted intervention to set students up for literacy success.**

The General Assembly, the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) share a common goal of ensuring that each student's progression from one grade to another be determined, in part, by their proficiency in reading. Local district school boards must implement clear policies that ensure students' reading needs are met through robust instruction and targeted interventions. Furthermore, the policy seeks to ensure parents and guardians are well informed about their children's reading progress, fostering collaboration between schools and families.

The **Early Literacy PreK-3 section** is designed to promote instructional equity, enhance literacy outcomes, and build a strong foundation for future success, regardless of students' cultural background, linguistic diversity, socioeconomic status, geographical location, or specific learning needs. ~~MSDE recognizes that the policy is evolving to become more comprehensive to meet the diverse needs of all Maryland students. Future expansions will incorporate additional provisions for Pre-K and address the specific needs of students in grades 4-12.~~ By ~~addressing these critical needs,~~ **strengthening early literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention,** Maryland will see a ripple effect in its communities, including a more educated workforce, reduced poverty, and improved health outcomes.

This policy supports the ambitious goal outlined in State Board Resolution 24-01 for improving educational outcomes for all students, positioning Maryland to regain its status as a top-ten state in reading by 2027, as measured by the NAEP Reading Assessment for 4th and 8th grades.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. System of Support for Educators

~~a.~~ **Licensure** ~~Beginning in School Year (SY) 2024-2025, MSDE shall provide professional learning for all general education, special education, and English Language Development teachers teachers of multilingual learners (English learners), speech-language pathologists, administrators, and other staff who support literacy instruction (e.g., paraprofessionals) for students in pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read (The Reading League, 2022).~~

~~Per COMAR 13A.12.02, all applicants seeking initial licensure in early childhood education (PreK through 3rd grade), elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.~~

**i. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:**

**a) Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or**

**b) Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.**

**Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.**

**ii. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in early childhood education (PreK through 3rd grade), elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading Professional Learning**

**iii. The (Local Education Agency) LEA must provide professional learning for administrators, classroom teachers, including special education, speech-language pathologists, and English Language Development teachers ~~of multilingual learners~~ as well as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists) on the system of assessments selected by LEAs and approved by MSDE to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and analyze the results to inform instruction, including interpreting literacy data for multilingual learners in the context of English language development and students' linguistic assets.**

iv. **LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation.**

b. Educator preparation programs **(EPP)** are required to**:**

**i. Prepare candidates seeking licensure for early childhood, elementary education, and special education with training and instruction to:**

**a) Teach phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension effectively;**

**b) Implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials which do not include the three-cueing systems model ~~("guessing strategies")~~ or leveled texts ~~("matching students to leveled text")~~;**

**c) Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;**

**d) Understand and use student data to make instructional decisions including decisions about improving the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction in Tier 1 and intervention design in Tier 2 and 3;**

**e) Understand the negative impacts of the three-cueing systems model, how to identify it in curriculum or instructional material, and why it is a flawed model of teaching children to read; and**

**f) Pass a State Board-approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates' knowledge of the Science of Reading.**

**ii. Annually submit a comprehensive data report to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) beginning in SY 2028–2029, detailing program completers:**

**a) Proficiency in teaching the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) for candidates pursuing early childhood, elementary, special education, and ESOL licensure;**

**b) Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and**

**c) A narrative explaining how they assess each of the above-listed items throughout the program.**

~~c. Coaching should be provided to support educators with the implementation of the Science of Reading:~~

~~i. School-based teacher training on evidence-based reading instruction and data-based decision-making to support the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction;~~

~~ii. Co-planning;~~

~~iii. Co-teaching; and~~

~~iv. Non-evaluative coaching observations with timely feedback cycles for improving instruction.~~

**d. LEAs provide instructional support to assist educators with implementing Tier 1 structured literacy instruction embedded in LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-informed ~~based~~ decision making which may include:**

**i. Co-planning;**

**ii. Co-teaching and modeling;**

**iii. Professional learning communities;**

**iv. Job-embedded professional learning;**

**v. Curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL); and**

**vi. Non-evaluative observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.**

d. Districts must report the number of general education teachers, special education teachers, **English Language Development teachers** ~~teachers of multilingual learners~~, and

administrators in grades PreK-3 who have received foundational training in the Science of Reading during that academic school year to MSDE **annually** ~~by September 15 of each year~~.

e. MSDE will provide guidance, technical assistance, and training on developing and implementing frameworks for MTSS and interventions embedded within the SRIP as outlined in section II.B.3.

**2. Reading Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention**

a. Per the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Ready to Read Act, Education Article 7-202, and COMAR 13A.03.08, it is the ultimate goal of the General Assembly that every student reads at or above grade level by the end of grade 3.

b. All ~~Pre~~K-3 students must receive Tier **1** literacy instruction~~, also known as core instruction,~~ aligned to the Science of Reading **using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Following structured literacy principles,** Tier **1** instruction is defined as evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit instruction **that provides equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025)**. It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction **or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025**). Tier **1** instruction must also:

i. Address ~~one or more of~~ the five components of reading **(phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) (Scarborough, 2001) and writing (foundational and compositional skills) (Sedita, 2023)** with an intentional focus on the identified area(s) driven by the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Literacy/English Language Arts (ELA);

**ii.** ~~Require assessment of each student's reading competency throughout the year that includes the types of assessments as outlined in Section II.B.2, below;~~ **Require educators to use the LEA's system of assessments to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);**

**iii.** Utilize a scope and sequence **within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year,** that is delivered explicitly ~~with judicious review, allowing for~~ **following Universal Design for Learning (COMAR 13A.03.06) and Science of Learning principles** for active and engaged students **(CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);**

~~iv.~~ Be delivered within literacy blocks that are sufficient to deliver effective and comprehensive instruction **and meaningful practice with writing and complex text.** ~~LEAs shall implement instructional minutes and scheduling that protect Tier 1 literacy instruction in ELA and content-area classrooms (including math, history/social studies, science, health, physical education, and arts), consistent with MSDE guidance;~~

v. Be comprised of an adequate number of daily instructional minutes for literacy Tier **1** instruction **based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).** ~~LEAs should review guidance from the State Superintendent of Schools regarding the number of minutes for Tier I literacy instruction.~~

**c.** All PreK students in Maryland must receive instruction and curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading which is culturally responsive and language affirming. ~~, as defined by the Maryland Early Learning Standards. This alignment emphasizes critical components such as phonological~~

~~awareness, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills within the Language and Literacy Domain. The standards promote research-based, intentional teaching methods that foster foundational reading abilities. In addition, the Early Learning Standards incorporate individualized strategies and accommodations. The Language and Literacy Domain enables educators to tailor learning experiences, ensuring that all children, including those with diverse needs, can develop critical early literacy skills~~. PreK educators are tasked with creating literacy-rich, developmentally appropriate environments that equip children with the essential skills for future reading success, thereby laying a strong groundwork for their academic journey **(Herrera et al., 2021).**

**i. PreK3 students must receive whole group and targeted small group instruction aligned with the Language and Literacy Domain of the Early Learning Standards.**

**ii. PreK4 students must receive whole group and targeted small group instruction aligned with the PreK Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts.**

d. MSDE ~~provide a list of reviewed instructional materials in SY25-26, specifying whether they meet the criteria to be designated as High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for LEAs to adopt.~~ **will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process for comprehensive literacy programs, which publishes reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) website. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs.** These materials must align with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards and be based on scientifically grounded reading **and writing** research**, including the positive impact of integrated reading and writing instruction (Graham, 2012),** designed to reduce the risk of reading ~~failure~~ **difficulties.** These materials shall:

i. Address the core components of foundational literacy;

ii. Integrate culturally **responsive** and **language-affirming** ~~linguistically sustaining~~ practices; and

iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model **or leveled texts.**

e. The system of assessments school districts use must include statewide universal screening (Education Article 4-136), diagnostic surveys, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading. The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined **below** ~~in COMAR 13A.03.08~~:

i. Beginning in SY 2025 -2026, MSDE will release a list of vetted and approved **grades K-3** universal screeners to be administered three times per year (fall, winter, and spring: beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year). The screener will be used to:

a) Identify students with early warning signs of reading difficulties which may include dyslexia;literacy resolution kell

b) Measure~~s~~, minimum, phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, decoding, fluency, and rapid automatic naming. Measures may also include additional subtests such as encoding and reading comprehension **(Bond, 2021).**~~, for example using an assessment such as MAZE.~~

**ii. Beginning in SY 2026-2027, MSDE shall vet a set of PreK universal reading screeners along with additional K-3 screeners not previously submitted or previously submitted screeners which have been updated or have newer research**

**to address previous concerns. Authorized screeners will be added to the list of the MSDE approved universal screeners.**

**iii. Beginning in SY 2027-2028, LEAs and approved PreK private providers who receive state funding shall administer an MSDE-approved PreK universal reading screener to children in their PreK4 year (the year before kindergarten), three times per year (~~fall, winter, and spring:~~ beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year). The screener will be used to:**

**a) Measure, at a minimum, phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge (letter name and sound) (Ozernov-Palchik et al., 2016).**

**b) Collect data that informs targeted instruction to build students' early literacy skills and prevent them from developing future reading difficulties (Bond, 2021).**

iv. Additional diagnostic tools should be ~~identified and~~ administered including informal curriculum-based measures, to support **staff** ~~teachers~~ with targeting instruction based on student needs **(Gersten et al., 2009).**

~~1. Accurately and reliably identify students who demonstrate a reading difficulty and are at risk for poor learning outcomes.~~

**f. For multilingual learners, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be given in English in order to identify the specific areas of need and track growth (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015):**

**i. When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).**

**ii. Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.**

**g. For students with disabilities, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be administered as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], 2004):**

**i. Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations can be used;**

**ii. MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented; and**

**iii. MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.**

**h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs may reques**

**i. t universal screening data to accompany transfer records.**

**i. If LEAs do not receive current screening results with the transfer records, LEAs shall test students within 30 calendar days of enrollment.**

**ii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested during the LEAs' regular testing windows.**

j. In determining which assessments to approve for use by LEAs, MSDE shall also consider, at a minimum, the following factors:

i. The time required to conduct **and score** the assessment, with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time;

ii. The professional development needed to administer, analyze the data, and **use data to plan instruction and intervention** ~~develop instructional pathways~~; and

iii. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

k. Per the COMAR 13A.03.08 ~~(Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties)~~: Each ~~Pre~~K-3 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive **reading intervention** ~~supplemental instruction~~ aligned to their identified needs ~~through MTSS~~ which includes:

**i.** Proactive, school-wide framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students with areas of concern **(Brown & Stollar, 2025);**

ii. ~~Program specific~~ **Progress** monitoring tools that LEAs ~~should~~ use to collect and analyze intervention data to make instructional decisions **(Bailey et al., 2020);**

iii. Opportunities for students who are experiencing reading **or writing difficulties** ~~challenges~~ to be identified early, receive targeted intervention to support their needs, and have their progress closely monitored over time;

iv. Home partnerships with parents/guardians as an integral part of the decision-making team;

v. Supports that address a student's identified needs with varying intensity and duration across the three tiers **(Brown & Stollar, 2025);**

**vi. Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);**

vii. Provisions such that student participation in any tier of this framework does not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

viii. All students including Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, etc. must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction **(ESSA, 2015).**

**l.** Each ~~Pre~~K-3 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive **targeted Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 reading intervention** ~~supplemental instruction through a reading program~~ aligned to **assessed needs and** the Science of Reading~~:~~ **(Brown & Stollar, 2025).** ~~The reading program~~ **Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 intervention shall:**

i. Be provided in addition to ~~core~~ **Tier 1~~, core~~** reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom;

ii. Be implemented during regular school hours **and shall not impede students' access to Tier 1, grade-level aligned instruction (Durrance, 2023);**

iii. **Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions must continue to receive English Language Development (ELD) instruction. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.**

iv. **Follow scheduling models (e.g., flexible grouping, parallel scheduling, tiered flooding, flex blocks, intervention blocks, push-in services) to provide intervention without removing access to required Tier 1 literacy and ~~other~~ content-area instruction ~~courses~~.**

~~v.~~ Be provided to all ~~Pre~~K-3 students demonstrating a reading difficulty or who need ~~supplemental instruction in~~ reading **intervention**. This includes students with the risk factors of dyslexia as determined by MSDE-approved assessment administered within the first ~~thirty (30)~~ **sixty (60)** days of school **per COMAR 13A.03.08**; ~~and~~

vi. Be provided in an explicit, systematic, sequential manner, with cumulative instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension, as applicable **(Al Otaiba et al., 2019; National Reading Panel, 2000).~~;~~**

vii. **Match the specific skill profile ~~(e.g., multisyllabic decoding/morphology, connected text fluency with prosody, syntax/grammar, foundational writing, academic language, vocabulary/knowledge)~~ as determined by the diagnostic~~;~~, are developmentally appropriate~~;~~, and are delivered with adequate dosage and fidelity (Brown & Stollar, 2025; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b); and**

1. **Be delivered by any staff member trained in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the intervention being provided (Ragusa, 2026).**

l. **All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment ~~opportunities~~ experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.**

m. **Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.**

**3. Parent/Guardian Notification and Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)**

a. Beginning in SY 2026-2027, any student in grades ~~Pre~~K-3 who meets the following criteria shall receive a SRIP:

i. Students who have been identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time, based upon the MSDE vetted and approved **universal screener** ~~assessment system~~,

ii. Students who have been identified for retention in grade 3 **due to reading difficulties,** and

iii. Any 4th-grade student promoted for a good cause or by parent/guardian consent.

b. The SRIP shall be developed no later than 30 **calendar** days **upon closing of the universal screener assessment window and test results** ~~after~~ identifying the reading difficulty.

c. The LEA must develop a process and procedures to notify the parent/guardian(s)**, in writing (print or electronic),** of any ~~Pre~~K-3 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year ~~in writing~~ **~~(may be print or electronic communication).~~** This notification must be written in family-friendly language and include the following:

i. An explanation that their child has been identified as having difficulties in reading;

~~ii. A description of the current services provided to the child;~~

~~iii. A description of the proposed evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to the child that are designed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading concern;~~

iv. An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the development of an individual reading improvement plan **that includes evidence-based reading interventions ~~and supplemental instructional services and supports~~ designed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading concern;** and

v. **For students in grades 1 – 3, n**otification for the possibility of retention**,** ~~–~~if the child's reading issues are not remediated by the end of the grade level year and the child has received two years of intensive reading intervention, the following may be considered: retention, good cause exemption designation, **informed consent for promotion,** and/or other supports established by the LEA may be instituted. ~~LEAs must consider providing flexible grouping that will allow a student to receive 3rd grade reading interventions while receiving 4th grade instruction in other content areas.~~

d. The SRIP shall:

i. Be created by the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);

ii. Describe the evidence-based reading intervention **practices and/or** program the student will receive to remedy the reading **difficulties** ~~deficit~~ **~~gap~~**;

iii. Include the necessary frequency and intensity of interventions to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning;

iv. Meet the requirements for ~~core~~ **Tier 1~~, core~~** instruction and reading interventions outlined in section **II.B.2.b** above;

v. Be reviewed and updated annually with the parent/guardian(s) if a student **continues to exhibit** the need for a reading intervention;

**vi. Include a progress monitoring cadence aligned to COMAR 13A.03.08 *Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties* at a minimum of every 30 days, the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;~~-~~**

**vii. Identify exit criteria for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency;**

viii. Describe how each student will receive intensive reading intervention until the student no longer demonstrates difficulty in reading as determined by the LEA's approved system of assessment; and

ix. Provide more intensified interventions to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for **students significantly below grade level, and** any transfer or newly enrolled student identified with a reading difficulty.

**e.** MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters, a ~~format~~ **checklist** for the SRIP, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources. **LEAs may adapt samples while retaining the required elements.**

f. **In alignment COMAR 13A.03.08**, if a student has an IEP with reading goals:

i. The IEP ~~will~~ **may** substitute for the development of a SRIP;

**ii. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP will be updated;**

**iii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan.**

**4. Demonstrated Readiness for Promotion**

a. Grade 3 students must demonstrate adequate reading proficiency on the MSDE-adopted State English Language Arts Assessment to be designated for promotion to grade 4 (See MD Code, Education, § 7-202. Minimum levels of reading ability).

i. Upon recommendation from the State Superintendent of Schools, the SBOE will set the performance level for adequate reading proficiency.

~~ii. Scoring at or above the required performance level on an MSDE-approved reassessment, and~~

iii. Triangulated data from valid and reliable multiple measures, such as curriculum-based **assessments** ~~measures (CBMs~~), diagnostic assessments, and benchmark assessments, or other assessment as identified by MSDE **which demonstrate that the student is not at risk for reading difficulties may also be used to consider promotion.** Screener data and/or benchmarks should not be used in isolation for promotion purposes.

**iv. Students will not be designated for promotion to grade 4 (Greene & Winters, 2007; Hwang & Koedel, 2025; Mumma, et al, 2023) if they meet the following criteria:**

**a) The student did not score at the required performance level on the grade 3 MSDE-adopted State English Language Arts Assessment, and**

**b) Triangulated data from multiple valid and reliable measures demonstrates that the student continues to be at risk for reading difficulties.**

b. The LEA may designate a grade 3 student for promotion to grade 4 who does not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency if they qualify for a good-cause exemption.

i. Good-cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

a) Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates participation in the Maryland Alternate Education Framework;

~~b) Students who have received less than two years of instruction aligned to World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) standards or who have~~

~~demonstrated to be on track to meet the English language proficiency as measured by WIDA **ACCESS**~~.

**c) Multilingual Learners (MLs) who have received three years or less of English instruction in U.S. schools or who have met their required target under Maryland's growth-to-target model as determined by the Department-approved summative English language proficiency assessment in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.**

d) Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide English Language Arts assessment and who have an IEP or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for at least two years, but still demonstrates a reading difficulty, or was previously retained for one year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.

e) Students who were previously retained for one year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade. No student shall be retained more than once as a result of this policy.

ii. A student who is designated for promotion to grade 4 with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies **outlined** ~~prescribed~~ in the SRIP until the student no longer demonstrates reading difficulty.

iii. Requests to exempt students from the retention requirement using one of the good-cause exemptions shall be made consistent with the following:

a) The school principal with input from the classroom teacher and other appropriate personnel shall determine whether a student qualifies for good cause exemptions. If the school principal determines that the student has met one of the good cause exemptions, the school principal shall provide the decisions made at the school level in writing to the district superintendent or designee.

c. A 3rd grader who does not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency and does not qualify for a good cause exemption may be designated for retention in 3rd grade with parent/guardian consent.

i. At the end of 3rd grade, it is required that LEAs and schools provide notification of the designation for promotion or retention and the informed consent process to the student's parent/guardian(s).

ii. If a student is not designated for promotion to 4th grade, the notification must inform the parent/guardian of the process and options, which includes:

a) An invitation via phone call, letter, or email, etc., to meet to discuss the recommendation of retention in 3rd-grade;

b) A letter designating that the student may be retained in 3rd grade, an explanation of the student's current performance level in reading, and reference to the required adequate reading proficiency level required for promotion to 4th grade;

c) An explanation of the potential risks and benefits of both promotion and retention for a child who does not demonstrate reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade;

d) An MSDE-approved list of ~~supplemental~~ reading support ~~program~~ options for the parent/guardian to choose from at no cost to the parent or guardian such as specific summer school programs, before or after-school tutoring, or other instructional supports;

e) A document that captures the parent or guardians' final decision regarding the options to:

1) Consent to the designation of retention in 3rd grade, or

2) Choose 4th-grade promotion **with the understanding that the child has not met grade-level reading proficiency** and consent to their student ~~enrolling and~~ participating in ~~a supplemental~~ reading support ~~program~~ provided by the LEA and approved by MSDE at no cost to the parent or guardian.

f) MSDE will provide communication support about the benefits and risks for each decision.

iii. In the case that a school or LEA does not receive a final decision regarding retention in 3rd grade from the parent/guardians, the school must continue reaching out to parent/guardian(s) through multiple means of communication, including, but not limited to mail, email, phone calls, and, if appropriate, home visits prior to the next school year.

iv. LEAs should develop a contingency process for situations where a parent or guardian cannot be contacted and send communication via certified mail no later than June 30th and a follow-up by July 31st stating that the child will be retained in 3rd grade.

d. Beginning in the SY ~~2027-2028~~ **2028-2029**, students who remain in grade 3 must continue to receive intensive reading intervention to remedy the student's specific reading difficulty. Each LEA shall conduct a review of SRIPs for all students retained. The review shall address additional supports and services, as described in this subsection, needed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading difficulty. The ~~district~~ **LEA shall** provide the following for students:

i. Access to ~~core~~ **Tier 1~~, core~~** instruction that is aligned to the Science of Reading. Additional time for intervention shall not impede students' access to Tier **1** or ~~core~~ content-area instruction.

ii. Reading intervention services and supports to address the identified area(s) of reading difficulty, including, but not limited to more dedicated time than the previous school year in ~~scientifically~~ evidence-based reading instruction and intervention.

iii. Use of reading strategies and/or programs that are ~~scientifically~~ evidence-based and have proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within the same school year.

iv. ~~Daily targeted small group reading~~ **Ongoing Tier 2 or Tier 3** intervention based on student needs, including explicit and systematic instruction with ~~more~~ detailed explanations, ~~more~~ extensive opportunities for guided practice, and ~~more~~ opportunities for error correction and feedback.

v. Frequently monitoring the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year and adjusting instruction according to student needs.

~~vi. Before and/or after school supplemental evidence-based reading intervention delivered by a teacher or tutor with specialized training grounded in the Science of Reading.~~

vii. ~~A "Read at Home" plan outlined in a family reading agreement, including participation in~~ **LEA provided** parent/guardian training workshops and/or regular parent-guided home reading activities which are aligned to ~~scientifically~~ **evidence-**based reading research.

## C. PREK-3 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| ~~Beginning~~ 2024-2025 | • MSDE provides professional learning for Maryland educators and Literacy Coaches.<br>• MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance in designing their MTSS model. |
| ~~Fall 2025~~ | ~~• MSDE releases the SRIP template and provides training on use.~~ |
| September 1, 2025 | • LEAs must develop and report promotion and retention policies to MSDE that will go into effect ~~in 2026-2027~~ **no later than 2027-2028.** |
| September 15, 2025 | • LEAS submit first annual report of the number of ~~teachers~~ **PreK-grade 3 staff** who have participated in MSDE-approved Science of Reading professional learning programs. |
| ~~Beginning~~ 2025-2026 | ~~• MSDE will provide a list of reviewed instructional materials, indicating their HQIM designation for LEA consideration~~<br>• MSDE provides technical assistance on grade promotion policies.<br>• MSDE releases the SRIP ~~template~~ **checklist** and provides training on **its** ~~**their**~~ use.<br>• **MSDE supports SRIP Workgroups.** |
| ~~Winter-Spring 2025-2026~~ | ~~• MSDE provides technical assistance on promotion policies.~~ |
| July 2026 | • SBOE reviews the policy implementation. |
| September 1, 2026 | • LEAs submit the first annual report on the district school board's policies and procedures for student promotion and retention if substantial changes are made. |
| ~~Beginning SY~~ 2026-2027 | • LEAs implement ~~PreK-5~~ **K-3** MTSS Model with MSDE support (which includes SRIPs).<br>• LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners **in grades K-3.** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include SRIPs, walkthrough tools, coaching, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.**<br>• **MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report for PreK-3.** |
| **2027-2028** | • **LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in PreK.**<br>• **MSDE provides support for literacy policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning.** |
| **August 31, 2028** | • **LEA staff who support grades 1 through grade 3 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed Science of Reading (SoR) professional learning.**<br>• **LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete SoR professional learning within three years of their hire date.** |
| ~~Beginning SY 2027-2028~~ **2028-2029** | • Implement retention portion of Literacy Policy<br>• **LEAs begin annual reporting of PreK screening data in addition to K-3 screening.**<br>• **MSDE provides continued support for literacy policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.**<br>• **EPPs begin annual reporting of Science of Reading course completion.**<br>• **MSDE publishes EPP program completion rates annually.** |
| **2029-2030** | • **Full implementation of PreK –3 literacy policy.** |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Local Education Agency Responsibilities

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by ~~September~~ **October** 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

**i. The number and percentage of students in grades PreK-3 who were screened.**

ii. The number and percentage of all students in grades K-3 **identified as at risk for reading difficulties** ~~performing below grade level~~ on the **universal screener** ~~local assessments~~ organized by grade level and student group **consistent with state reporting practices in COMAR 13A.03.08 (e.g., multilingual learner status, disability status, students eligible for free and reduced meals, race/ethnicity);**

iii. By grade level and student group, the total number and percentage of students receiving evidence-based intervention based on the reported assessment(s) by grade level;

iv. The number and percentage of all students not promoted in grades K-3 organized by grade level and student group;

v. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on an MSDE-identified additional reading assessment.

vi. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who were promoted for good cause, by each category of good cause as specified in previous sections; and

vii. The total number and percentage of students who were promoted by parent/guardian consent. and agreed to another support offered by the LEA;

viii. The proposed supports and interventions delivered for students who were promoted by parent/guardian consent;

b. Policies developed and LEA Board approved regarding promotion, retention, and the dissemination of information concerning SRIPs;

c. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. Districts must ensure all general education teachers, special education teachers, **English Language Development teachers**, and administrators in grades PreK-3 have received training in the Science of Reading by September 1 of each school year.

ii. ~~By September 15 of each academic year,~~ This list shall be submitted **annually** to MSDE.

**d. LEAs shall provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and support for PreK through grade 3 staff who support literacy instruction per section II.B.1 of this policy.**

**2. Maryland State Department of Education**

a. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

b. MSDE shall annually compile the information required along with state-level summary information and report such information to the SBOE, the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

c. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to aid **LEAs** ~~local school boards~~ in **developing and** implementing ~~with~~ the ~~literacy~~ **promotion**~~/retention~~ policy developed by LEAs.

**d. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.**

**e. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.**

**f. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners; Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students; and students with disabilities.**

**g. MSDE will provide decision rules for follow up diagnostic assessment and intervention.**

h. MSDE will provide examples of promotion policies for consideration.

i. MSDE will review the submitted promotion policies to ensure adherence to the requirements.

j. MSDE will develop ~~a consistent system~~ **communication support** for parental/guardian consent for promotion and retention **that outlines the risks and benefits of retention and promotion for students with reading difficulties.**

k. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around planning, scheduling, and identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

l. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for administrators, ELA supervisors, and **educators** ~~interventionists~~ in grades PreK-3.

m. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters, a ~~format~~ **checklist** for the SRIPs, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources.

n. MSDE will develop an education/media campaign to increase families' and community stakeholders' knowledge about the importance of effective literacy instruction and Science of Reading practices from birth – 3rd grade.

**o. MSDE will publish EPP completion rates annually to ensure transparency and alignment to the Science of Reading across the state's educator pipeline.**

**3. Maryland State Board of Education Policies**

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy including analysis of the following by district and student groups:

i. The number of students enrolled (PreK-3),

ii. The number and percentage of students screened,

iii. The number and percentage of students identified as at-risk for reading difficulty,

iv. The number and percentage of students who received **reading intervention** ~~**and/or** supplemental instruction~~,

v. The number and percentage of students demonstrating adequate reading proficiency,

vi. The number and percentage of students who were promoted to grade 4 based on demonstrated reading proficiency, a good cause exemption, or by parent/guardian consent for promotion, and

vii. The number and percentage of students who were not promoted to 4th grade.

viii. All data should be disaggregated by **multilingual learner status, disability status,** race, ethnicity and free and reduced lunch status (FARMS).

# ~~III.~~ II. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8

## A. PURPOSE

**This section of the policy outlines a comprehensive vision for advancing literacy instruction across grades 4 through 8, establishing clear expectations for evolving reading growth. It delivers a robust system of support and professional learning for educators to effectively deliver evidence-based instruction. Additionally, it implements a coordinated assessment system to identify and support students at risk for reading difficulties with targeted interventions. Finally, the policy elevates family collaboration through transparent communication and active engagement to foster reading success.**

Maryland's early-grade literacy policy sets a strong foundation that must be sustained in grades 4–**8** ~~12,~~ so students can keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, **writing,** and academic demands. Because literacy expectations expand across disciplines in the upper grades, ~~core~~ **Tier 1~~, core~~** instruction must continue to develop students' reading **and writing** proficiency to ensure access to rigorous coursework and readiness for **high school**, graduation, and postsecondary opportunities.

To address this need, a comprehensive adolescent literacy policy is essential to extend evidence-based literacy practices beyond grade 3 and ensure that all students ~~especially,~~ **particularly those with reading difficulties, those living in poverty, multilingual learners, students of color, and students with disabilities,** can access grade-level coursework and graduate on time. This policy is designed to strengthen literacy instruction and intervention across grades 4–**8** ~~12~~ in ways that reflect the developmental demands of adolescent ~~reading and the~~ literacy expectations embedded in secondary classrooms.

This policy aligns to the PreK–3 ~~framework's equity goals~~ focus on statewide a progression, while updating the approach for older students by integrating advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills into Tier 1 instruction across disciplines. Consistent with emerging research on adolescent literacy development, the policy emphasizes attention to both foundational and language-based dimensions of reading alongside comprehension and knowledge-building, with targeted interventions provided when screening and diagnostic evidence indicate need.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

#### a. Licensure

**~~i.~~ Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in elementary education, special education, or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:**

- **~~a)~~ Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or**
- **~~b)~~ Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.**

**Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.**

**ii. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.**

b. **Professional Learning**

**i. Local Education Agencies** (LEAs) **~~should~~** ~~shall~~ provide **the following system of support for grades 4 through 8 educators who support literacy instruction (95 Percent Group, 2026):**

**a)** Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning **on the Science of Reading; and**

**b)** Professional learning ~~for administrators, classroom teachers, including special education, speech-language pathologists, and teachers of multilingual learners as well as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists) on the system of assessments selected by LEAs and approved by MSDE to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills~~ to administer ~~the~~ assessment**s** and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention ~~design.~~ **(Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.);**

ii. ~~Coaching~~ **Instructional support** ~~should be provided~~ to ~~support~~ **assist** educators with implementing **Tier 1** instruction **using the LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-based decision-making **which may** include ~~ing~~:

a) Co-planning;

b) Co-teaching; and modeling;

**c) Professional learning communities;**

**d) Job-embedded professional learning;**

**e) Curriculum-based professional learning; and**

~~f) School-based teacher training on evidence-based instruction and use of screening/progress monitoring data;~~

f) Non-evaluative ~~coaching~~ observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

~~iii. for secondary ELA and content area teachers, special educators, multilingual learner (ML) educators, administrators, interventionists, instructional coaches, and other staff who support literacy instruction in grades 4-12. Professional learning shall address advanced foundational skills (multisyllabic word recognition, morphology, syntax), fluency, vocabulary, academic language, discourse, comprehension, writing, assessment use, differentiation for diverse learners, and scheduling within secondary timetables. For special educators and multilingual learner educators, professional learning shall also include targeted training on early foundational skills (phonological/phonemic awareness; basic decoding/encoding).~~

**c. LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation.**

d. **In accordance with COMAR 13A.07.06,** educator preparation programs **(EPPs) shall:**

i. **Provide the coursework and clinical experiences necessary** ~~are required~~ to prepare

candidates **seeking licensure for elementary education, secondary ELA, special education, English Language Development, and Reading Specialist roles to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading to:** ~~seeking licensure for secondary ELA, content area, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles with training and instruction to:~~

a) **Teach advanced decoding skills, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing effectively in secondary contexts;**

b) **Implement reading/literacy instruction using high-quality instructional materials aligned with the Science of Reading;**

c) **Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;**

d) **Understand and use student data (screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring) to make instructional decisions for Tier 1 and to design Tier 2/3 interventions; and**

e) **Demonstrate competency through State Board-recognized evidence consistent with existing timelines.**

~~f) Proficiency in teaching the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) for candidates pursuing early childhood, elementary, special education, and ESOL licensure; and~~

g) **Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and**

h) **Pass a State Board-approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates' knowledge of the Science of Reading.**

ii. **Annually submit a comprehensive data report to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) beginning in SY 2028–2029, detailing program completers:**

a) **Proficiency in teaching advanced decoding skills, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing effectively for candidates pursuing elementary education (grades 4-6) and secondary ELA (grades 6-8), special education, and ESOL licensure;**

b) **Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and**

c) **A narrative explaining how they assess each of the above-listed items throughout the program.**

e. **MSDE shall provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for all staff who support literacy instruction for students in grades 4 through 8 to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students how to engage with grade-level text ~~read~~ (The Reading League, 2022).**

i. **Staff hired prior to July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028.**

ii. **Staff hired after July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training within three years of their hire**

**date.**

~~f. Per COMAR 13A.12.02, all applicants seeking initial licensure in elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.~~

**g. The LEA must provide professional learning for administrators, classroom teachers, ~~including~~ special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, and English Language Development teachers ~~teachers of multilingual learners~~ as well as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists) on the system of assessments selected by LEAs and approved by MSDE to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and analyze the results to inform instruction.**

h. MSDE will provide guidance, ~~and~~ technical assistance**, and training** on **developing and** implementing ~~secondary MTSS and interventions embedded within the SRIP (see Section III), and provide~~ professional learning ~~(PL) guidance~~.

2. **SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENTS**

a. The system of assessments local education agencies **(LEAs)** use for students in grades 4 through **8** ~~11~~ shall include universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading **(Toste et al., 2026).** The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined below:

i. ~~Beginning in~~ **During** SY 2026–2027, MSDE shall release a ~~provisional~~ list of approved universal reading screeners and support **LEAs** ~~local education agency pilots~~ to inform optimal screening windows, reporting practices, and implementation supports for secondary grades. ~~MSDE shall prioritize screening tools designed for universal administration.~~ MSDE shall also ~~issue guidance~~ **provide support** on decision rules for follow-up diagnostic assessment and intervention~~, including the use of subtest patterns or other indicators of reading need~~.

ii. ~~Beginning in~~ **During** SY 2027–2028, l~~ocal education agencies shall~~ **LEAs will follow a phased-in timeline to** administer an MSDE-approved **adolescent** universal reading screener in accordance with the following grade-level requirements **(Sedita, 2024b, Toste, et al., 2026):**

a) **Starting in SY 2027-2028,** for students in grades 4 through **5** ~~8~~, the universal screener shall be administered three times per year at the beginning of year (BOY), middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY).

**b) Starting in SY 2028-2029, for students in grades 6-8, the universal screener shall be administered at BOY to any student who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the prior year's Maryland-approved English Language Arts assessment (Sedita, 2012):**

**1) Students who are identified through universal screening as demonstrating a reading difficulty or being at risk for reading difficulties shall also be screened again at MOY and EOY.**

b. Universal screeners **for grades 4-8** shall:

~~i. Accurately and reliably identify students at risk for reading difficulties, including characteristics associated with dyslexia;~~

ii. Measure, at a minimum, ~~foundational and~~ advanced **decoding** reading skills, including multisyllabic word recognition, morphology, and syntax, as well as **reading** fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension **for grades 4-5;**

**iii. Measure, at a minimum, ~~reading fluency,~~ vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 6-8 (AIM Institute, 2021; Sedita, 2024b);**

**c. Diagnostics shall be administered to students identified by the universal screener as at risk for reading difficulties.** Universal screening and ~~when required,~~ diagnostic ~~assessments~~ data shall ~~produce actionable~~ **provide actionable** information to ~~guide~~ **inform Tier I** instruction and **Tiers 2 and 3** intervention~~,~~ **to address reading difficulties (Bond, 2021; Sedita, 2024b; Sedita, 2026).**

d. Screeners, ~~and~~ diagnostic**, and progress monitoring tools** must provide timely, actionable reporting to teachers, administrators, and families with minimal loss of instructional time (Gersten et al., 2009).

**e. Students deemed at-risk for reading difficulties in 4-8 shall be provided targeted reading intervention with progress monitoring intervals of no more than 30 days (Gersten et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2010).**

**f.** For multilingual learners, screening and diagnostic assessment shall be ~~administered with appropriate accommodations and language development considerations, including MSDE guidance regarding timing and interpretation for newcomer students.~~ **given in English to identify the specific areas of need and track growth (ESSA, 2015):**

**i. When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).**

**ii. Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.**

**g.** For students with disabilities, screening**, diagnostic,** and progress monitoring shall be administered ~~in accordance with applicable accessibility and accommodations requirements.~~ **as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], 2004):**

**i. Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations may be used;**

**ii. MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented; and**

**iii. MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.**

**h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs shall request universal screener reading data to accompany transfer records. In grades 4-8:**

**i. Students whose in- or out-of-state reading assessment results demonstrate a lack of grade-level reading proficiency and lack current reading screener data will be screened within 30-calendar days of enrollment.**

**ii. If LEAs do not receive current screening or state reading assessment with the transfer records, LEAs will screen students within 30-calendar days of enrollment.**

**iii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested (or exempted if applicable) during the LEAs' next regular testing window.**

**i. LEAs will notify parents/guardians of their child's screening results (Learning Heroes, 2025).**

j. In determining which assessments to approve for LEA use, MSDE shall consider, at minimum:

i. Total time required to administer and score **the assessment, with the intention** of ~~to~~ minimiz**ing the** impact on instructional time;

ii. **The** professional learning needed to administer, interpret, and use data to plan instruction; and

iii. **The** timeliness and clarity of reporting **assessment results** to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

3. MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

a. All students in grades ~~4 12~~ **8** must receive Tier **1** literacy instruction **using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)** aligned with the Science of Reading **(Hammond, 2015; Washington & Iruka, 2024; Zeng, et al., 2025). Following structured literacy principles,** Tier **1** instruction ~~is defined as~~ **must be** evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit **and provide equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025). It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025).** Tier **1** instruction must also:

i. Address the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCR) for English Language Arts (ELA) and the MSDE's secondary literacy guidance (including any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk) that identifies advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills (multisyllabic decoding, morphology/word study, advanced spelling), syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building **within the LEA-selected HQIM (National Institute for Literacy & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007; Wang, et al., 2024);**~~in ELA and content courses;~~

ii. **Include educators' use of the LEA's system of** assessment**s** ~~of each student's literacy needs throughout the year, including the assessment types outlined in Section III.4 (diagnostic screeners and progress monitoring), with results used to adjust core instruction; and~~ **to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);**

iii. **Utilize a scope and sequence within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year that is delivered explicitly following Universal Design for Learning and Science of Learning principles for active and engaged students (CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);**

iv. Be delivered within ELA/content-area blocks sufficient to provide comprehensive literacy instruction and meaningful practice with **writing and** complex text. ~~LEAs shall~~

~~implement instructional minutes and scheduling that protect Tier I literacy instruction in ELA and **other** content-area **instruction** classrooms (including **math,** history/social studies, science, health, **and arts)**, consistent with MSDE guidance~~; **and**

v. **Be comprised of a sufficient number of daily instructional minutes for Tier I literacy instruction based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).**

b. MSDE shall maintain a recurring standards review cycle for grades 4–~~12~~ **8** with authority to issue off-cycle updates when research or student data warrant, to ensure Maryland's standards remain aligned with the Science of Reading. Because current standards do not explicitly include advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills in grades 6–~~12~~**8**, MSDE shall issue a Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk specifying research-based expectations for these skills by grade band and mapping them to current standards. LEAs shall implement Tier I practices consistent with the addendum while formal standards review proceeds. The timing of the addendum/crosswalk shall follow the Board-approved implementation timeline. MSDE may update state English Language Arts assessment blueprints and related guidance to align with adopted standards and any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk, consistent with the Board-approved implementation timeline.

**c.** MSDE will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process **for comprehensive literacy programs**, which publishes ~~the~~ reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) **website** ~~portal~~. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs. ~~IMR criteria and processes for secondary ELA and content-area materials will be updated – on the Board-approved timeline – to align with Tier I expectations grounded in the Science of Reading.~~ **HQIM must align with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards and be based on scientifically grounded reading and writing research, including the positive impact of integrated reading and writing instruction (Graham, 2012), designed to reduce the risk of reading difficulties ~~failure.~~ These materials shall:**

i. **Address the core components of adolescent literacy** ~~Update IMR criteria and processes for secondary ELA and content-area materials to reflect Tier I expectations~~ (advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills, syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, **foundational and compositional** writing, vocabulary, **comprehension,** and knowledge-building); ~~per the Board-approved timeline.~~

**ii. Integrate culturally responsive and language-affirming practices; and**

**iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model or leveled texts.**

d. ~~Until IMR updates are adopted,~~ LEAs should prioritize materials that meet Tier I expectations and avoid approaches not supported by the Science of Reading.

e. Students identified as at risk through screeners, including any grade 4 student promoted for a good cause or by parent/guardian consent, must receive targeted reading **and/or writing** intervention aligned to assessed needs, in addition to **Tier 1 instruction** ~~core coursework~~ **(Brown & Stollar, 2025). Science of Reading** based interventions shall be school-based and scheduled within the school day **(Durrance, 2023).** LEAs shall ensure **Tier 2 and 3 interventions**:

**i.** Match the specific skill profile ~~**(e.g., multisyllabic decoding/morphology, connected-text fluency with prosody, syntax/grammar, foundational writing,**~~

~~academic language, vocabulary/knowledge)~~ as determined by the diagnostic; are developmentally appropriate; and are ~~delivered~~ provided in an explicit, systematic, and sequential manner with ~~explicit instruction~~, adequate dosage and fidelity (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Brown & Stollar, 2025; NRP, 2000; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b);

ii. ~~Tier II interventions may be~~ Are delivered by ~~a general education teacher~~ any staff member trained in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the intervention being provided (Ragusa, 2026). ~~when appropriate; Tier III interventions shall be delivered by trained interventionists, trained teachers, and, where feasible, certified Reading Specialists. LEAs shall plan for staffing realities and may phase staffing targets consistent with MSDE guidance;~~

iii. Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);

iv. Do not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

v. ~~Secondary Scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning)~~ Follow scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) ~~intervention without~~ that do not remove ~~ing~~ access to required ~~core~~ Tier 1 ELA and content-area courses.

viii. Continue to provide English Language Development (ELD) instruction for Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.

f. For each student receiving intervention, schools ~~shall~~ ~~should~~ develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) within 30 calendar days of identification that specifies goals/benchmarks, intervention type/focus, service frequency and duration, progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, and exit criteria; align with Individualized Education Plans (IEP)/504 as applicable;

g. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment ~~opportunities~~ experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.

h. All students including multilingual learners (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974), students with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990), and students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction

i. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.

j. All students in grades 6–8 should receive interdisciplinary literacy instruction in history, social studies, science, and technical subjects to support the development of skills needed

**to meet college and career expectations (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).**

~~k. Schools establish protected collaboration time for general education, multilingual learner English Language Development, special education, and intervention teachers and staff to plan for how all students will access Tier 1 materials HQIM and instruction (including scaffolds and accommodations) and to align enrichment and interventions to Tier 1 goals and content (Sims et al., 2023).~~

4. **FAMILY NOTIFICATION AND STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLANS (SRIP)**

a. Any student in grades 4–5 (beginning in SY 2027–2028) and grades 6-8 (beginning in SY 2028-2029) who meets the following criteria shall receive a**n** SRIP **~~and/or intervention~~**:

i. Students who have been identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time in the current school year, based on the MSDE vetted and approved universal screener**; and** ~~assessment system.~~

ii. Any 4th grade student promoted for good cause by parent/guardian consent.

b. The SRIP shall be developed no later than 30**-calendar** days **upon closing of the universal screener assessment window and test results** identifying the reading difficulty.

c. The LEA must develop **a process and procedures to** notify the parent/guardian(s**), in writing (print or electronic communication), of any grade 4-8 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year** ~~in writing (may be print or electronic communication) within 10 school days of identification~~. The notification must be written in family-friendly language and include:

i. An explanation that the student has been identified as having difficulties in reading;

~~ii. A description of the current services provided to the student;~~

~~iii. A description of the proposed evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to address the identified area(s) of concern;~~

ii. An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the development of the SRIP **which includes evidence-based reading interventions ~~and supplemental instructional services and supports~~ to address the identified area(s) of reading concern; and**

iii. A school point of contact for follow-up.

d. The SRIP shall:

a) Be created by the teacher, principal, or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);

b) Describe the **evidence-based** intervention program(s) and**/or** practices grounded in the Science of Reading that the student will receive to remedy the reading **difficulty** ~~deficit~~;

c) Include the necessary frequency and duration of interventions to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning;

**d) Meet the requirements for Tier 1 instruction and reading interventions outlined in section III.B.3 above;**

e) Specify how the **intervention** ~~services~~ fit**s** within secondary schedules without

displacing required **content-area courses** ~~core coursework~~;

f) Include a progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance **at a minimum of every 30 days,** the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;

g) Identify exit criteria ~~and continued Tier I supports within ELA and content-area courses~~ **for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency**;

h) Provide more intensified interventions to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for students significantly below grade level and transfer or newly enrolled students identified with reading difficulties; **and**

**i) Be reviewed and updated annually with the parent/guardian(s) if a student exhibits the continued need for reading intervention.**

~~e. The SRIP shall be reviewed and updated with the parent/guardian(s) at established checkpoints and when progress-monitoring data indicate a need to adjust services.~~

e. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters and guidance for developing and implementing a SRIP as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources. LEAs may adapt samples while retaining required elements.

**f. If a student has not met exit criteria at the end of a given school year, the SRIP will stay active and go with the student to the following grade level. When transitioning to a new school, the receiving school shall meet once new screener and diagnostic data is available to update the SRIP with the new intervention details.**

g. If a student has reading goals on their IEP:

i. The IEP **may** ~~shall~~ substitute for the development of an SRIP;

**ii. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP will be updated;**

**iii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan.**

## C. GRADES 4-8 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| ~~Spring-Summer 2026~~ | ~~MSDE issues the provisional assessment menu and accompanying training plan~~ |
| ~~Summer 2026~~ | ~~MSDE releases initial Tier I guidance for adolescent literacy~~ |
| **2025-2026** | • **MSDE releases grades 4-8 Family Guides to support at-home literacy.** |
| ~~School Year (SY)~~ SY 2026-2027 | • ~~MSDE and select LEAs pilot assessment tools and workflows; refine timelines, data turnaround, and reporting~~<br>• ~~MSDE publishes professional learning (PL) provider vetting criteria~~ |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • **MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports.**<br>• MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance on MTSS for secondary schedules.<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include SRIPs, walkthrough tools, coaching, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.**<br>• **MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report which includes recommended screeners for grades 4-8.**<br>• **MSDE releases a grade 4-8 SRIP checklist and sample parent notification letters.** |
| ~~Fall 2027~~ | ~~MSDE releases guidance for developing a SRIP and sample parent notification letters, and provides training on their use.~~ |
| ~~Fall 2027~~ | ~~MSDE provides professional learning (PL) guidance~~ |
| Beginning ~~School Year~~ (SY) 2027-2028 | • MSDE launches Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders.<br>• Selected LEAs pilot intervention service models.<br>• **LEAs report SoR PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 4-8.**<br>• LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners **and follow-up diagnostics, as needed,** in grades **4-5** ~~4-12~~; MSDE technical assistance (TA) ~~and training~~ provided.<br>• **LEAs implement grades 4-5 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS.** ~~LEAs implement SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students~~<br>• MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes.<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning.** |
| **August 31, 2028** | • **LEA staff who support grades 4-8 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed SoR PL.**<br>• **LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete SoR PL within three years of their hire date.** |

| | |
|---|---|
| ~~Fall 2028~~ | • ~~MSDE updates Tier 1 guidance based on pilot findings and updated IMR criteria.~~<br>• ~~LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 4-5 screening and intervention data.~~<br>• ~~MSDE publishes adolescent literacy competencies and EPP review rubric.~~ |
| ~~SY~~ **2028-2029** | • **LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in grades 6-8.**<br>• **LEAs implement grades 6-8 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS.**<br>• ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~<br>• **LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 4-5.**<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.**<br>• **EPPs begin annual reporting of SoR course completion.**<br>• **MSDE publishes EPP completion rates annually.** |
| ~~September 15, 2029~~<br>**October 1, 2029** | • **LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 6-8 screening and intervention data.**<br>• ~~LEAs submit first annual adolescent literacy report to MSDE~~ |
| **SY 2029-2030** | • **LEAs begin to provide ongoing Science of Reading PL support for grades 6-8.**<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.**<br>• ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~ |
| **SY 2030-2031** | • **Full implementation of Adolescent Literacy grades 4-8th section of the PreK – 12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy.** |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by ~~September~~ **October** 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

i. Student participation rates for each screening window in the MSDE-approved and

required LEA assessment system;

ii. Number and percentage of students identified at risk **for reading difficulty** by grade **level** ~~and school~~;

iii. Number and percentage of students receiving **evidence-based reading** intervention ~~by tier and focus area (e.g., advanced foundational skills, fluency, syntax/academic language, vocabulary/knowledge)~~;

iv. Number **and percentage** of students with a SRIP **by grade level**~~, updates completed, and exits from intervention~~; **and**

v. Disaggregation by grade (4–**8** ~~12~~) and student groups consistent with state reporting practices (e.g., multilingual learner status and English language proficiency level, disability status, economically disadvantaged, race/ethnicity~~, gender~~).

b. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. ~~By September 15 of each academic year,~~ This list shall be submitted **annually** to MSDE.

2. MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

**a. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.**

**b. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.**

**c. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners; Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students; and students with disabilities.**

**d. MSDE will provide guidance on diagnostic assessment and intervention.**

e. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

f. MSDE shall annually compile the information required, along with state-level summary information, and report such information to the state board of education (SBOE), the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

g. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around ~~planning, scheduling, and~~ identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

~~h.~~ MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters, ~~guidance for developing a SRIP, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources.~~

**i. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for educators.**

**j. MSDE will develop an education/media campaign to increase families' and community stakeholders' knowledge about the importance of effective literacy instruction and Science of Reading practices for grades 4-8.**

**k. MSDE will publish EPP program completion rates annually to ensure transparency and alignment to the Science of Reading across the state's educator pipeline.**

3. MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy, including analysis of the following by **LEA** ~~district~~ and student groups:

**i. The number of students enrolled;**

**ii. The number and percentage of students screened;**

**iii. The number and percentage of students identified as at-risk for reading difficulty;**

**iv. The number and percentage of students that received reading intervention;**

**v. The number and percentage of students demonstrating adequate reading proficiency;**

**vi. All data should be disaggregated by multilingual learner status, disability status, race, ethnicity, and free and reduced lunch status (FARMS); and**

**vii. The number and percentage of employees who support literacy instruction trained in the Science of Reading.**

# IV. Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12

## A. PURPOSE

Maryland's early-grade literacy policy sets a strong foundation that must be sustained in grades ~~4~~ **9**-12, so students can keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, **writing,** and academic demands. Because literacy expectations expand across disciplines in the upper grades, ~~core~~ **Tier 1~~, core~~** instruction must continue to develop students' **vocabulary,** reading**, and writing** proficiency **through enhancing disciplinary literacy skills** to ensure access to rigorous coursework, readiness for graduation, and **success with** postsecondary opportunities.

To address this need, a comprehensive adolescent literacy policy is essential to extend evidence-based literacy practices beyond grade 3 and ensure that all students ~~especially,~~ **particularly those with reading difficulties, those living in poverty**, multilingual learners**, students of color,** ~~especially multilingual learners~~ and students with disabilities can access grade-level coursework and graduate on time. This policy is designed to strengthen literacy instruction and intervention across grades ~~4~~ **9-12** in ways that reflect the developmental demands of adolescent reading and the literacy expectations embedded in secondary classrooms.

This policy aligns to the PreK–3 framework's equity goals and focus on statewide progression, while updating the approach for older students by integrating advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills into Tier 1 instruction across disciplines. Consistent with emerging research on adolescent literacy development, the policy emphasizes attention to both foundational and language-based dimensions of reading alongside comprehension and knowledge-building, with targeted interventions provided when screening and diagnostic evidence indicate need.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

**a. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in special education or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:**

- ~~**i.**~~ **Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or**
- ~~**ii.**~~ **Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.**

**Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.**

**b. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in special education (birth through adult) and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.**

**c. Local Education Agencies** (LEAs) ~~**should** shall~~ provide **the following system of support for grades ~~4~~ 9 through ~~8~~ 12 educators who support literacy instruction (95 Percent Group, 2026):**

- **i.** Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning **on the Science of Reading;**
- ii. Professional learning ~~for administrators, classroom teachers, including special education, speech-language pathologists, and teachers of multilingual learners as well~~

~~as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists) on the system of assessments selected by LEAs and approved by MSDE to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills~~ to administer ~~the~~ assessment**s** and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention ~~design.~~ **(Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.).**

d. ~~Coaching~~ **Instructional support** ~~should be provided~~ to ~~support~~ **assist** educators with implementing **Tier 1** instruction **using the LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-based decision-making **which may** include ~~ing~~:

   i. Co-planning;
   **ii.** Co-teaching and modeling;
   **iii. Professional learning communities;**
   **iv. Job-embedded professional learning;**
   **v. Curriculum-based professional learning; and**
   ~~vi. School-based teacher training on evidence-based instruction and use of screening/ progress-monitoring data;~~
   vii. Non-evaluative ~~coaching~~ observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

~~e. for secondary ELA and content-area teachers, special educators, multilingual learner (ML) educators, administrators, interventionists, instructional coaches, and other staff who support literacy instruction in grades 4-12. Professional learning shall address advanced foundational skills (multisyllabic word recognition, morphology, syntax), fluency, vocabulary, academic language, discourse, comprehension, writing, assessment use, differentiation for diverse learners, and scheduling within secondary timetables. For special educators and multilingual learner educators, professional learning shall also include targeted training on early foundational skills (phonological/phonemic awareness; basic decoding/encoding).~~

**f. LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation. In accordance with COMAR 13A.07.06,** educator preparation programs **shall:**

   i. **Provide the coursework and clinical experiences necessary** ~~are required~~ to prepare candidates **seeking licensure for secondary ELA, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Read to:** ~~seeking licensure for secondary ELA, content-area, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles with training and instruction to:~~

      **1) Teach advanced morphology and etymology, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing effectively in secondary contexts;**
      **2) Implement reading/literacy instruction using high-quality instructional materials aligned with the Science of Reading;**
      **3) Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;**
      **4) Understand and use student data (screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring) to make instructional decisions for Tier I and to design Tier II/III**

**interventions; and**

**5) Demonstrate competency through State Board-recognized evidence consistent with existing timelines.**

**b. MSDE shall provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for all staff who support literacy instruction for students in grades 9 through 12 to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students how to engage with grade-level text ~~read~~ (The Reading League, 2022).**

**i. Staff hired prior to July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028.**

**ii. Staff hired after July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training within three years of their hire date.**

c. MSDE will provide guidance, ~~and~~ technical assistance**, and training** on **developing and** implementing ~~secondary MTSS and interventions embedded within the SRIP (see Section III), and provide~~ professional learning ~~(PL) guidance~~.

2. **SYSTEM OF ASSESSMENTS**

a. The system of assessments local education agencies **(LEAs)** use for students in grades ~~4~~ **9** through ~~11~~ **12** shall include universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading **(Toste et al., 2026)**. The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined below:

i. ~~Beginning in~~ **During** SY 2026–2027, MSDE shall release a ~~provisional~~ list of approved universal reading screeners and support **LEAs** ~~local education agency pilots~~ to inform optimal screening windows, reporting practices, and implementation supports for secondary grades. ~~MSDE shall prioritize screening tools designed for universal administration.~~ MSDE shall also ~~issue guidance~~ **provide support** on decision rules for follow-up diagnostic assessment and intervention~~, including the use of subtest patterns or other indicators of reading need~~.

**ii. Starting in SY 2029-2030** for students in grade~~s~~ 9 ~~and 10~~, the universal screener shall be administered at the beginning of year (BOY) **to any student who did not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency on the prior year's Maryland-approved English Language Arts assessment (Sedita, 2012).**

1. Students ~~in grades 9 and 10~~ who are identified through universal screening as demonstrating a reading difficulty or being at risk for poor reading outcomes shall also be screened at MOY and EOY.

**ii.** For students in grade**s 10-12** ~~11, identification for additional universal screening shall be informed by end-of-year (EOY) screening or assessment data from grade 10.~~ **a universal screener shall be administered at BOY beginning in SY 2029-2030 if the student was identified as demonstrating not achieving reading proficiency the previous school year. Students who have been designated as College and Career Ready will be exempt from screening.**

b. Universal screeners shall:

i. Accurately and reliably identify **and predict** students **who may be** at risk for reading difficulties, including characteristics associated with dyslexia; **and**

ii. **Measure, at a minimum, ~~reading fluency,~~ vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 9-12 (AIM Institute, 2021; Sedita, 2024b).**

c. **Diagnostics shall be administered to students identified by the universal screener as at risk for reading difficulties.** Universal screening and ~~when required,~~ diagnostic ~~assessments~~ data shall ~~produce actionable~~ **provide actionable** information to ~~guide~~ **inform Tier 1** instruction and **Tiers 2 and 3** intervention~~,~~ **to address reading difficulties (Bond, 2021; Sedita, 2024b; Sedita, 2026).**

**d.** Screeners, ~~and~~ diagnostic**, and progress monitoring** results must provide timely, actionable reporting to teachers, administrators, and families with minimal loss of instructional time **(Gersten et al., 2009).**

**e. Students deemed at-risk for reading difficulties in 9-12 shall be provided targeted reading intervention with progress monitoring intervals of no more than 30 days (Gersten et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2010).**

**f.** For multilingual learners, screening and diagnostic assessment shall be ~~administered with appropriate accommodations and language development considerations, including MSDE guidance regarding timing and interpretation for newcomer students.~~ **given in English to identify the specific areas of need and track growth (ESSA, 2015):**

i. **When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).**

ii. **Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.**

**g.** For students with disabilities, screening**, diagnostic,** and progress monitoring shall be administered ~~in accordance with applicable accessibility and accommodations requirements.~~ **as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; IDEA, 2004):**

i. **Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations can be used;**

ii. **MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented; and**

iii. **MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.**

**h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs shall request state reading data to accompany transfer records. In grades 9-12:**

i. **Students whose in- or out-of-state reading assessment results demonstrate a lack of grade-level reading proficiency and lack current reading screener data will be screened within 30-calendar days of enrollment.**

ii. **If LEAs do not receive current screening or state reading assessment with the transfer records, LEAs will screen students within 30-calendar days of enrollment.**

**iii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested (or exempted if applicable) during the LEAs' next regular testing window.**

**i. LEAs will notify parents/guardians of their child's screening results (Learning Heroes, 2025).**

j. In determining which assessments to approve for LEA use, MSDE shall consider, at minimum:

i. Total time required to administer and score **the assessment, with the intention of** ~~to~~ minimize**ing the** impact on instructional time;

ii. **The** professional learning needed to administer, interpret, and use data to plan instruction; and

iii. **The** timeliness and clarity of reporting **assessment results** to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

3. MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

a. All students in grades~~4~~ **9-**12 must receive Tier I literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading **using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) (Hammond, 2015; Washington & Iruka, 2024; Zeng, et al., 2025). Following structured literacy principles,** Tier I instruction ~~is defined as~~ **must be** evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit **and provide equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025). It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025).** Tier I instruction must also:

i. Address the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCR) for English Language Arts (ELA) and the MSDE's secondary literacy guidance (including any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk) that identifies advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills (multisyllabic decoding, morphology/word study, advanced spelling), syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building **within the LEA-selected HQIM (National Institute for Literacy & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007; Wang, et al., 2024);**~~in ELA and content courses;~~

**ii. Include educators' use of the LEA's system of** assessments ~~of each student's literacy needs throughout the year, including the assessment types outlined in Section III.4 (diagnostic screeners and progress monitoring), with results used to adjust core instruction; and~~ **to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);**

**iii. Utilize a scope and sequence within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year that is delivered explicitly following Universal Design for Learning and Science of Learning principles for active and engaged students (CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);**

~~iv.~~ Be delivered within ELA/content-area blocks sufficient to provide comprehensive literacy instruction and meaningful practice with **writing and** complex text. ~~LEAs shall implement instructional minutes and scheduling that protect Tier I literacy instruction in ELA and~~ **~~other~~** ~~content area~~ **instruction** ~~classrooms (including~~ **~~math,~~** ~~history/social studies, science, health,~~ **~~and arts~~**~~), consistent with MSDE guidance;~~ **~~and~~**

**v. Be comprised of a sufficient number of daily instructional minutes for Tier I literacy instruction based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced**

**learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).**

b. MSDE shall maintain a recurring standards review cycle for grades ~~4–12~~ **9-12** with authority to issue off-cycle updates when research or student data warrant, to ensure Maryland's standards remain aligned with the Science of Reading. Because current standards do not explicitly include advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills in grades ~~6~~ **9**–12, MSDE shall issue a Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk specifying research-based expectations for these skills by grade band and mapping them to current standards. LEAs shall implement Tier I practices consistent with the addendum while formal standards review proceeds. The timing of the addendum/crosswalk shall follow the Board-approved implementation timeline. MSDE may update state English Language Arts assessment blueprints and related guidance to align with adopted standards and any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk, consistent with the Board-approved implementation timeline.

**c.** MSDE will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process **for comprehensive literacy programs**, which publishes ~~the~~ reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) **website** ~~portal~~. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs. ~~IMR criteria and processes for secondary ELA and content-area materials will be updated—on the Board-approved timeline—to align with Tier I expectations grounded in the Science of Reading.~~ **These materials shall:**

i. **Address the core components of adolescent literacy** ~~Update IMR criteria and processes for secondary ELA and content-area materials to reflect Tier I expectations~~ (advanced ~~foundational~~ **decoding** skills, syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, **foundational and compositional** writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building); ~~per the Board-approved timeline.~~

**ii. Integrate culturally responsive and language-affirming practices; and**

**iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model or leveled texts.**

d. ~~Until IMR updates are adopted,~~ LEAs should prioritize materials that meet **Tier 1** expectations and avoid approaches not supported by the Science of Reading.

e. Students identified as at risk through screeners~~, including any grade 4 student promoted for a good cause or by parent/guardian consent~~, must receive targeted reading **and/or writing** intervention aligned to assessed needs, in addition to **Tier 1 instruction** ~~core coursework~~ **(Brown & Stollar, 2025). Science of Reading based** interventions shall be school-based and scheduled within the school day **(Durrance, 2023).** LEAs shall ensure **Tier 2 and 3 interventions**:

i. Match the specific skill profile ~~**(e.g., multisyllabic decoding/morphology, connected-text fluency with prosody, syntax/grammar, foundational writing, academic language, vocabulary/knowledge)**~~ **as determined by the diagnostic;** are developmentally appropriate; and are ~~delivered~~ **provided in an explicit, systematic, and sequential manner** with ~~explicit instruction~~, adequate dosage and fidelity **(Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Brown & Stollar, 2025; NRP, 2000; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b);**

ii. ~~Tier II interventions may be~~ **Are delivered** by ~~a general education teacher~~ **any staff member** trained in **the Science of Reading (SoR) and** the intervention **being provided (Ragusa, 2026).** ~~when appropriate; Tier III interventions shall be delivered by trained interventionists, trained teachers, and, where feasible, certified Reading Specialists. LEAs~~

~~shall plan for staffing realities and may phase staffing targets consistent with MSDE guidance;~~

iii. **Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);**

**iv. Do not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and**

v. ~~Secondary~~ **Follow** scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) ~~provide intervention without~~ that do not remove access to required ~~core~~ Tier 1 ELA **and** content**-area** courses.

**ix. Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions must continue to receive English Language Development (ELD) instruction. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.**

f. For each student receiving intervention, schools shall develop ~~a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)~~ **a plan** within 30 **calendar** days of identification that specifies goals/benchmarks, intervention type/focus, service frequency and duration, progress monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, and exit criteria; align with Individualized Education Plans (IEP)/504 as applicable.

**g. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment ~~opportunities~~ experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.**

**h. All students including multilingual learners (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974), students with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990), and students with an intervention plan ~~a Student Reading Improvement Plan~~ must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction.**

**i. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.**

**j. All students in grades 6–8 should receive interdisciplinary literacy instruction in history, social studies, science, and technical subjects to support the development of skills needed to meet college and career expectations (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).**

~~**k.** Schools establish protected collaboration time for general education, multilingual learner **English Language Development,** special education, and intervention **teachers and** staff to plan for how all students will access Tier 1 materials **HQIM** and instruction (including scaffolds and accommodations) and to align **enrichment and** interventions to Tier 1 goals and content **(Sims et al., 2023).**~~

4. FAMILY NOTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION ~~STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLANS (SRIP)~~

~~a. Beginning in SY 2029–2030, any student in grades 9–12 who meets the following criteria shall receive literacy intervention support which is noted on their Six-Year Plan in the goals and high school plan sections following *MSDE's State Guidelines: Six-Year Plans: Comprehensive Guidelines for Maryland's Six-Year Plan Implementation*:~~

~~i. Students who have been identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time in the current school year, based on an MSDE vetted and approved universal screener.~~

~~b. The Six-Year Plan shall be developed updated no later than 30 calendar days upon closing of the universal screener assessment window and test results after identifying the reading difficulty.~~

a. **Beginning in SY 2029-2030,** the LEA must develop **a process and procedures, in writing (print or electronic), to** notify the parent/guardian(s) **of any 9-12 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year** ~~in writing (may be print or electronic communication~~) ~~within 10 school days of identification~~. The notification must be written in family-friendly language and include:

i. An explanation that the student has been identified as having difficulties in reading;

~~ii. A description of the current services provided to the student;~~

~~iii. A description of the proposed evidence-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to address the identified area(s) of concern;~~

**iv.** An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the ~~development of the SRIP that includes~~ **evidence-based reading interventions ~~and supplemental instructional services and supports~~ to address the identified area(s) of reading concern; and**

v. A school point of contact for follow-up.

b. The ~~SRIP~~ **reading intervention(s)** shall:

i. **Be identified** ~~created~~ by the teacher, principal, or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);

ii. **Be** ~~Describe the~~ **an evidence-based** intervention program(s) and**/or** practices grounded in the Science of Reading that the student will receive to remedy the reading **difficulty** ~~deficit~~;

iii. **Be administered at** ~~Include~~ the necessary frequency and duration ~~of interventions~~ to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning **and** ~~Specify how intervention services~~ fit**s** within secondary schedules without displacing required **content-area courses** ~~core coursework~~;

iv. Include a progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance**,** the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;

v. **Have clear** ~~Identify~~ exit criteria ~~and continued Tier I supports within ELA and content-area courses~~ **for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency**;

vi. ~~Provide more intensified interventions~~ **Increase in intensity** to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for students significantly below grade level and transfer or newly enrolled students identified with reading difficulties;

**vii. Be reviewed and updated as needed with the parent/guardian(s) if a student exhibits the continued need for reading intervention;**

~~c. The SRIP shall be reviewed and updated with the parent/guardian(s) at established checkpoints and when progress-monitoring data indicate a need to adjust services.~~

c. If a student has reading goals on their IEP:

~~i. The IEP shall substitute for the development of an SRIP;~~

**i. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP may ~~will~~ be updated;**

**ii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop reading intervention. ~~a Student Reading Improvement Plan.~~**

## C. GRADES 9-12 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| ~~Spring-Summer 2026~~ | ~~MSDE issues the provisional assessment menu and accompanying training plan~~ |
| ~~Summer 2026~~ | ~~MSDE releases initial Tier 1 guidance for adolescent literacy~~ |
| ~~School Year (SY)~~ 2026-2027 | • ~~MSDE and select LEAs pilot assessment tools and workflows; refine timelines, data turnaround, and reporting~~<br>• ~~MSDE publishes professional learning (PL) provider vetting criteria~~<br>• ~~MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance on MTSS for secondary schedules~~<br>• **MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports.**<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include walkthrough tools, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.**<br>• **MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report with grades 9-12.** |
| ~~Fall 2027~~ | ~~MSDE releases guidance for developing a SRIP and sample parent notification letters, and provides training on their use.~~ |
| ~~Fall 2027~~ | ~~MSDE provides professional learning (PL) guidance~~ |
| ~~Beginning School Year~~ **SY** 2027-2028 | • MSDE launches Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders.<br>• ~~Selected LEAs pilot intervention service models~~<br>• **LEAs report Science of Reading PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 9-12.** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • ~~LEAs implement SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students~~<br>• MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes.<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning.** |
| **August 31, 2028** | • **LEA staff who support grades 9-12 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed SoR PL.**<br>• **LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete Science of Reading PL within three years of their hire date.** |
| ~~Fall 2028~~ | • ~~MSDE updates Tier 1 guidance based on pilot findings and updated IMR criteria~~<br>• ~~MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy competencies and EPP review rubric.~~ |
| **2028-2029** | • ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.** |
| **2029-2030** | • **LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, along with parent notification, as needed, in grades 9-12.**<br>• **LEAs begin to provide ongoing Science of Reading PL support for grades 9-12.**<br>• **MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.**<br>• ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~ |
| **October 1, 2030** | • **LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 9-12 screening and intervention data.** |
| **2030-2031** | • **Full implementation of the Adolescent Literacy 9-12th section of the PreK – 12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy.** |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by ~~September~~ **October** 1 of each year,

the following information on the prior school year:

i. Student participation rates for each screening window in the MSDE-approved and required LEA assessment system;

ii. Number and percentage of students identified at risk **for reading difficulty** by grade **level** ~~and school~~;

iii. Number and percentage of students receiving **evidence-based reading** intervention; **and** ~~by tier and focus area (e.g., advanced foundational skills, fluency, syntax/academic language, vocabulary/knowledge);~~

iv. ~~Number of students with a SRIP, updates completed, and exits from intervention;~~

v. Disaggregation by grade **(9-12)** and student groups consistent with state reporting practices (e.g., multilingual learners/English proficiency levels, disability status, economically disadvantaged, race/ethnicity~~, gender~~).

b. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. ~~By September 15 of each academic year,~~ This list shall be submitted **annually** to MSDE.

2. MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

**a. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.**

**b. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.**

**c. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners; Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students; and students with disabilities.**

**d. MSDE will provide decision rules for follow up diagnostic assessment and intervention.**

e. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

f. MSDE shall annually compile the information required, along with state-level summary information, and report such information to the state board of education (SBOE), the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

g. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around ~~planning, scheduling, and~~ identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

h. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters~~, guidance for developing a SRIP, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources~~.

**i. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for administrators, ELA supervisors, and educators in grades 9-12.**

3. MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy, including analysis of: ~~the following by LEA district and student groups:~~

**i. The number and percentage of employees who support literacy instruction trained in the Science of Reading.**

# VII. References

## A. Laws & Regulations


1. Education Article 7-202
2. **Every Student Succeeds Act 2015**
3. **Gifted and Talented Education (COMAR 13A.04.07)**
4. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004)**
5. Literacy Standards Regulation
6. Ready to Read Act (SB 734)
7. Ready to Read Regulations (COMAR 13A.03.08)
8. ~~Maryland Blueprint Transitional Supplemental Instruction (TSI)~~


## B. Board Policies, Resolutions, Frameworks, and Guidance


1. State Board Resolution 24-01 – Statewide Adoption and Implementation of the Science of Reading
2. Maryland College and Career-Readiness Standards for ELA
3. Maryland Early Learning Standards
4. **A Framework for Multi-Tiered System of Supports: A Maryland MTSS Guide**
5. **Criteria for excellence: Gifted and talented education program**
6. **MSDE's Maryland's PreK – 12 Family Engagement Framework: A Shared Responsibility**
7. **MSDE's ELA/Literacy High-Quality Instructional Materials Identification Framework**
8. **MSDE's Literacy High-Quality Instructional Materials Rubric**
9. **MSDE's Building a Strong Foundation High-Quality Instruction Materials Adoption Framework**
10. **MSDE's HQIM Implementation Framework**


## C. Research


**95 Percent Group. (2026). *Science of Reading 3.0: Widening the lens on literacy*. https://info.95percentgroup.com/ebook-sor-3.0**

**AIM Institute for Learning & Research. (2021). *Quick guide for reading assessment*. AIM Nexus. https://nexus.aimpa.org/publications/articles/quick-guide-for-reading-assessment**

**Al Otaiba, S., Allor, J. H., Baker, K., Conner, C., Stewart, J., & Mellado de la Cruz, V. M. (2019). *Teaching phonemic awareness and word reading skills: Focusing on explicit and systematic approaches. Perspectives on Language and Literacy*.**

**Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.**

**Bailey, T. R., Colpo, A., & Foley, A. (2020, December). Assessment practices within a multi-tiered system of supports (Document No. IC-18). University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center. https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Assessment-Practices-Within-a-Multi-Tiered-System-of-Supports-2.pdf**

**Bond, B. (2021, October 27). Early reading: Screening, diagnosis, and prevention. Albert Shanker Institute. https://www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/early-reading-screening-diagnosis-and-prevention**

**Brown, S., & Stollar, S. (2025). *MTSS for Reading Improvement: A Leader's Tool Kit for Schoolwide Success (Reading science in action: an MTSS tool kit)*. Solution Tree Press.**

**CAST. (n.d.). *Evidence and benefits of UDL*. https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/evidence/**

**Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). *Ensuring fidelity of assessment and data entry procedures*. https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/DataFidelity_Final508.pdf**

**Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2022). *10 essential features of tier 2 supplemental intervention* [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/10-features-tier2-v2.pdf**

**Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2023). *Essential features of tier 1 core programming* [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/tier_1_infographic.pdf**

**Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2023). *Essential features of tier 3 intensive intervention* [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/tier3_infographic.pdf**

**Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2025). *Tier 1: Considerations for improving tier 1 instruction, curriculum, and environment* [Tip sheet]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/considerations_tier1.pdf**

**Chung, P. J., Patel, D. R., & Nizami, I. (2020). Disorder of written expression and dysgraphia: definition, diagnosis, and management. *Translational pediatrics*, *9*(Suppl 1), S46–S54. https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2019.11.01**

**Ciancio, D. (2023, July 18). *The importance of comprehension in the science of reading*. Institute of Education Sciences. https://ies.ed.gov/learn/blog/importance-comprehension-science-reading**

**Colorado Department of Education. (2021, July). *What is the difference between decodable text and leveled text?***

**Connor, C. M., Alberto, P. A., Compton, D. L., & O'Connor, R. E. (2014). Improving reading outcomes for students with or at risk for reading disabilities: A synthesis of the contributions from the Institute of Education Sciences Research Centers (NCSER 2014-3000). National Center for Special Education Research. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544759**

**Durrance, S. (2023). *Implementing MTSS in secondary schools: Challenges and strategies*. SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro.**

**EdTrust-New York. (2025, June). *Every grade counts: The state of adolescent literacy in New York*. https://newyork.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/The-State-of-Adolescent-Literacy-in-New-York.pdf**

**Esparza Brown, J., & Sanford, A. (2011). *RTI for English language learners: Appropriately using screening and progress monitoring tools to improve instructional outcomes*. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/rtiforells.pdf**

**Gersten, R., Baker, S.K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide (NCEE 2007-4011)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20074011.pdf**

**Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2008). Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and multi-tier intervention in the primary grades: A practice guide (NCEE 2009-4045). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. ed.gov**

**Graham, S. (2020). The sciences of reading and writing must become more fully integrated. *Reading research quarterly*, *55*, S35-S44.**

**Greene, T. (2024, January 10). *From policy to action: Why 8 states banned three-cueing from K-3 reading instruction*. ExcelinEd in Action. https://excelinedinaction.org/2024/01/10/from-policy-to-action-why-8-states-banned-three-cueing-from-k-3-reading-instruction/**

**Greene, Jay P., and Marcus A. Winters. "Revisiting grade retention: An evaluation of Florida's test-based promotion policy." *Education Finance and Policy* 2.4 (2007): 319-340.**

**Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J., & Wayman, J. (2009). *Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making* (NCEE 2009-4067). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/12**

**Hammond, Z. L. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain*. Corwin Press.**

**Heal, J., & Lee, M.(2026, April).*The science of learning: A blueprint for instructional improvement*. *The Learning Professional*, *47*(2). https://learningforward.org/journal/applying-the-science-of-learning/the-science-of-learning-a-blueprint-for-instructional-improvement/**

**Herrera, S., Phillips, B. M., Newton, Y., Dombek, J. L., & Hernandez, J. A. (2021). *Effectiveness of early literacy instruction: Summary of 20 years of research* (REL 2021–084). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs**

**Hwang, NaYoung, and Cory Koedel. "Helping or hurting: The effects of retention in the third grade on student outcomes." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 47.1 (2025): 65-88.**

**International Dyslexia Association. (n.d.). *Effective reading instruction*. https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/**

**International Dyslexia Association. (2017, October 5). *Universal screening: K–2 reading*. https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/**

**International Dyslexia Association. (2022, December 20). *English learners and dyslexia*. https://dyslexiaida.org/english-learners-and-dyslexia/**

**Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). *Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices* (NCEE #2008-4027). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. ed.gov**

**Kaplan, S. N. (2019). The grid: Differentiated curriculum for the gifted and talented. Prufrock Press. Learning Heroes. (2025, October). *Centering families in the future of education: Insights & perspectives from 10 years of research*. https://bealearninghero.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/LH_10YearReport_SEPT25_V7-WEB-PAGES.pdf**

**Mumma, Kirsten, and Marcus Winters. "The effect of retention under Mississippi's test-based promotion policy."." *Technical Report Working Paper 2023-1*. Wheelock Educational Policy Center Boston, MA, 2023.**

**National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). *Screening for Reading Risk: What Is It and Why Is It Important*? https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/screening-for-reading-risk-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-important**

**National Institute for Literacy, & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2007). *What content-area teachers should know about adolescent literacy*. U.S. Department of Education. nih.gov**

**National Reading Panel. (2000). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction*. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.**

**Ozernov-Palchik, O., Norton, E. S., Sideridis, G., Beach, S. D., Wolf, M., Gabrieli, J. D. E., & Gaab, N. (2017). Longitudinal stability of pre-reading skill profiles of kindergarten children: implications for early screening and theories of reading. *Developmental science*, *20*(5), 10.1111/desc.12471. https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12471**

**Pondiscio, R., & Mahnken, K. (2014, September 24). *Leveled reading: The making of a literacy myth*. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. fordhaminstitute.org**

**Ragusa, J. (2026, April 21). *New study shows LETRS training improves student reading outcomes. Kentucky Teacher*. Retrieved from https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/news/2026/04/new-study-shows-letrs-training-improves-student-reading-outcomes/**

**Renzulli, J. S. (2021). Rethinking enrichment clusters: Research-based practices for developing creative productivity. Gifted Education International, 37(3), 181–198.**

**Richmond, C. L., Daucourt, M. C., Hart, S. A., & Solari, E. J. (2024). Examining the Word Level Skill and Reading Comprehension Profiles of Adolescents with and without Specific Learning Disabilities. *Learning disability quarterly : journal of the Division for Children with Learning Disabilities*, *47*(3), 167–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/07319487231182133**

**Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (pp. 97–110). Guilford Press.**

**Schwerdt, Guido, and Martin R. West. "The Effects of Early Grade Retention on Student Outcomes over Time: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Florida. Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Papers Series. PEPG 12-09."** ***Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University*** **(2012).**

**Sedita, J. (2023).** ***The writing rope: A framework for explicit writing instruction in all subjects.*** **Paul H. Brookes Publishing.**

**Sedita, J. (2024a, November 12). Disciplinary literacy.** ***Literacy Lines.***

**https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/disciplinary-literacy-2/**

**Sedita, J. (2024b, November 25).** ***Reading assessment model, grades 5–12.*** **Keys to Literacy.**

**https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/reading-assessment-model-grades-5-12/**

**Sedita, J. (2026, March).** ***Adolescent literacy: A guide.*** **Keys to Literacy; K12 Coalition.**

**https://keystoliteracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/KTL-Guide_Adolescent_Literacy_2026.pdf**

**Shanahan, T. (2025).** ***Leveled reading, leveled lives: How students' reading achievement has been held back and what we can do about it.*** **Harvard Education Press.**

**Shanahan T., Shanahan C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy.** ***Harvard Educational Review*****, 78, 40-59.**

**Sims, W. A., King, K. R., Preast, J. L., Burns, M. K., & Panameño, S. (2023). Are school-based problem-solving teams effective? A meta-analysis of student- and systems-level effects.** ***Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*****,** ***33*****(4), 407–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2023.2232785**

**Sweller, J., van Merriënboer, J.J.G. & Paas, F. Cognitive Architecture and Instructional Design: 20 Years Later.** ***Educ Psychol Rev*** **31, 261–292 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09465-5**

**The Reading League. (2022). Science of reading: Defining guide. https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-thescience-of-reading**

**TNTP. (2018).** ***The opportunity myth: What students can show us about how school is letting them down—and how to fix it.*** **The Opportunity Myth - TNTP**

**Toste, J. R., Espinas, D., Oslund, E., Elleman, A., & Biancarosa, G. (2026). Measuring what matters: Understanding what reading assessments really tell us.** ***The Reading League Journal*****.**

**Vaughn, S., Denton, C. A., & Fletcher, J. M. (2010). Why intensive interventions are necessary for students with severe reading difficulties. Psychology in the Schools, 47(5), 432–444. https://doi.org**

**Wang, Z., O'Reilly, T., & Sutherland, R. (2024). Replicating decoding threshold in ReadBasix®: Impact on reading skills development (Research Memorandum No. RM-24-06). ETS.**

**Washington, J. A., & Iruka, I. U. (2025). Linguistic justice: Addressing linguistic variation of Black children in teaching and learning.** ***Linguistics and Education*****,** ***85*****, 101382.**

**White, S., & McCloskey, M. (2005). *Framework for the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy* (NCES 2005-531). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.**

**Wohlstetter, P., Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2008). Creating a system for data-driven decision-making: Applying the principal–agent framework. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *19*(3), 239–259. Doi.org**

**Zeng, Y., Isleem, H. F., Tejani, G. G., Jahami, A., & Alnowibet, K. A. (2025). Examining the impact of culturally responsive teaching and identity affirmation on student outcomes: A mixed-methods study in diverse educational settings. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *117*, 103376.**

## D. Other Policies Consulted

**An Act Relative to Teacher Preparation and Student Literacy, H. 5511, 194th Gen. Court. (Mass. 2026). Massachusetts Legislature Bill Text Repository.**

**Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-7-1201 *et seq.* (2012 & Supp. 2025).**

**ExcelinEd. (2025). *Advancing adolescent literacy (grades 4–8) model policy*. https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ExcelinEd-Adolescent-Literacy-Model-Policy.pdf**

**Georgia Council on Literacy. (2024). *Georgia's vision 2030: State literacy plan*. Georgia Reads. https://georgiareads.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Literacy-Plan.pdf**

**Indiana Department of Education. (2024). *Indiana academic standards for literacy development and teacher endorsement protocols*. Indiana Department of Education Literacy Hub.**

**Louisiana Department of Education. (2026, February). *Louisiana tiered pathways for literacy support framework*. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/literacy/louisiana-tiered-pathway-for-literacy-support-framework-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=afadb7dd_1**

**Mississippi policy on individual reading plans: Literacy-Based Promotion Act, Miss. Code Ann. § 37-177-1 et seq. (2024)**

**New Jersey Department of Education. (2025). *The New Jersey literacy framework: A guide to evidence-based literacy practices & universal screeners*. New Jersey Department of Education Literacy Guidance Platform.**

**Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. (2025). *Ohio's plan to raise literacy achievement*. https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Ohios-Plan-to-Raise-Literacy-Achievement.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US**

**Oregon Department of Education. (2025). *Oregon's Adolescent Literacy Framework*. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/ELA/Documents/ORAdolescentLiteracyFramework_2025.pdf**

**Utah State Legislature. (2026). *S.B. 241: Early literacy*.https://le.utah.gov/Session/2026/bills/static/SB0241.html**

**Virginia Literacy Act, Va. Code Ann. §§ 22.1-253.13:2 (2022). https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-**

**instruction/english-reading-literacy/literacy/virginia-literacy-actthttps://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/english-reading-literacy/literacy/virginia-literacy-act**

**Wyoming policy on Individual Reading Plans: Wyo. Admin. Code § 206-0002-56 (2023). Wyo.gov**

Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy

Version 3

Division of Instructional Programs

October 2026

## MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.**
State Superintendent of Schools

**Tenette Y. Smith, Ed.D.**
Chief Academic Officer
Office of Teaching and Learning

**Wes Moore**
Governor

## MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President

James C. Bell, Jr., Ed.D., Vice President

Lorena Wu, Student Member

Dr. Peggy Carr

Alverne "Chet" Chesterfield

Kenny Clash

Monica Goldson, Ed.D.

Nick Greer

Dr. Irma E. Johnson

Marcy Leonard

Dr. Kim Lewis

Xiomara V. Medina, M.Ed.

Nicole Murray-Lewis

Samir Paul, Esq.

# Acknowledgements

A sincere appreciation is offered to the following Maryland State Department of Education staff who contributed time and expertise to develop this policy. Their efforts will support local education agencies as they work together to strengthen literacy outcomes for all Maryland students.

## OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

### Division of Instructional Programs

Elise Brown, Ph.D., Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Instructional Programs

Jill Snell, Executive Director, Literacy Programs and Initiatives

Jennifer Wojcik, Executive Director, Systems of Instructional Coherence

Tara Downes, Ed.D., Director, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Christine Fulton, Director, High-Quality Instructional Materials

Teresa Timmons-Parrott, Ed.D., Director, Multilingual Learners and World Languages

Laura Aberg, Ed.D. Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives

Meg Kinlaw, Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives

Suzanne Tirado, Coordinator of Literacy Programs and Initiatives

### Division of College and Career Pathways

Anthony Vargas, Director, Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs

Rita Brandunas, Coordinator, Career Counseling

Kysha Egungbemi, Specialist, Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs

### Division of Special Education

Jennifer Masoodi, J.D., Ph.D, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Special Education

Molly Conner, Director, Performance Support and Technical Assistance

Liz Zogby, Consultant

### Division of Early Childhood Education

Nykia Washington, Ed.D., Program Manager, Pre-Kindergarten and Mixed Delivery

## OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

### Division of Assessment and Accountability

Emily Oliver, Project Manager, Early Childhood Assessment

### Division of Educator Effectiveness

Kelly Meadows, Assistant State Superintendent, Educator Effectiveness

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ..... 3

Document Control Information ..... 5

PreK-12 Literacy Policy Overview ..... 6

I. Early Literacy Grades PreK-3 ..... 13

II. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8 ..... 27

III. Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12 ..... 37

References ..... 45

# Document Control Information

| | |
|---|---|
| **Title:** | Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy |
| **File Name:** | Comprehensive Literacy Policy_Clean Copy.pdf |

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

| Document Version | Date | Summary |
|---|---|---|
| 1.0 | October 2024 | PreK-3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education |
| 2.0 | January 2026 | Draft Adolescent Policy presented to the Maryland State Board of Education and stakeholder feedback was collected |
| 3.0 | October 2026 | PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education |

# PreK-12 Literacy Policy Overview

## A. PURPOSE

The Maryland PreK–12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy serves as a transformative lever for change across our state's educational landscape, establishing a clear, unified trajectory toward lifelong reading success for every student. Rooted in an unyielding commitment to evidence-based instruction and the Science of Reading, this policy establishes a clear literacy vision while empowering educators through a robust system of support, high-quality instructional materials, and actionable guidance. It institutes a coherent assessment system designed to identify reading difficulties early and mobilize targeted, proactive interventions. Crucially, the policy elevates families as essential partners in their child's literacy journey through transparent communication and collaborative engagement. Together, these structures build an equitable foundation that prepares all learners to thrive, an urgent imperative given the literacy challenges facing Maryland today.

Since 2013, Maryland students' reading performance fell from third to twentieth (2024 scores) in the nation on the Grade 4 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading Assessment and from sixth to twenty-first nationally on the Grade 8 NAEP Reading Assessment. The overall proficiency score for grades 3-8 and 10 on the 2024-2025 English Language Arts Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) was 50.8% with student group scores below the composite average for multilingual learners (11.1%), students with disabilities (14.6%), Hispanic (33.7%), economically disadvantaged (34.5%), Black (39.4%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (44.9%), and males (46.5%) while other subgroups performed above average including Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (54.7%), females (55.2%), two or more races (59.4%), White (67.9%), and Asian (75.3%). This alarming gap underscores the urgent need to comprehensively address reading proficiency at all grade levels, particularly for multilingual learners, students with disabilities, those living in poverty, and students of color.

The purpose of the Maryland Comprehensive Literacy Policy is to ensure a coherent, statewide approach to literacy development from PreK through grade 12 by aligning evidence-based instruction, high-quality materials, and targeted supports across all grade bands. This policy expands Maryland's PreK–3 Early Literacy Policy to establish consistent expectations and guidance for literacy teaching and learning in grades 4–12, ensuring every student has access to strong instruction that builds proficiency, deepens comprehension, and supports success in college and career by setting a strong literacy foundation that is sustained for all students to keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, writing, and academic demands.

## B. DEFINITIONS

a. **Advanced Decoding** is the ability to read complex, multisyllabic words by analyzing syllable patterns, structural units (prefixes, suffixes, roots), etymology (word origin), and complex phonemic patterns (vowel teams, diphthongs). It transitions readers from sound-by-sound decoding to recognizing larger word parts, building reading automaticity, fluency, and vocabulary (Wang, et al., 2024).

b. **Advanced Learners** are students who demonstrate, or show the potential to perform at, remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to students of similar age, experience, or environment. They may demonstrate advanced performance or potential in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas; leadership; or specific academic fields. Advanced learners require and benefit from appropriately rigorous, challenging, and advanced learning opportunities that recognize their abilities, develop their potential, and promote continued growth and achievement.

c. **At-risk** indicates an elevated likelihood of not meeting grade-level literacy expectations without additional support.

d. **Content-Area Instruction,** also referred to as Tier 1 or core instruction, is high-quality, evidence-based, grade-level classroom instruction provided to all students. It is the teaching of specific academic subjects using targeted methods to build background knowledge, vocabulary, and subject-specific comprehension and writing in the content area.

e. **Data-informed decision making** is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative data alongside qualitative data.

f. **Diagnostic,** also referred to as diagnostic survey (COMAR 13A.03.08), means an assessment tool that identifies areas of need within a student's mastery of reading skills, foundational skills, or both to guide intervention.

g. **Disciplinary Literacy** refers to the habits of mind, routines and practices, texts (and how those texts are created and used), and discourses of each content area (Sedita, 2024a).

h. **Dyslexia** is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual's peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective (IDA, 2025).

i. **Educator Preparation Program (EPP)** refers to any program within an institution of higher education (IHE) that prepares individuals for licensure as elementary, middle, or high school teachers, school leaders, or other educational personnel.

j. **Enrichment** refers to experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for advanced students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development (Renzulli, 2021; Kaplan, 2019).

k. **Equitable Access** ensures that literacy instruction, rooted in the Science of Reading, is applied thoughtfully to meet the diverse needs of learners who come to school with varying experiences, backgrounds, and developmental needs. This approach, sensitive to each individual, ensures that all students, particularly those from socio-economically disadvantaged and underserved groups, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (ML) are given access the support, resources, and opportunities necessary to achieve the skills and knowledge for literacy success, regardless of their starting point. Equitable access focuses on ensuring that students who have been historically excluded are intentionally included in literacy instruction and enrichment opportunities, with structures in place to support their success (95 Percent Group, 2026).

l. **Evidence-based** means an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on (I) strong evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; (II) moderate evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or (III) promising evidence from at least 1 well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

m. **Family-Friendly Language** refers to language that is accessible and easy to understand for families, and that is responsive to their cultural and linguistic needs. It avoids jargon, acronyms, and deficit-based language. It can also include language that is inclusive of all family members, and that avoids making assumptions about their identities or relationships.

n. **Good-Cause Exemptions** allow students to be exempt from retention to 3rd grade for valid reasons, but such students remain eligible for instructional supports, such as reading camps, services, and appropriate reading interventions based on their age and reading ability.

o. **High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)** are grade-level, standards-aligned instructional materials that are used to build knowledge and skills for all students in a language affirming and culturally responsive way (MSDE, 2026).

p. **Instructional Equity** is a practice that ensures an inclusive academic environment, addresses persistent disparities, examines biases, dismantles unfair systems, and provides every student with access to personalized, high-quality learning opportunities to reach their full potential.

q. **Intensive Support** refers to Tier 3 support provided to students identified as needing more explicit and intensive instruction. Tier 3 instruction should not take place during Tier 1 instructional time in a core content area.

r. **Leveled Texts** are text that have been assigned to a reading level based on various factors: vocabulary, number of different words, support from context, support from pictures, page layout or written material that has been modified to match a specific reading ability or grade level. Leveled texts can hinder literacy progress by reducing decoding skill application and restricting students' access to complex, grade-level content which limits exposure to academic vocabulary and critical thinking (Pondiscio & Mahnken, 2014; Shanahan, 2025).

s. **Literacy** is the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, achieve goals, and develop knowledge and potential. It involves reading, writing, speaking, and listening in ways that allow effective communication and comprehension of the world (White & McCloskey, 2005).

t. **Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)** is a framework for enhancing academic, behavioral, and social-emotional outcomes for all students. MTSS provides supports for students with reading challenges, addressing identified needs with varying intensities and durations. The MTSS framework includes:

   i. **Tier 1:** On-grade level, standards-aligned instruction for all students. It should occur within the core instructional block with direct and explicit instruction using LEA-selected HQIM. All students should be provided access to Tier 1 instruction (Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, etc.).

   ii. **Tier 2:** In addition to core instruction, Tier 2 support involves small group interventions that align with evidence-based practices used in Tier 1 instruction.

   iii. **Tier 3:** For students not demonstrating growth in Tier 2, Tier 3 provides diagnostic-based, explicit interventions tailored to their needs.

u. **Reading Difficulties** refers to a student's challenges with decoding, language comprehension, or both; which affect their ability to achieve grade-level reading proficiency.

v. **Reading Intervention**, which may also be referred to as supplemental instruction, means evidence-based, sequential, systematic, explicit, and developmentally appropriate instruction provided in addition to core coursework and aligned with Tier 1 instruction. In grades preK-3, intervention will focus on mastery of foundational literacy skills, including phonological or phonemic awareness and processing, phonics, and vocabulary to support development of decoding, spelling, fluency, writing, and reading comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum (National Reading Panel [NPR], 2000). In grades 4-12, intervention may address foundational literacy skills as needed, or advanced decoding, fluency, syntax/grammar, academic language, vocabulary/knowledge, writing and comprehension skills to meet grade level curriculum expectations (Kamil et al., 2008). Reading intervention targets specific reading skills using evidence-based strategies, including individual/small group instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, and technology-assisted learning paired with face-to-face supports.

w. **Science of Learning** is an interdisciplinary body of research spanning cognitive science, educational psychology, and instructional design to examine how humans acquire, retain, and utilize knowledge (Heal & Lee, 2026).

x. **Science of Reading (SoR)** refers to a comprehensive body of research from fields such as cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education. This research informs effective reading instruction and intervention across grades PreK-12 by focusing on how the brain processes written language (Ciancio, 2023).

y. **Structured Literacy** is an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned with the Science of Reading. It features explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in areas such as phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics (International Dyslexia Association, n.d.).

z. **Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)** refers to a personalized plan to help students improve their reading skills. It includes assessments, goals, instruction, and monitoring (COMAR 13A.03.08).

aa. **System of Assessments** refers to a comprehensive assessment system used by LEAs that includes screening, diagnostic (formal and/or informal), and progress monitoring. It also includes formative and summative assessments, such as curriculum-based assessments and writing samples. (Toste et al., 2026).

bb. **Three-cueing System** refers to teaching methods based on meaning, structure, syntax, and visual cues (MSV). It is a disproven, balanced literacy strategy that encourages students to identify unfamiliar words by guessing using pictures, context clues, and sentence structure instead of explicitly sounding out the letters which can hinder their ability to recognize words efficiently in the future (Greene, 2024).

cc. **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a research-based framework for curriculum design, that includes goals, methods, materials, and assessments to reduce barriers to learning by providing students multiple accessible support options for: a) acquiring information and knowledge; b) demonstrating knowledge and skills in alternative forms of action and expression; c) engaging in learning (COMAR 13A.03.06).

dd. **Universal Screener** is an assessment administered to all students three times a year (beginning, middle, and end) in grades PreK-5 and as needed in subsequent grades to identify or predict students who may be at risk for reading difficulties or poor reading outcomes. It is typically brief and assesses skills such as phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, as developmentally appropriate.

ee. **Writing** is the act of using letters or symbols to communicate thoughts and ideas. It is comprised of foundational skills (often called transcription skills) consisting of handwriting, keyboarding, punctuation, syntax, and spelling with the goal of developing automaticity and compositional skills consisting of planning, drafting, writing, revising, editing, and self-regulation with the goal of developing critical thinking (Graham, 2020; Sedita, 2023).

ff. **Writing Difficulties** refer to a student's challenges with writing ability at any stage, including problems with letter formation/legibility, letter spacing, spelling, fine motor coordination, rate of writing, grammar, and composition (Chung et al., 2020).

gg. **Writing Intervention** is a targeted instructional approach tailored to each student's developmental needs. For younger learners, it builds foundational transcription skills like fine motor control, posture, and orthographic awareness. As students' progress, the focus shifts to explicit instruction in advanced composition, teaching complex cognitive processes like planning, drafting, revising, and self-regulation to improve overall writing automaticity and quality (Chung et al., 2020).

## C. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

| Timeline | Activity |
|---|---|
| **January 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Resolution (24-01) adopted by the State Board and tasked the State Superintendent of Schools with drafting a comprehensive literacy policy aligned with the Science of Reading for the Board's approval |
| **June-July 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>First draft of Literacy Policy (V.1.1) released for public comment<br>Meetings held with local education agency (LEA) staff, various community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel to discuss the policy and gather feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board of Education |
| **July-August 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Literacy Policy (V.1.2) released for public comment<br>Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board of Education |
| **August-September 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Literacy Policy (V.1.3) released for public comment<br>Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board of Education<br>Public Hearing on the proposed Literacy Policy conducted during the August State Board of Education meeting |
| **October 2024** | **PreK-3 Policy**<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board of Education, and request for adoption<br>Literacy Policy (V.1) released<br>**Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>Initial engagement with LEA Literacy Supervisors and Coordinators |

| Timeline | Activity |
|---|---|
| **October-November 2025** | **Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>External engagement with LEA Literacy Supervisors and Coordinators<br>Internal engagement with the Division of Educator Effectiveness and the Division of College and Career Pathways |
| **December 2025** | **Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>External engagement with:<br>• District Chief Academic Officers<br>• Maryland READS Network<br>• Project for Adolescent Literacy (PAL)<br>• Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE)<br>• LEA leaders and educators |
| **January 2026** | **Adolescent Literacy Policy**<br>Literacy Policy (V.2) open to public comment |
| **March-April 2026** | **PreK-12 Literacy Policy**<br>Revisions made based on public comments and policies are combined into a PreK-12 Literacy Policy (V.3.1) |
| **May-June 2026** | **PreK-12 Literacy Policy**<br>Internal and external engagement with:<br>• Chief Academic Officers<br>• Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE)<br>• Institutes of Higher Education (IHE)<br>• LEA literacy and advanced learners' leaders<br>• LEA school leaders and educators<br>• Students<br>• MSDE Division's of Special Education, College and Career Pathways, Advanced Academics, Early Childhood Education, Educator Effectiveness, and Instructional Programs |
| **June-July 2026** | **PreK-12 Literacy Policy**<br>Edited PreK-12 Literacy Policy (V.3.2) based on stakeholder feedback and presented to the State Board of Education |

| Timeline | Activity |
|---|---|
| **August 2026** | **Revised PreK-12 Policy**<br>PreK-12 Literacy Policy (V.3.3) updates shared with the Education Policy Committee and released for public comment |
| **September 2026** | **Revised PreK-12 Policy**<br>PreK-12 Literacy Policy (V.3.3) public comment period<br>Revisions made based on public comments |
| **October 2026** | **Revised PreK-12 Policy**<br>Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board of Education, and request for adoption<br>Literacy Policy (V.3) released |

# I. Early Literacy Grades PreK-3

## A. PURPOSE

The Early Literacy PreK-3 section lays the foundation of Maryland's continuous PreK-12 literacy system, where children develop the essential skills upon which their later literacy outcomes depend. Guided by Science of Reading research, this section ensures that all students receive systematic, explicit, and developmentally appropriate instruction, early and proactive identification of potential reading difficulties, and timely targeted intervention to set students up for literacy success.

The General Assembly, the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE), and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) share a common goal of ensuring that each student's progression from one grade to another be determined, in part, by their proficiency in reading. Local district school boards must implement clear policies that ensure students' reading needs are met through robust instruction and targeted interventions. Furthermore, the policy seeks to ensure parents and guardians are well informed about their children's reading progress, fostering collaboration between schools and families.

The Early Literacy PreK-3 section is designed to promote instructional equity, enhance literacy outcomes, and build a strong foundation for future success, regardless of students' cultural background, linguistic diversity, socioeconomic status, geographical location, or specific learning needs. By strengthening early literacy instruction, assessment, and intervention, Maryland will see a ripple effect in its communities, including a more educated workforce, reduced poverty, and improved health outcomes.

This policy supports the ambitious goal outlined in State Board Resolution 24-01 for improving educational outcomes for all students, positioning Maryland to regain its status as a top-ten state in reading by 2027, as measured by the NAEP Reading Assessment for 4th and 8th grades.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. System of Support for Educators

a. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in early childhood education, elementary education, special education, or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:

   i. Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or

   ii. Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.

   Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.

b. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in early childhood education (PreK through 3rd grade), elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.

c. The (Local Education Agency) LEA must provide professional learning for administrators, classroom teachers, including special education, speech-language pathologists, and English Language Development teachers of multilingual learners as well as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists) on the system of assessments

selected by LEAs and approved by MSDE to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and analyze the results to inform instruction.

d. Educator preparation programs (EPP) are required to:

   i. Teach phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension effectively;

   ii. Implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials which do not include the three-cueing systems model ("guessing or leveled texts;

   iii. Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;

   iv. Understand and use student data to make instructional decisions including decisions about improving the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction in Tier 1 and intervention design in Tier 2 and 3;

   v. Understand the negative impacts of the three-cueing systems model, how to identify it in curriculum or instructional material, and why it is a flawed model of teaching children to read; and

   vi. Pass a State Board-approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates' knowledge of the Science of Reading.

   vii. Annually submit a comprehensive data report to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) beginning in SY 2028–2029, detailing program completers:

      1) Proficiency in teaching the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) for candidates pursuing early childhood, elementary, special education, and ESOL licensure;

      2) Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and

      3) A narrative explaining how they assess each of the above-listed items

         throughout the program.

e. LEAs provide instructional support to assist educators with implementing Tier 1 structured literacy instruction embedded in LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-informed decision making which may include:

   i. Co-planning;

   ii. Co-teaching and modeling;

   iii. Professional learning communities;

   iv. Job-embedded professional learning;

   v. Curriculum-based professional learning (CBPL); and

vi. Non-evaluative observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

f. Districts must report the number of general education teachers, special education teachers, English Language Development teachers, and administrators in grades PreK-3 who have received foundational training in the Science of Reading during that academic school year to MSDE annually.

g. MSDE will provide guidance, technical assistance, and training on developing and implementing frameworks for MTSS and interventions embedded within the SRIP as outlined in section I.B.3.b-f.

**2. Reading Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention**

a. Per the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Ready to Read Act, Education Article 7-202, and COMAR 13A.03.08, it is the ultimate goal of the General Assembly that every student reads at or above grade level by the end of grade 3.

b. All K-3 students must receive Tier 1 literacy instruction, aligned to the Science of Reading using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Following structured literacy principles, Tier 1 instruction is defined as evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit instruction that provides equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025). It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025). Tier 1 instruction must also:

i. Address the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) (Scarborough, 2001) and writing (foundational and compositional skills) (Sedita, 2023) with an intentional focus on the identified area(s) driven by the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Literacy/English Language Arts (ELA);

ii. Require educators to use the LEA's system of assessments to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);

iii. Utilize a scope and sequence within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year, that is delivered explicitly following Universal Design for Learning (COMAR 13A.03.06) and Science of Learning principles for active and engaged students (CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);

iv. Be delivered within literacy blocks that are sufficient to deliver effective and comprehensive instruction and meaningful practice with writing and complex text.

v. Be comprised of an adequate number of daily instructional minutes for literacy Tier 1 instruction based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).

c. All PreK students in Maryland must receive instruction and curriculum aligned with the Science of Reading which is culturally responsive and language affirming. PreK educators are tasked with creating literacy-rich, developmentally appropriate environments that equip children with the essential skills for future reading success, thereby laying a strong groundwork for their academic journey (Herrera et al., 2021).

i. PreK3 students must receive whole group and targeted small group instruction aligned with the Language and Literacy Domain of the Early Learning Standards.

ii. PreK4 students must receive whole group and targeted small group instruction aligned with the PreK Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for English Language Arts.

d. MSDE will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process for comprehensive literacy programs, which publishes reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) website. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs. These materials must align with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards and be based on scientifically grounded reading and writing research, including the positive impact of integrated reading and writing instruction (Graham, 2012), designed to reduce the risk of reading difficulties. These materials shall:

i. Address the core components of foundational literacy;

ii. Integrate culturally responsive and language-affirming practices; and

iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model or leveled texts.

e. The system of assessments school districts use must include statewide universal screening (Education Article 4-136), diagnostic surveys, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading. The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined below:

i. Beginning in SY 2025 -2026, MSDE will release a list of vetted and approved grades K-3 universal screeners to be administered three times per year (fall, winter, and spring: beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year). The screener will be used to:

1) Identify students with early warning signs of reading difficulties which may include dyslexia; literacy resolution

2) Measure, minimum, phonological and phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, decoding, fluency, and rapid automatic naming. Measures may also include additional subtests such as encoding and reading comprehension (Bond, 2021).

ii. Beginning in SY 2026-2027, MSDE shall vet a set of PreK universal reading screeners along with additional K-3 screeners not previously submitted or previously submitted screeners which have been updated or have newer research to address previous concerns. Authorized screeners will be added to the list of the MSDE approved universal screeners.

iii. Beginning in SY 2027-2028, LEAs and approved PreK private providers who receive state funding shall administer an MSDE-approved PreK universal reading screener to children in their PreK4 year (the year before kindergarten), three times per year (beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year). The screener will be used to:

1) Measure, at a minimum, phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge (letter name and sound) (Ozernov-Palchik et al., 2016).

2) Collect data that informs targeted instruction to build students' early literacy skills and prevent them from developing future reading difficulties (Bond, 2021).

iv. Additional diagnostic tools should be administered including informal curriculum-based measures, to support staff with targeting instruction based on student needs (Gersten et al., 2009).

f. For multilingual learners, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be given in English in order to identify the specific areas of need and track growth (Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], 2015):

i. When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).

ii. Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.

g. For students with disabilities, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be administered as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], 2004):

i. Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations can be used;

ii. MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented.

iii. MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.

h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs may request universal screening data to accompany transfer records.

i. If LEAs do not receive current screening results with the transfer records, LEAs shall test students within 30 calendar days of enrollment.

ii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested during the LEAs' regular testing windows.

i. In determining which assessments to approve for use by LEAs, MSDE shall also consider, at a minimum, the following factors:

i. The time required to conduct and score the assessment, with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time;

ii. The professional development needed to administer, analyze the data, and use data to plan instruction and intervention; and

iii. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

j. Per the COMAR 13A.03.08: Each K-3 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive reading intervention aligned to their identified needs which includes:

   i. Proactive, school-wide framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students with areas of concern (Brown & Stollar, 2025);

   ii. Progress monitoring tools that LEAs use to collect and analyze intervention data to make instructional decisions (Bailey et al., 2020);

   iii. Opportunities for students who are experiencing reading or writing difficulties to be identified early, receive targeted intervention to support their needs, and have their progress closely monitored over time;

   iv. Home partnerships with parents/guardians as an integral part of the decision-making team;

   v. Supports that address a student's identified needs with varying intensity and duration across the three tiers (Brown & Stollar, 2025);

   vi. Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);

   vii. Provisions such that student participation in any tier of this framework does not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

   viii. All students including Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, etc. must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction (ESSA, 2015).

k. Each K-3 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive targeted Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 reading intervention aligned to assessed needs and the Science of Reading. (Brown & Stollar, 2025). Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 intervention shall:

   i. Be provided in addition to Tier 1 reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom;

   ii. Be implemented during regular school hours and shall not impede students' access to Tier 1, grade-level aligned instruction (Durrance, 2023);

   iii. Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions must continue to receive English Language Development (ELD) instruction. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.

   iv. Follow scheduling models (e.g., flexible grouping, parallel scheduling, tiered flooding, flex blocks, intervention blocks, push-in services) to provide intervention without removing access to required Tier 1 literacy and content-area instruction.

   v. Be provided to all K-3 students demonstrating a reading difficulty or who need reading intervention. This includes students with the risk factors of dyslexia as determined by MSDE-approved assessment administered within the first sixty (60) days of school per COMAR 13A.03.08;

vi. Be provided in an explicit, systematic, sequential manner, with cumulative instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension, as applicable (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; National Reading Panel, 2000);

vii. Match the specific skill profile as determined by the diagnostic, are developmentally appropriate, and are delivered with adequate dosage and fidelity (Brown & Stollar, 2025; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b); and

viii. Be delivered by any staff member trained in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the intervention being provided (Ragusa, 2026).

l. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.

m. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.

**3. Parent/Guardian Notification and Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)**

a. Beginning in SY 2026-2027, any student in grades K-3 who meets the following criteria shall receive a SRIP:

i. Students who have been identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time, based upon the MSDE vetted and approved universal screener,

ii. Students who have been identified for retention in grade 3 due to reading difficulties, and

iii. Any 4th-grade student promoted for a good cause or by parent/guardian consent.

b. The SRIP shall be developed no later than 30 calendar days upon closing of the universal screener assessment window and test results identifying the reading difficulty.

c. The LEA must develop a process and procedures to notify the parent/guardian(s), in writing (print or electronic), of any K-3 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year. This notification must be written in family-friendly language and include the following:

i. An explanation that their child has been identified as having difficulties in reading;

ii. An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the development of an individual reading improvement plan that includes evidence-based reading interventions designed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading concern; and

iii. Notification for the possibility of retention, if the child's reading issues are not remediated by the end of the grade level year and the child has received two years of intensive reading intervention, the following may be considered: retention, good cause

exemption designation, informed consent for promotion, and/or other supports established by the LEA may be instituted.

d. The SRIP shall:

i. Be created by the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);

ii. Describe the evidence-based reading intervention practices and/or program the student will receive to remedy the reading difficulties;

iii. Include the necessary frequency and intensity of interventions to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning;

iv. Meet the requirements for Tier 1 instruction and reading interventions outlined in section I.B.2.b above;

v. Be reviewed and updated annually with the parent/guardian(s) if a student continues to exhibit the need for a reading intervention;

vi. Include a progress monitoring cadence aligned to COMAR 13A.03.08 *Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties* at a minimum of every 30 days, the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;-

vii. Identify exit criteria for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency;

viii. Describe how each student will receive intensive reading intervention until the student no longer demonstrates difficulty in reading as determined by the LEA's approved system of assessment; and

ix. Provide more intensified interventions to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for students significantly below grade level, and any transfer or newly enrolled student identified with a reading difficulty.

e. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters, a checklist for the SRIP, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources. LEAs may adapt samples while retaining the required elements.

f. In alignment COMAR 13A.03.08 if a student has an IEP with reading goals:

i. The IEP may substitute for the development of a SRIP;

ii. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP will be updated;

iii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan.

**4. Demonstrated Readiness for Promotion**

a. Grade 3 students must demonstrate adequate reading proficiency on the MSDE-adopted State English Language Arts Assessment to be designated for promotion to grade 4 (See MD Code, Education, § 7-202. Minimum levels of reading ability).

i. Upon recommendation from the State Superintendent of Schools, the SBOE will set the performance level for adequate reading proficiency.

ii. Triangulated data from valid and reliable multiple measures, such as curriculum-based assessments, diagnostic assessments, and benchmark assessments, or other assessment as identified by MSDE which demonstrate that the student is not at risk for reading difficulties may also be used to consider promotion. Screener data and/or benchmarks should not be used in isolation for promotion purposes.

iii. Students will not be designated for promotion to grade 4 (Greene & Winters, 2007; Hwang & Koedel, 2025; Mumma, et al, 2023) if they meet the following criteria:

1) The student did not score at the required performance level on the grade 3 MSDE-adopted State English Language Arts Assessment, and

2) Triangulated data from multiple valid and reliable measures demonstrates that the student continues to be at risk for reading difficulties.

b. The LEA may designate a grade 3 student for promotion to grade 4 who does not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency if they qualify for a good-cause exemption.

i. Good-cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

1) Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates participation in the Maryland Alternate Education Framework;

2) Multilingual Learners (MLs) who have received three years or less of English instruction in U.S. schools or who have met their required target under Maryland's growth-to-target model as determined by the Department-approved summative English language proficiency assessment in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

3) Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide English Language Arts assessment and who have an IEP or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for at least two years, but still demonstrates a reading difficulty, or was previously retained for one year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.

4) Students who were previously retained for one year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade. No student shall be retained more than once as a result of this policy.

ii. A student who is designated for promotion to grade 4 with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies outlined in the SRIP until the student no longer demonstrates reading difficulty.

iii. Requests to exempt students from the retention requirement using one of the good-cause exemptions shall be made consistent with the following:

1) The school principal with input from the classroom teacher and other appropriate personnel shall determine whether a student qualifies for good cause exemptions. If the school principal determines that the student has met one of the good cause exemptions, the school principal shall provide the decisions made at the school level in writing to the district superintendent or designee.

c. A 3rd grader who does not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency and does not qualify for a good cause exemption may be designated for retention in 3rd grade with parent/guardian consent.

   i. At the end of 3rd grade, it is required that LEAs and schools provide notification of the designation for promotion or retention and the informed consent process to the student's parent/guardian(s).

   ii. If a student is not designated for promotion to 4th grade, the notification must inform the parent/guardian of the process and options, which includes:

      1) An invitation via phone call, letter, or email, etc., to meet to discuss the recommendation of retention in 3rd-grade;

      2) A letter designating that the student may be retained in 3rd grade, an explanation of the student's current performance level in reading, and reference to the required adequate reading proficiency level required for promotion to 4th grade;

      3) An explanation of the potential risks and benefits of both promotion and retention for a child who does not demonstrate reading proficiency by the end of 3rd grade;

      4) An MSDE-approved list of reading support options for the parent/guardian to choose from at no cost to the parent or guardian such as specific summer school programs, before or after-school tutoring, or other instructional supports;

      5) A document that captures the parent or guardians' final decision regarding the options to:

         a) Consent to the designation of retention in 3rd grade, or

         b) Choose 4th-grade promotion with the understanding that the child has not met grade-level reading proficiency and consent to their student participating in reading support provided by the LEA and approved by MSDE at no cost to the parent or guardian.

      6) MSDE will provide communication support about the benefits and risks for each decision.

   iii. In the case that a school or LEA does not receive a final decision regarding retention in 3rd grade from the parent/guardians, the school must continue reaching out to parent/guardian(s) through multiple means of communication, including, but not limited to mail, email, phone calls, and, if appropriate, home visits prior to the next school year.

   iv. LEAs should develop a contingency process for situations where a parent or guardian cannot be contacted and send communication via certified mail no later than June 30th and a follow-up by July 31st stating that the child will be retained in 3rd grade.

d. Beginning in the SY 2028-2029, students who remain in grade 3 must continue to receive intensive reading intervention to remedy the student's specific reading difficulty. Each LEA shall conduct a review of SRIPs for all students retained. The review shall address additional supports

and services, as described in this subsection, needed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading difficulty. The LEA shall provide the following for students:

i. Access to Tier 1 instruction that is aligned to the Science of Reading. Additional time for intervention shall not impede students' access to Tier 1 or content-area instruction.

ii. Reading intervention services and supports to address the identified area(s) of reading difficulty, including, but not limited to more dedicated time than the previous school year in evidence-based reading instruction and intervention.

iii. Use of reading strategies and/or programs that are evidence-based and have proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within the same school year.

iv. Ongoing Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention based on student needs, including explicit and systematic instruction with detailed explanations, extensive opportunities for guided practice, and opportunities for error correction and feedback.

v. Frequently monitoring the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year and adjusting instruction according to student needs.

vi. LEA provided parent/guardian training workshops and/or regular parent-guided home reading activities which are aligned to evidence-based reading research.

## C. PREK-3 TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| 2024-2025 | • MSDE provides professional learning for Maryland educators and Literacy Coaches.<br>• MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance in designing their MTSS model. |
| September 1, 2025 | • LEAs must develop and report promotion and retention policies to MSDE that will go into effect no later than 2027-2028. |
| September 15, 2025 | • LEAS submit first annual report of the number of PreK-grade 3 staff who have participated in MSDE-approved Science of Reading professional learning programs. |
| 2025-2026 | • MSDE releases the SRIP checklist and provides training on its use.<br>• MSDE provides technical assistance on grade promotion policies.<br>• MSDE supports SRIP Workgroups. |
| July 2026 | • SBOE reviews the policy implementation. |

| | |
|---|---|
| September 1, 2026 | • LEAs submit the first annual report on the district school board's policies and procedures for student promotion and retention if substantial changes are made. |
| 2026-2027 | • LEAs implement K-3 MTSS Model with MSDE support (which includes SRIPs).<br>• LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners in grades K-3.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include SRIPs, walkthrough tools, coaching, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.<br>• MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report for PreK-3. |
| 2027-2028 | • LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in PreK.<br>• MSDE provides support for literacy policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning. |
| August 31, 2028 | • LEA staff who support grades 1 through grade 3 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed Science of Reading (SoR) professional learning.<br>• LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete SoR professional learning within three years of their hire date. |
| 2028-2029 | • Implement retention portion of Literacy Policy<br>• LEAs begin annual reporting of PreK screening data in addition to K-3 screening.<br>• MSDE provides continued support for literacy policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.<br>• EPPs begin annual reporting of Science of Reading course completion.<br>• MSDE publishes EPP program completion rates annually. |
| 2029-2030 | • Full implementation of PreK –3 literacy policy. |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Local Education Agency

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by October 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

i. The number and percentage of students in grades PreK-3 who were screened.

ii. The number and percentage of all students in grades K-3 identified as at risk for reading difficulties on the universal screener organized by grade level and student group consistent with state reporting practices in COMAR 13A.03.08 (e.g., multilingual learner status, disability status, students eligible for free and reduced meals, race/ethnicity);

iii. By grade level and student group, the total number and percentage of students receiving evidence-based intervention based on the reported assessment(s) by grade level;

iv. The number and percentage of all students not promoted in grades K-3 organized by grade level and student group;

v. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on an MSDE-identified additional reading assessment.

vi. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who were promoted for good cause, by each category of good cause as specified in previous sections; and

vii. The total number and percentage of students who were promoted by parent/guardian consent. and agreed to another support offered by the LEA;

viii. The proposed supports and interventions delivered for students who were promoted by parent/guardian consent;

b. Policies developed and LEA Board approved regarding promotion, retention, and the dissemination of information concerning SRIPs;

c. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. Districts must ensure all general education teachers, special education teachers, English Language Development teachers, and administrators in grades PreK-3 have received training in the Science of Reading by September 1 of each school year.

ii. This list shall be submitted annually to MSDE.

d. LEAs shall provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning and support for PreK through grade 3 staff who support literacy instruction per section II.B.1 of this policy.

### 2. Maryland State Department of Education

a. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

b. MSDE shall annually compile the information required along with state-level summary information and report such information to the SBOE, the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

c. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to aid LEAs in developing and implementing the promotion policy developed by LEAs.

d. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.

e. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.

f. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students; and students with disabilities.

g. MSDE will provide decision rules for follow up diagnostic assessment and intervention.

h. MSDE will provide examples of promotion policies for consideration.

i. MSDE will review the submitted promotion policies to ensure adherence to the requirements.

j. MSDE will develop communication support for parental/guardian consent for promotion and retention that outlines the risks and benefits of retention and promotion for students with reading difficulties.

k. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around planning, scheduling, and identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

l. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for administrators, ELA supervisors, and educators in grades PreK-3.

m. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters, a checklist for the SRIPs, as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources.

n. MSDE will develop an education/media campaign to increase families' and community stakeholders' knowledge about the importance of effective literacy instruction and Science of Reading practices from birth – 3rd grade.

o. MSDE will publish EPP completion rates annually to ensure transparency and alignment to the Science of Reading across the state's educator pipeline.

**3. Maryland State Board of Education**

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy including analysis of the following by district and student groups:

i. The number of students enrolled (PreK-3),

ii. The number and percentage of students screened,

iii. The number and percentage of students identified as at-risk for reading difficulty,

iv. The number and percentage of students who received reading intervention,

v. The number and percentage of students demonstrating adequate reading proficiency,

vi. The number and percentage of students who were promoted to grade 4 based on demonstrated reading proficiency, a good cause exemption, or by parent/guardian consent for promotion, and

vii. The number and percentage of students who were not promoted to 4th grade.

viii. All data should be disaggregated by multilingual learner status, disability status, race, ethnicity and free and reduced lunch status (FARMS).

# II. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8

## A. PURPOSE

This section of the policy outlines a comprehensive vision for advancing literacy instruction across grades 4 through 8, establishing clear expectations for evolving reading growth. It delivers a robust system of support and professional learning for educators to effectively deliver evidence-based instruction. Additionally, it outlines a coordinated assessment system to identify and support students at risk for reading difficulties with targeted interventions. Finally, the policy elevates family collaboration through transparent communication and active engagement to foster reading success.

Maryland's early-grade literacy policy sets a strong foundation that must be sustained in grades 4–8, so students can keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, writing, and academic demands. Because literacy expectations expand across disciplines in the upper grades, Tier 1 instruction must continue to develop students' reading and writing proficiency to ensure access to rigorous coursework and readiness for high school, graduation, and postsecondary opportunities.

To address this need, a comprehensive adolescent literacy policy is essential to extend evidence-based literacy practices beyond grade 3 and ensure that all students particularly those with reading difficulties, those living in poverty, multilingual learners, students of color, and students with disabilities, can access grade-level coursework and graduate on time. This policy is designed to strengthen literacy instruction and intervention across grades 4–8 in ways that reflect the developmental demands of adolescent literacy expectations embedded in secondary classrooms.

This policy aligns to the PreK–3 focus on statewide a progression, while updating the approach for older students by integrating advanced decoding skills into Tier 1 instruction across disciplines. Consistent with emerging research on adolescent literacy development, the policy emphasizes attention to both foundational and language-based dimensions of reading alongside comprehension and knowledge-building, with targeted interventions provided when screening and diagnostic evidence indicate need.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. System of Support for Educators

a. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in elementary education, special education, or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:

   i. Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or

   ii. Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.

   Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.

b. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in elementary education (grades 1-6), special education (birth through adult), and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.

c. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) provide the following system of support for grades 4 through 8 educators who support literacy instruction (95 Percent Group, 2026):

   i. Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning on the Science of Reading; and

   ii. Professional learning to administer assessments and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention (Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.).

iii. Instructional support to support assist educators with implementing Tier 1 instruction using the LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-based decision-making which may include:

1) Co-planning;
2) Co-teaching; and modeling;
3) Professional learning communities;
4) Job-embedded professional learning;
5) Curriculum-based professional learning; and
6) Non-evaluative coaching observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

d. LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation.

e. In accordance with COMAR 13A.07.06, educator preparation programs (EPPs) shall:

i. Provide the coursework and clinical experiences necessary to prepare candidates seeking licensure for elementary education, secondary ELA, special education, English Language Development, and Reading Specialist roles to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading to:

1) Teach advanced decoding skills, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing effectively in secondary contexts;
2) Implement reading/literacy instruction using high-quality instructional materials aligned with the Science of Reading;
3) Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;
4) Understand and use student data (screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring) to make instructional decisions for Tier 1 and to design Tier 2/3 interventions; and
5) Demonstrate competency through State Board-recognized evidence consistent with existing timelines.
6) Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and
7) Pass a State Board-approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates' knowledge of the Science of Reading.

ii. Annually submit a comprehensive data report to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) beginning in SY 2028–2029, detailing program completers:

1) Proficiency in teaching advanced decoding skills, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing for candidates pursuing elementary education (grades 4-6) and secondary ELA (grades 6-8), special education, and ESOL licensure;
2) Proficiency in administering evidence-based literacy instruction for struggling readers (including students exhibiting characteristics of dyslexia) and multilingual learners for all teacher candidates; and
3) A narrative explaining how they assess each of the above-listed items throughout the program.

f. MSDE shall provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for all staff who support literacy

instruction for students in grades 4 through 8 to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students how to engage with grade-level text (The Reading League, 2022).

i. Staff hired prior to July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028.

ii. Staff hired after July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training within three years of their hire date.

g. MSDE will provide guidance technical assistance, and training on developing and implementing professional learning.

**2. System of Assessments**

a. The system of assessments local education agencies (LEAs) use for students in grades 4 through 8 shall include universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading (Toste et al., 2026). The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined below:

i. During SY 2026–2027, MSDE shall release a list of approved universal reading screeners and support LEAs to inform optimal screening windows, reporting practices, and implementation supports for secondary grades. MSDE shall also provide support on decision rules for follow-up diagnostic assessment and intervention.

ii. During SY 2027–2028, LEAs will follow a phased-in timeline to administer an MSDE-approved adolescent universal reading screener in accordance with the following grade-level requirements (Sedita, 2024b, Toste, et al., 2026):

1) Starting in SY 2027-2028, for students in grades 4 through 5, the universal screener shall be administered three times per year at the beginning of year (BOY), middle of year (MOY), and end of year (EOY).

2) Starting in SY 2028-2029, for students in grades 6-8, the universal screener shall be administered at BOY to any student who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the prior year's Maryland-approved English Language Arts assessment (Sedita, 2012):

a) Students who are identified through universal screening as demonstrating a reading difficulty or being at risk for reading difficulties shall also be screened again at MOY and EOY.

b. Universal screeners for grades 4-8 shall:

i. Measure, at a minimum, advanced decoding reading skills, including multisyllabic word recognition, morphology, and syntax, as well as reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 4-5;

ii. Measure, at a minimum, vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 6-8;

c. Diagnostics shall be administered to students identified by the universal screener as at risk for reading difficulties. Universal screening and diagnostic data shall provide actionable information to inform Tier I instruction and Tiers 2 and 3 intervention to address reading difficulties (Bond, 2021; Sedita, 2024b; Sedita, 2026).

d. Screeners, diagnostic, and progress monitoring tools must provide timely, actionable reporting to teachers, administrators, and families with minimal loss of instructional time (Gersten et al., 2009).

e. Students deemed at-risk for reading difficulties in 4-8 shall be provided targeted reading intervention with progress monitoring intervals of no more than 30 days (Gersten et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2010).

f. For multilingual learners, screening and diagnostic assessment shall be given in English to identify

the specific areas of need and track growth (ESSA, 2015):

i. When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).

ii. Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.

g. For students with disabilities, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be administered as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; Individuals with Disabilities Act [IDEA], 2004):

i. Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations may be used;

ii. MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented.

iii. MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.

h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs may request universal screener reading data to accompany transfer records. In grades 4-8:

i. Students whose in- or out-of-state reading assessment results demonstrate a lack of grade-level reading proficiency and lack current reading screener data will be screened within 30-calendar days of enrollment.

ii. If LEAs do not receive current screening or state reading assessment with the transfer records, LEAs will screen students within 30-calendar days of enrollment.

iii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested (or exempted if applicable) during the LEAs' next regular testing window.

i. LEAs will notify parents/guardians of their child's screening results (Learning Heroes, 2025).

j. In determining which assessments to approve for LEA use, MSDE shall consider, at minimum:

i. Total time required to administer and score the assessment, with the intention minimizing the impact on instructional time;

ii. The professional learning needed to administer, interpret, and use data to plan instruction; and

iii. The timeliness and clarity of reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

**3. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support**

a. All students in grades 4-8 must receive Tier 1 literacy instruction using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) aligned with the Science of Reading (Hammond, 2015; Washington & Iruka, 2024; Zeng, et al., 2025). Following structured literacy principles, Tier 1 instruction must be evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit and provide equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025). It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025). Tier 1 instruction must also:

i. Address the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCR) for English Language Arts (ELA) and the MSDE's secondary literacy guidance (including any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk) that identifies advanced decoding skills (multisyllabic decoding, morphology/word study, advanced spelling), syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building within the LEA-selected HQIM (National Institute for Literacy & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007; Wang, et al., 2024);

ii. Include educators' use of the LEA's system of assessments to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);

iii. Utilize a scope and sequence within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year that is delivered explicitly following Universal Design for Learning and Science of Learning principles for active and engaged students (CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);

iv. Be delivered within ELA/content-area blocks sufficient to provide comprehensive literacy instruction and meaningful practice with writing and complex text; and

v. Be comprised of a sufficient number of daily instructional minutes for Tier I literacy instruction based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).

b. MSDE shall maintain a recurring standards review cycle for grades 4–8 with authority to issue off-cycle updates when research or student data warrant, to ensure Maryland's standards remain aligned with the Science of Reading. Because current standards do not explicitly include advanced decoding skills in grades 6–8, MSDE shall issue a Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk specifying research-based expectations for these skills by grade band and mapping them to current standards. LEAs shall implement Tier I practices consistent with the addendum while formal standards review proceeds. The timing of the addendum/crosswalk shall follow the Board-approved implementation timeline. MSDE may update state English Language Arts assessment blueprints and related guidance to align with adopted standards and any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk, consistent with the Board-approved implementation timeline.

c. MSDE will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process for comprehensive literacy programs, which publishes reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) website. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs. HQIM must align with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards and be based on scientifically grounded reading and writing research, including the positive impact of integrated reading and writing instruction (Graham, 2012), designed to reduce the risk of reading difficulties. These materials shall:

i. Address the core components of adolescent literacy (advanced decoding skills, syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, foundational and compositional writing, vocabulary, comprehension, and knowledge-building);

ii. Integrate culturally responsive and language-affirming practices; and

iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model or leveled texts.

d. LEAs should prioritize materials that meet Tier I expectations and avoid approaches not supported by the Science of Reading.

e. Students identified as at risk through screeners, including any grade 4 student promoted for a good cause or by parent/guardian consent, must receive targeted reading and/or writing intervention aligned to assessed needs, in addition to Tier 1 instruction (Brown & Stollar, 2025). Science of

Reading based interventions shall be school-based and scheduled within the school day (Durrance, 2023). LEAs shall ensure Tier 2 and 3 interventions:

i. Match the specific skill profile as determined by the diagnostic; are developmentally appropriate; and are provided in an explicit, systematic, and sequential manner with adequate dosage and fidelity (Al Otaiba et al., 2019; Brown & Stollar, 2025; NRP, 2000; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b);

ii. Are delivered by any staff member trained in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the intervention being provided (Ragusa, 2026);

iii. Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);

iv. Do not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

v. Follow scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) that do not remove access to required Tier 1 ELA and content-area courses.

vi. Continue to provide English Language Development (ELD) instruction for Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.

f. For each student each student receiving intervention, schools develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) within 30 calendar days of identification that specifies goals/benchmarks, intervention type/focus, service frequency and duration, progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, and exit criteria; align with Individualized Education Plans (IEP)/504 as applicable;

g. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.

h. All students including multilingual learners (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974), students with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990), and students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction

i. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.

j. All students in grades 6-8 should receive interdisciplinary literacy instruction in social studies, science, and technical subjects to support the development of skills needed to meet college and career expectations (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

**4. Family Notification and Student Reading Improvement Plans**

a. Any student in in grades 4–5 (beginning in SY 2027–2028) and grades 6-8 (beginning in SY 2028-2029) who meets the following criteria shall receive a SRIP:

i. Students who have been identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time in the current school year, based on the MSDE vetted and approved universal screener; and

ii. Any 4th grade student promoted for good cause by parent/guardian consent.

b. The SRIP shall be developed no later than 30-calendar days upon closing of the universal screener assessment window and test results identifying the reading difficulty.

c. The LEA must develop a process and procedures to notify the parent/guardian(s), in writing (print or electronic), of any grade 4-8 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year. The notification must be written in family-friendly language and include:
    i. An explanation that the student has been identified as having difficulties in reading;
    ii. An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the development of the SRIP which includes evidence-based reading interventions address the identified area(s) of reading concern; and
    iii. A school point of contact for follow-up.

d. The SRIP shall:
    i. Be created by the teacher, principal, or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);
    ii. Describe the evidence-based intervention program(s) and/or practices grounded in the Science of Reading that the student will receive to remedy the reading difficulty;
    iii. Include the necessary frequency and duration of interventions to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning;
    iv. Meet the requirements for Tier 1 instruction and reading interventions outlined in section II.B.3 above;
    v. Specify how the intervention fits within secondary schedules without displacing required content-area courses;
    vi. Include a progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance at a minimum of every 30 days, the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;
    vii. Identify exit criteria for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency;
    viii. Provide more intensified interventions to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for students significantly below grade level and transfer or newly enrolled students identified with reading difficulties; and
    ix. Be reviewed and updated annually with the parent/guardian(s) if a student exhibits the continued need for reading intervention.

e. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters and guidance for developing and implementing a SRIP as well as technical assistance and training on these tools and resources. LEAs may adapt samples while retaining required elements.

f. If a student has not met exit criteria at the end of a given school year, the SRIP will stay active and go with the student to the following grade level. When transitioning to a new school, the receiving school shall meet once new screener and diagnostic data is available to update the SRIP with the new intervention details.

g. If a student has reading goals on their IEP:
    i. The IEP may substitute for the development of an SRIP;
    ii. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP will be updated;
    iii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan.

## C. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| 2025-2026 | • MSDE releases grades 4-8 Family Guides to support at-home literacy. |
| 2026-2027 | • MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports.<br>• MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance on MTSS for secondary schedules.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include SRIPs, walkthrough tools, coaching, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.<br>• MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report which includes recommended screeners for grades 4-8.<br>• MSDE releases a grade 4-8 SRIP checklist and sample parent notification letters. |
| 2027-2028 | • MSDE launches Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders.<br>• Selected LEAs pilot intervention service models.<br>• LEAs report SoR PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 4-8.<br>• LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in grades 4-5; MSDE technical assistance (TA) provided.<br>• LEAs implement grades 4-5 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS.<br>• MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning. |
| August 31, 2028 | • LEA staff who support grades 4-8 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed SoR PL.<br>• LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete SoR PL within three years of their hire date. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2028-2029 | • LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in grades 6-8.<br>• LEAs implement grades 6-8 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS.<br>• LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 4-5.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning.<br>• EPPs begin annual reporting of SoR course completion.<br>• MSDE publishes EPP program completion rates annually. |
| October 1, 2029 | • LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 6-8 screening and intervention data. |
| 2029-2030 | • LEAs begin to provide ongoing Science of Reading PL support for grades 6-8.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning. |
| 2030-2031 | • Full implementation of Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8 section of the PreK – 12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy. |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Local Education Agency

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by October 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

i. Student participation rates for each screening window in the MSDE-approved and required LEA assessment system;

ii. Number and percentage of students identified at risk for reading difficulty by grade level;

iii. Number and percentage of students receiving evidence-based reading intervention;

iv. Number and percentage of students with a SRIP by grade level; and

v. Disaggregation by grade (4–8) and student groups consistent with state reporting practices (e.g., multilingual learner status and English language proficiency level, disability status, economically disadvantaged, race/ethnicity).

b. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. This list shall be submitted annually to MSDE.

### 2. Maryland State Department of Education

a. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.

b. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.

c. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners, Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students, and students with disabilities.

d. MSDE will provide guidance on diagnostic assessment and intervention.

e. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

f. MSDE shall annually compile the information required, along with state-level summary information, and report such information to the state board of education (SBOE), the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

g. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

h. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters.

i. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for educators.

j. MSDE will develop an education/media campaign to increase families' and community stakeholders' knowledge about the importance of effective literacy instruction and Science of Reading practices for grades 4-8.

k. MSDE will publish EPP program completion rates annually to ensure transparency and alignment to the Science of Reading across the state's educator pipeline.

**3. Maryland State Board of Education**

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy, including analysis of the following by LEA and student groups:

i. The number of students enrolled;

ii. The number and percentage of students screened;

iii. The number and percentage of students identified as at-risk for reading difficulty;

iv. The number and percentage of students that received reading intervention;

v. The number and percentage of students demonstrating adequate reading proficiency;

vi. All data should be disaggregated by multilingual learner status, disability status, race, ethnicity, and free and reduced lunch status (FARMS); and

vii. The number and percentage of employees who support literacy instruction trained in the Science of Reading.

# III. Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12

## A. PURPOSE

Maryland's early-grade literacy policy sets a strong foundation that must be sustained in grades 9-12, so students can keep pace with increasingly complex grade-level texts, writing, and academic demands. Because literacy expectations expand across disciplines in the upper grades, Tier 1 instruction must continue to develop students' vocabulary, reading, and writing proficiency through enhancing disciplinary literacy skills to ensure access to rigorous coursework, readiness for graduation, and success with postsecondary opportunities.

To address this need, a comprehensive adolescent literacy policy is essential to extend evidence-based literacy practices beyond grade 3 and ensure that all students particularly those with reading difficulties, those living in poverty, multilingual learners, students of color, and students with disabilities can access grade-level coursework and graduate on time. This policy is designed to strengthen literacy instruction and intervention across grades 9-12 in ways that reflect the developmental demands of adolescent reading and the literacy expectations embedded in secondary classrooms.

This policy aligns to the PreK–3 framework's equity goals and focus on statewide progression, while updating the approach for older students by integrating advanced decoding skills into Tier 1 instruction across disciplines. Consistent with emerging research on adolescent literacy development, the policy emphasizes attention to both foundational and language-based dimensions of reading alongside comprehension and knowledge-building, with targeted interventions provided when screening and diagnostic evidence indicate need.

## B. POLICY STANDARDS

### 1. System of Support for Educators

a. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.06, all teachers employed in a Maryland LEA in a position that requires a license in special education or English to Speakers of Other Languages shall demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction if proficiency was not demonstrated at the time of initial licensure. Demonstration of proficiency may be satisfied by:

   i. Passing an approved reading instruction licensure assessment; or

   ii. Passing professional learning or coursework approved by the MSDE.

   Demonstration of proficiency is due at the time of licensure renewal.

b. Per COMAR 13A.12.02.03, all applicants seeking initial licensure in special education (birth through adult) and English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) must demonstrate proficiency aligned with the Science of Reading.

c. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) provide the following system of support for grades 9 through 12 educators who support literacy instruction (95 Percent Group, 2026):

   i. Ongoing, job-embedded professional learning on the Science of Reading; and

   ii. Professional learning to administer assessments and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention (Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.).

d. Instructional support to support assist educators with implementing Tier 1 instruction using the LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-based decision-making which may include:

   i. Co-planning;

   ii. Co-teaching; and modeling;

   iii. Professional learning communities;

iv. Job-embedded professional learning;

v. Curriculum-based professional learning; and

vi. Non-evaluative coaching observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

e. LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation. In accordance with COMAR 13A.07.06, educator preparation programs shall:

i. Provide the coursework and clinical experiences necessary to prepare candidates seeking licensure for secondary ELA, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading to:

1) Teach advanced morphology and etymology, fluency, academic language, discourse, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing effectively in secondary contexts;

2) Implement reading/literacy instruction using high-quality instructional materials aligned with the Science of Reading;

3) Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading difficulties, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;

4) Understand and use student data (screening, diagnostics, progress monitoring) to make instructional decisions for Tier I and to design Tier II/III interventions; and

5) Demonstrate competency through State Board-recognized evidence consistent with existing timelines.

f. MSDE shall provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for all staff who support literacy instruction for students in grades 9 through 12 to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students how to engage with grade-level text (The Reading League, 2022).

i. Staff hired prior to July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028.

ii. Staff hired after July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training within three years of their hire date.

g. MSDE will provide guidance, technical assistance, and training on developing and implementing professional learning.

**2. System of Assessments**

a. The system of assessments local education agencies (LEAs) use for students in grades 9 through 12 shall include universal screening, diagnostic assessment, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading (Toste et al., 2026). The system of assessments shall follow the required timeline outlined below:

i. During SY 2026–2027, MSDE shall release a list of approved universal reading screeners and support LEAs to inform optimal screening windows, reporting practices, and implementation supports for secondary grades. MSDE shall also provide support on decision rules for follow-up diagnostic assessment and intervention.

ii. Starting in SY 2029-2030 for students in grade 9, the universal screener shall be administered at the beginning of year (BOY) to any student who did not demonstrate adequate reading proficiency on the prior year's Maryland-approved English Language Arts assessment (Sedita, 2012).

b. Universal screeners shall:

i. Accurately and reliably identify and predict students who may be at risk for reading difficulties, including characteristics associated with dyslexia; and

ii. Measure, at a minimum, vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 9-12 (AIM Institute, 2021; Sedita, 2024b).

c. Diagnostics shall be administered to students identified by the universal screener as at risk for reading difficulties. Universal screening and diagnostic data shall provide actionable information to inform Tier 1 instruction and Tiers 2 and 3 intervention to address reading difficulties (Bond, 2021; Sedita, 2024b; Sedita, 2026).

d. Screeners, diagnostic, and progress monitoring results must provide timely, actionable reporting to teachers, administrators, and families with minimal loss of instructional time (Gersten et al., 2009).

e. Students deemed at-risk for reading difficulties in 9-12 shall be provided targeted reading intervention with progress monitoring intervals of no more than 30 days (Gersten et al., 2008; Vaughn et al., 2010).

f. For multilingual learners, screening and diagnostic assessment shall be given in English to identify the specific areas of need and track growth (ESSA, 2015):

i. When available, an additional screener may be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).

ii. Permitted accommodations for multilingual learners, as outlined in the screener administration manual, may be used provided they maintain the validity of the assessment. Intervention planning shall be informed by multiple, convergent data sources.

g. For students with disabilities, screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring shall be administered as an important component in ensuring access and providing timely support (Connor et al., 2014; ESSA, 2015; IDEA, 2004):

i. Teachers and school-based teams should review the screener's directions to determine how 504 and/or IEP-aligned accommodations can be used;

ii. MSDE will issue guidance on supporting students whose approved accommodations conflict with screening manual protocols to ensure accommodations may be implemented; and

iii. MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.

h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs may request state reading data to accompany transfer records. In grades 9-12:

i. Students whose in- or out-of-state reading assessment results demonstrate a lack of grade-level reading proficiency and lack current reading screener data will be screened within 30-calendar days of enrollment.

ii. If LEAs do not receive current screening or state reading assessment with the transfer records, LEAs will screen students within 30-calendar days of enrollment.

iii. New students with transferred screening data will be tested (or exempted if applicable) during the LEAs' next regular testing window.

i. LEAs will notify parents/guardians of their child's screening results (Learning Heroes, 2025).

j. In determining which assessments to approve for LEA use, MSDE shall consider, at minimum:

i. Total time required to administer and score the assessment, with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time;

ii. The professional learning needed to administer, interpret, and use data to plan instruction;

and

iii. The timeliness and clarity of reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.

**3. Multi-Tiered System of Supports**

a. All students in grades 9-12 must receive Tier I literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) (Hammond, 2015; Washington & Iruka, 2024; Zeng, et al., 2025). Following structured literacy principles, Tier I instruction must be evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit and provide equitable access to complex, grade-level texts (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS Center], 2023a; MTSS Center, 2025). It shall not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction or matching students to leveled texts (Greene, 2024; Shanahan, 2025). Tier I instruction must also:

i. Address the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCR) for English Language Arts (ELA) and the MSDE's secondary literacy guidance (including any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk) that identifies advanced decoding skills (multisyllabic decoding, morphology/word study, advanced spelling), syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, comprehension, writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building within the LEA-selected HQIM (National Institute for Literacy & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2007; Wang, et al., 2024);

ii. Include educators' use of the LEA's system of assessments to make data-informed instructional decisions (Wohlstetter et al., 2008; Hamilton et al., 2009);

iii. Utilize a scope and sequence within the LEA-selected HQIM that increases in complexity over the course of the year that is delivered explicitly following Universal Design for Learning and Science of Learning principles for active and engaged students (CAST, n.d.; Heal & Lee, 2026; Sweller et al., 2019);

iv. Be delivered within ELA/content-area blocks sufficient to provide comprehensive literacy instruction and meaningful practice with writing and complex text.

v. Be comprised of a sufficient number of daily instructional minutes for Tier I literacy instruction based on scheduling requirements of the LEA-adopted HQIM, including reasonable time to implement the embedded differentiated supports for advanced learners, struggling readers, students with disabilities, and multilingual learners (TNTP, 2018).

b. MSDE shall maintain a recurring standards review cycle for grades 9-12 with authority to issue off-cycle updates when research or student data warrant, to ensure Maryland's standards remain aligned with the Science of Reading. Because current standards do not explicitly include advanced decoding skills in grades 9–12, MSDE shall issue a Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk specifying research-based expectations for these skills by grade band and mapping them to current standards. LEAs shall implement Tier I practices consistent with the addendum while formal standards review proceeds. The timing of the addendum/crosswalk shall follow the Board-approved implementation timeline. MSDE may update state English Language Arts assessment blueprints and related guidance to align with adopted standards and any Board-issued Secondary Literacy Addendum/Crosswalk, consistent with the Board-approved implementation timeline.

c. MSDE will maintain the Instructional Materials Review (IMR) process for comprehensive literacy programs, which publishes reviews and ratings on the high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) website. Procurement decisions remain with LEAs. These materials shall:

i. Address the core components of adolescent literacy (advanced decoding skills, syntax/grammar, academic language, discourse, fluency, foundational and compositional writing, vocabulary, and knowledge-building);

ii. Integrate culturally responsive and language-affirming practices; and

iii. Not include the three-cueing systems model or leveled texts.

d. LEAs should prioritize materials that meet Tier 1 expectations and avoid approaches not supported by the Science of Reading.

e. Students identified as at risk through screeners, must receive targeted reading and/or writing intervention aligned to assessed needs, in addition to Tier 1 instruction (Brown & Stollar, 2025). Science of Reading based interventions shall be school-based and scheduled within the school day (Durrance, 2023). LEAs shall ensure Tier 2 and 3 interventions:

i. Match the specific skill profile as determined by the diagnostic; are developmentally appropriate; and are provided in an explicit, systematic, and sequential manner with adequate dosage and fidelity (Al Otaiba et al., 2019;

ii. Are delivered by any staff member trained in the Science of Reading (SoR) and the intervention being provided (Ragusa, 2026).

iii. Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07);

iv. Do not delay or deny a student who may be suspected of having a disability from the appropriate evaluation under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and

v. Follow scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) that do not remove access to required Tier 1 ELA and content-area courses.

vi. Continue to provide English Language Development (ELD) instruction for Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.

f. For each student receiving intervention, schools shall develop a plan within 30 calendar days of identification that specifies goals/benchmarks, intervention type/focus, service frequency and duration, progress monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, and exit criteria; align with Individualized Education Plans (IEP)/504 as applicable.

g. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance.

h. All students including multilingual learners (Equal Educational Opportunities Act, 1974), students with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990), and students with an intervention plan must be provided access to all levels of tiered instruction.

i. Students with significant cognitive disabilities who are participating on the Alternate Education Framework shall be provided equitable access to all tiers of instruction following COMAR 13A.05.01.08 and MSDE's *Alternate Education Framework Guidance for IEP Teams Working with Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities: Assessment, Instruction, and Placement*.

j. All students in grades 9-12 should receive interdisciplinary literacy instruction in social studies, science, and technical subjects to support the development of skills needed to meet college and career expectations (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

**4. Family Notification and Intervention**

a. Beginning in SY 2029-2030, the LEA must develop a process and procedures, in writing (print or electronic), to notify the parent/guardian(s) of any 9-12 student who exhibits difficulty in reading at any time during the school year. The notification must be written in family-friendly language and

include:

i. An explanation that the student has been identified as having difficulties in reading;

ii. An invitation to collaborate with the teacher, principal or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel on the evidence-based reading interventions to address the identified area(s) of reading concern; and

iii. A school point of contact for follow-up.

b. The reading intervention(s) shall:

i. Be identified by the teacher, principal, or designee, and/or other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);

ii. Be an evidence-based intervention program(s) and/or practices grounded in the Science of Reading that the student will receive to remedy the reading difficulty;

iii. Be administered at the necessary frequency and duration to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning and fits within secondary schedules without displacing required content-area courses;

iv. Include a progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, the measures to be used, and decision rules for intensifying, modifying, or exiting intervention;

v. Have clear exit criteria for determining when intervention is no longer needed based on screener, diagnostic, and/or progress monitoring data reflecting grade-level proficiency;

vi. Increase in intensity to remedy specific area(s) of need and accelerate progress for students significantly below grade level and transfer or newly enrolled students identified with reading difficulties;

vii. Be reviewed and updated as needed with the parent/guardian(s) if a student exhibits the continued need for reading intervention;

c. If a student has reading goals on their IEP:

i. The IEP team will review the results of the screening instrument and diagnostic survey to determine whether the student's IEP may be updated;

ii. If an update is necessary, the IEP team shall incorporate the data and information that would have been used to develop reading intervention.

## C. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

| Timeline | Policy Component |
|---|---|
| 2026-2027 | • MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning to include walkthrough tools, student support, students learning multiple languages, and decision rules for follow-up diagnostics and intervention.<br>• MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report with grades 9-12. |

| | |
|---|---|
| 2027-2028 | • MSDE launches Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders.<br>• LEAs report Science of Reading PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 9-12.<br>• MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning. |
| August 31, 2028 | • LEA staff who support grades 9-12 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1, 2025 are expected to have completed SoR PL.<br>• LEA staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete Science of Reading PL within three years of their hire date. |
| 2028-2029 | • MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning. |
| 2029-2030 | • LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, along with parent notification, as needed, in grades 9-12.<br>• LEAs begin to provide ongoing Science of Reading PL support for grades 9-12.<br>• MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning. |
| October 1, 2030 | • LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 9-12 screening and intervention data. |
| 2030-2031 | • Full implementation of the Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12 section of the PreK – 12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy. |

## D. RESPONSIBILITIES

### 1. Local Education Agency

a. Each LEA must annually report in writing to MSDE by October 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

i. Student participation rates for each screening window in the MSDE-approved and required LEA assessment system;

ii. Number and percentage of students identified at risk for reading difficulty by grade level;

iii. Number and percentage of students receiving evidence-based reading intervention; and

iv. Disaggregation by grade (9-12) and student groups consistent with state reporting practices (e.g., multilingual learners/English proficiency levels, disability status, economically disadvantaged, race/ethnicity).

b. LEAs are responsible for maintaining an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading as defined by MSDE.

i. This list shall be submitted annually to MSDE.

**2. Maryland State Department of Education**

a. MSDE will provide a list of approved Science of Reading training for staff who support literacy instruction and update it as needed.

b. MSDE will vet and approve a list of PreK-12 Universal Reading screeners.

c. MSDE will provide guidance on screening multilingual learners; Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students; and students with disabilities.

d. MSDE will provide decision rules for follow up diagnostic assessment and intervention.

e. MSDE shall establish a uniform format for LEAs to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from LEAs and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

f. MSDE shall annually compile the information required, along with state-level summary information, and report such information to the state board of education (SBOE), the public, the Governor, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.

g. MSDE shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.

h. MSDE will provide sample parent/guardian notification letters.

i. MSDE will create an MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for administrators, ELA supervisors, and educators in grades 9-12.

**3. Maryland State Board of Education**

a. The SBOE shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy, including analysis of:

i. The number and percentage of employees who support literacy instruction trained in the Science of Reading.

# References

## A. LAWS & REGULATIONS

1. Education Article 7-202
2. Every Student Succeeds Act 2015
3. Gifted and Talented Education (COMAR 13A.04.07)
4. Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004)
5. Literacy Standards Regulation
6. Ready to Read Act (SB 734)
7. Ready to Read Regulations (COMAR 13A.03.08)

## B. BOARD POLICIES, RESOLUTIONS, FRAMEWORKS, AND GUIDANCE

1. State Board Resolution 24-01 – Statewide Adoption and Implementation of the Science of Reading
2. Maryland College and Career-Readiness Standards for ELA
3. Maryland Early Learning Standards
4. A Framework for Multi-Tiered System of Supports: A Maryland MTSS Guide
5. Criteria for excellence: Gifted and talented education program
6. MSDE's Maryland's PreK – 12 Family Engagement Framework: A Shared Responsibility
7. MSDE's ELA/Literacy High-Quality Instructional Materials Identification Framework
8. MSDE's Literacy High-Quality Instructional Materials Rubric
9. MSDE's Building a Strong Foundation High-Quality Instruction Materials Adoption Framework
10. MSDE's HQIM Implementation Framework

## C. RESEARCH

95 Percent Group. (2026). Science of Reading 3.0: Widening the lens on literacy. https://info.95percentgroup.com/ebook-sor-3.0

AIM Institute for Learning & Research. (2021). *Quick guide for reading assessment*. AIM Nexus. https://nexus.aimpa.org/publications/articles/quick-guide-for-reading-assessment

Al Otaiba, S., Allor, J. H., Baker, K., Conner, C., Stewart, J., & Mellado de la Cruz, V. M. (2019). Teaching phonemic awareness and word reading skills: Focusing on explicit and systematic approaches. Perspectives on Language and Literacy.

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching. Guilford Press.

Bailey, T. R., Colpo, A., & Foley, A. (2020, December). Assessment practices within a multi-tiered system of supports (Document No. IC-18). University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform Center. https://ceedar.education.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Assessment-Practices-Within-a-Multi-Tiered-System-of-Supports-2.pdf

Bond, B. (2021, October 27). Early reading: Screening, diagnosis, and prevention. Albert Shanker Institute. https://www.shankerinstitute.org/blog/early-reading-screening-diagnosis-and-prevention

Brown, S., & Stollar, S. (2025). MTSS for Reading Improvement: A Leader's Tool Kit for Schoolwide Success (Reading science in action: an MTSS tool kit). Solution Tree Press.

CAST. (n.d.). Evidence and benefits of UDL. https://www.cast.org/what-we-do/evidence/

Center on Intensive Intervention. (n.d.). Ensuring fidelity of assessment and data entry procedures. https://intensiveintervention.org/sites/default/files/DataFidelity_Final508.pdf

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2022). 10 essential features of tier 2 supplemental intervention [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/10-features-tier2-v2.pdf

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2023). Essential features of tier 1 core programming [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/tier_1_infographic.pdf

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2023). Essential features of tier 3 intensive intervention [Infographic]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/tier3_infographic.pdf

Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports. (2025). Tier 1: Considerations for improving tier 1 instruction, curriculum, and environment [Tip sheet]. American Institutes for Research. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/considerations_tier1.pdf

Chung, P. J., Patel, D. R., & Nizami, I. (2020). Disorder of written expression and dysgraphia: definition, diagnosis, and management. Translational pediatrics, 9(Suppl 1), S46–S54. https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2019.11.01

Ciancio, D. (2023, July 18). The importance of comprehension in the science of reading. Institute of Education Sciences. https://ies.ed.gov/learn/blog/importance-comprehension-science-reading

Colorado Department of Education. (2021, July). What is the difference between decodable text and leveled text?

Connor, C. M., Alberto, P. A., Compton, D. L., & O'Connor, R. E. (2014). Improving reading outcomes for students with or at risk for reading disabilities: A synthesis of the contributions from the Institute of Education Sciences Research Centers (NCSER 2014-3000). National Center for Special Education Research. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544759

Durrance, S. (2023). Implementing MTSS in secondary schools: Challenges and strategies. SERVE Center at UNC Greensboro.

EdTrust-New York. (2025, June). Every grade counts: The state of adolescent literacy in New York. https://newyork.edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/The-State-of-Adolescent-Literacy-in-New-York.pdf

Esparza Brown, J., & Sanford, A. (2011). RTI for English language learners: Appropriately using screening and progress monitoring tools to improve instructional outcomes. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, National Center on Response to Intervention. https://mtss4success.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/rtiforells.pdf

Gersten, R., Baker, S.K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades: A Practice Guide (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20074011.pdf

Gersten, R., Compton, D., Connor, C. M., Dimino, J., Santoro, L., Linan-Thompson, S., & Tilly, W. D. (2008). Assisting students struggling with reading: Response to Intervention (RtI) and multi-tier intervention in the primary grades: A practice guide (NCEE 2009-4045). National Center for

Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. ed.gov

Graham, S. (2020). The sciences of reading and writing must become more fully integrated. Reading research quarterly, 55, S35-S44.

Greene, T. (2024, January 10). From policy to action: Why 8 states banned three-cueing from K-3 reading instruction. ExcelinEd in Action. https://excelinedinaction.org/2024/01/10/from-policy-to-action-why-8-states-banned-three-cueing-from-k-3-reading-instruction/

Greene, Jay P., and Marcus A. Winters. "Revisiting grade retention: An evaluation of Florida's test-based promotion policy." Education Finance and Policy 2.4 (2007): 319-340.

Hamilton, L., Halverson, R., Jackson, S., Mandinach, E., Supovitz, J., & Wayman, J. (2009). Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making (NCEE 2009-4067). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide/12

Hammond, Z. L. (2015). Culturally responsive teaching and the brain. Corwin Press.

Heal, J., & Lee, M.(2026, April).The science of learning: A blueprint for instructional improvement. The Learning Professional, 47(2). https://learningforward.org/journal/applying-the-science-of-learning/the-science-of-learning-a-blueprint-for-instructional-improvement/

Herrera, S., Phillips, B. M., Newton, Y., Dombek, J. L., & Hernandez, J. A. (2021). Effectiveness of early literacy instruction: Summary of 20 years of research (REL 2021–084). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs

Hwang, NaYoung, and Cory Koedel. "Helping or hurting: The effects of retention in the third grade on student outcomes." Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis 47.1 (2025): 65-88.

International Dyslexia Association. (n.d.). Effective reading instruction. https://dyslexiaida.org/effective-reading-instruction/

International Dyslexia Association. (2017, October 5). Universal screening: K–2 reading. https://dyslexiaida.org/universal-screening-k-2-reading/

International Dyslexia Association. (2022, December 20). English learners and dyslexia. https://dyslexiaida.org/english-learners-and-dyslexia/

Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., & Torgesen, J. (2008). Improving adolescent literacy: Effective classroom and intervention practices (NCEE #2008-4027). National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. ed.gov

Kaplan, S. N. (2019). The grid: Differentiated curriculum for the gifted and talented. Prufrock Press.

Mumma, Kirsten, and Marcus Winters. "The effect of retention under Mississippi's test-based promotion policy."." Technical Report Working Paper 2023-1. Wheelock Educational Policy Center Boston, MA, 2023.

National Center on Improving Literacy. (2022). Screening for Reading Risk: What Is It and Why Is It Important? https://www.improvingliteracy.org/resource/screening-for-reading-risk-what-is-it-and-why-is-it-important

National Institute for Literacy, & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2007). What content-area teachers should know about adolescent literacy. U.S. Department of Education. nih.gov

National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction. National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Ozernov-Palchik, O., Norton, E. S., Sideridis, G., Beach, S. D., Wolf, M., Gabrieli, J. D. E., & Gaab, N. (2017).

Longitudinal stability of pre-reading skill profiles of kindergarten children: implications for early screening and theories of reading. Developmental science, 20(5), 10.1111/desc.12471. https://doi.org/10.1111/desc.12471

Pondiscio, R., & Mahnken, K. (2014, September 24). Leveled reading: The making of a literacy myth. Thomas B. Fordham Institute. fordhaminstitute.org

Ragusa, J. (2026, April 21). New study shows LETRS training improves student reading outcomes. Kentucky Teacher. Retrieved from https://www.kentuckyteacher.org/news/2026/04/new-study-shows-letrs-training-improves-student-reading-outcomes/

Renzulli, J. S. (2021). Rethinking enrichment clusters: Research-based practices for developing creative productivity. Gifted Education International, 37(3), 181–198.

Richmond, C. L., Daucourt, M. C., Hart, S. A., & Solari, E. J. (2024). Examining the Word Level Skill and Reading Comprehension Profiles of Adolescents with and without Specific Learning Disabilities. Learning disability quarterly : journal of the Division for Children with Learning Disabilities, 47(3), 167–181. https://doi.org/10.1177/07319487231182133

Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. B. Neuman & D. K. Dickinson (Eds.), Handbook of early literacy research (pp. 97–110). Guilford Press.

Schwerdt, Guido, and Martin R. West. "The Effects of Early Grade Retention on Student Outcomes over Time: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Florida. Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Papers Series. PEPG 12-09." Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University (2012).

Sedita, J. (2023). The writing rope: A framework for explicit writing instruction in all subjects. Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Sedita, J. (2024a, November 12). Disciplinary literacy. Literacy Lines. https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/disciplinary-literacy-2/

Sedita, J. (2024b, November 25). Reading assessment model, grades 5–12. Keys to Literacy. https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/reading-assessment-model-grades-5-12/

Sedita, J. (2026, March). Adolescent literacy: A guide. Keys to Literacy; K12 Coalition. https://keystoliteracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/KTL-Guide_Adolescent_Literacy_2026.pdf

Shanahan, T. (2025). Leveled reading, leveled lives: How students' reading achievement has been held back and what we can do about it. Harvard Education Press.

Shanahan T., Shanahan C. (2008). Teaching disciplinary literacy to adolescents: Rethinking content-area literacy. Harvard Educational Review, 78, 40-59.

Sims, W. A., King, K. R., Preast, J. L., Burns, M. K., & Panameño, S. (2023). Are school-based problem-solving teams effective? A meta-analysis of student- and systems-level effects. Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 33(4), 407–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2023.2232785

Sweller, J., van Merriënboer, J.J.G. & Paas, F. Cognitive Architecture and Instructional Design: 20 Years Later. Educ Psychol Rev 31, 261–292 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-019-09465-5

The Reading League. (2022). Science of reading: Defining guide. https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-thescience-of-reading

TNTP. (2018). The opportunity myth: What students can show us about how school is letting them down—and how to fix it. The Opportunity Myth - TNTP

Toste, J. R., Espinas, D., Oslund, E., Elleman, A., & Biancarosa, G. (2026). Measuring what matters: Understanding what reading assessments really tell us. *The Reading League Journal*.

Vaughn, S., Denton, C. A., & Fletcher, J. M. (2010). Why intensive interventions are necessary for

students with severe reading difficulties. Psychology in the Schools, 47(5), 432–444. https://doi.org

Wang, Z., O'Reilly, T., & Sutherland, R. (2024). Replicating decoding threshold in ReadBasix®: Impact on reading skills development (Research Memorandum No. RM-24-06). ETS.

Washington, J. A., & Iruka, I. U. (2025). Linguistic justice: Addressing linguistic variation of Black children in teaching and learning. Linguistics and Education, 85, 101382.

White, S., & McCloskey, M. (2005). Framework for the 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NCES 2005-531). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

Wohlstetter, P., Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2008). Creating a system for data-driven decision-making: Applying the principal–agent framework. School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 19(3), 239–259. Doi.org

Zeng, Y., Isleem, H. F., Tejani, G. G., Jahami, A., & Alnowibet, K. A. (2025). Examining the impact of culturally responsive teaching and identity affirmation on student outcomes: A mixed-methods study in diverse educational settings. International Journal of Educational Development, 117, 103376.

## D. OTHER POLICIES CONSULTED

An Act Relative to Teacher Preparation and Student Literacy, H. 5511, 194th Gen. Court. (Mass. 2026). Massachusetts Legislature Bill Text Repository.

Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act, Colo. Rev. Stat. § 22-7-1201 et seq. (2012 & Supp. 2025).

ExcelinEd. (2025). Advancing adolescent literacy (grades 4–8) model policy. https://excelined.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/ExcelinEd-Adolescent-Literacy-Model-Policy.pdf

Georgia Council on Literacy. (2024). Georgia's vision 2030: State literacy plan. Georgia Reads. https://georgiareads.org/wp-content/uploads/State-Literacy-Plan.pdf

Indiana Department of Education. (2024). Indiana academic standards for literacy development and teacher endorsement protocols. Indiana Department of Education Literacy Hub.

Louisiana Department of Education. (2026, February). Louisiana tiered pathways for literacy support framework. https://doe.louisiana.gov/docs/default-source/literacy/louisiana-tiered-pathway-for-literacy-support-framework-2025.pdf?sfvrsn=afadb7dd_1

Mississippi policy on individual reading plans: Literacy-Based Promotion Act, Miss. Code Ann. § 37-177-1 et seq. (2024)

New Jersey Department of Education. (2025). The New Jersey literacy framework: A guide to evidence-based literacy practices & universal screeners. New Jersey Department of Education Literacy Guidance Platform.

Ohio Department of Education and Workforce. (2025). Ohio's plan to raise literacy achievement. https://education.ohio.gov/getattachment/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Ohios-Plan-to-Raise-Literacy-Achievement.pdf.aspx?lang=en-US

Oregon Department of Education. (2025). Oregon's Adolescent Literacy Framework. https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/ELA/Documents/ORAdolescentLiteracyFramework_2025.pdf

Utah State Legislature. (2026). S.B. 241: Early literacy.https://le.utah.gov/Session/2026/bills/static/SB0241.html

Virginia Literacy Act, Va. Code Ann. §§ 22.1-253.13:2 (2022). https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/english-reading-literacy/literacy/virginia-literacy-acthttps://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/english-reading-literacy/literacy/virginia-literacy-act

Wyoming policy on Individual Reading Plans: Wyo. Admin. Code § 206-0002-56 (2023). Wyo.gov



# Revised Literacy Policy

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Presented By | Dr. Elise Brown, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Instructional Programs

October 13, 2026

Maryland
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

# MSDE Strategic Plan Goals

1

**Every child** has access to a high-quality early childhood program.




PILLAR 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

2

**Every school** has high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders.



PILLAR 2: HIGH-QUALITY & DIVERSE TEACHERS AND LEADERS

3

**Every student** graduates high school college and career ready.



PILLAR 3: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



**Every student** is matched with the resources they need to ensure their success.

4

PILLAR 4: MORE RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS



**Every school and district** receives a rating of ___ or higher.

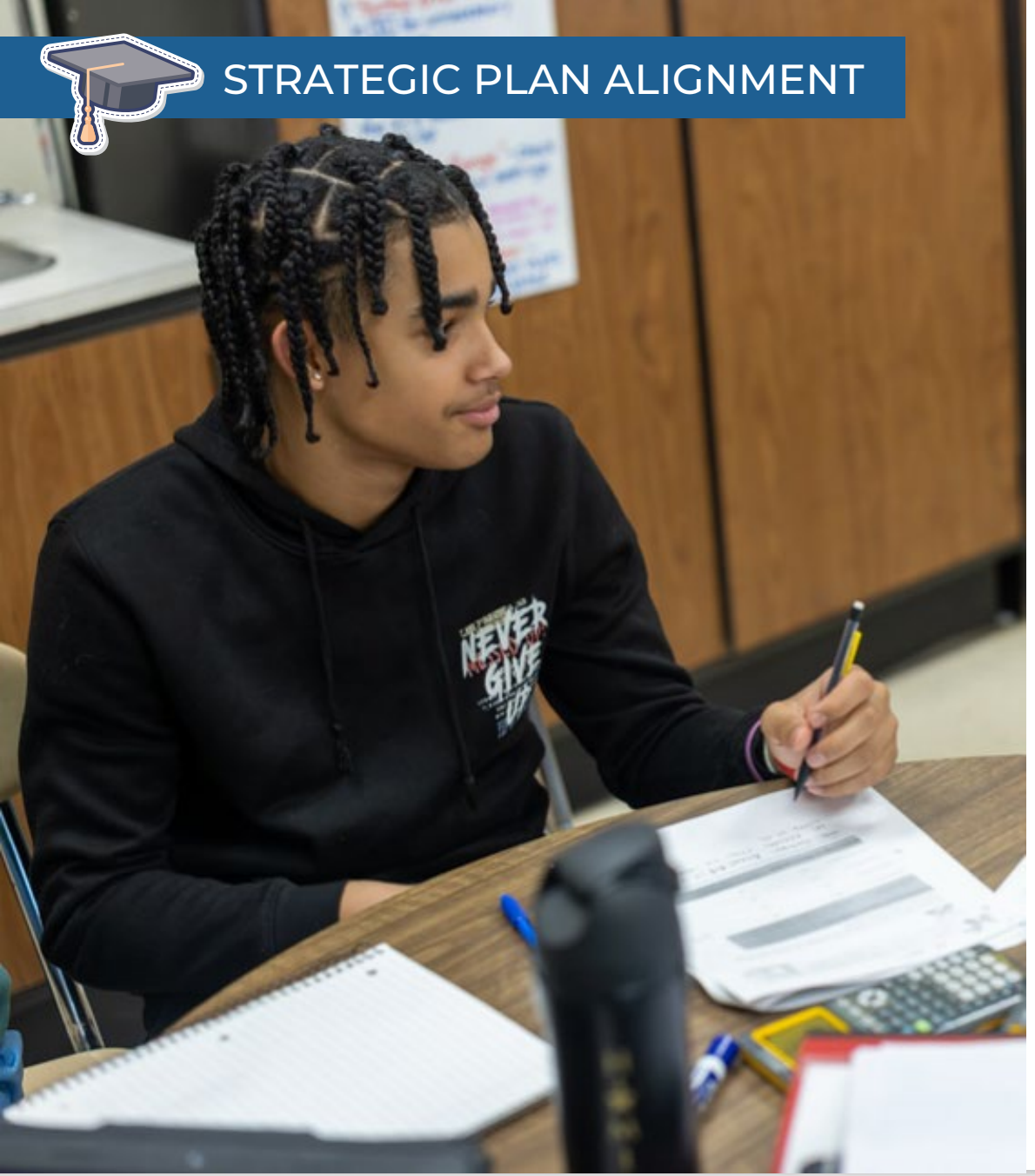
5

PILLAR 5: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Visit the Maryland State Department of Education website to learn more about the Strategic Plan!

strategicplan.marylandpublicschools.org

# STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT




GOAL 3

**Every student** graduates high school college and career ready.

| | |
|---|---|
| **3.A** | Increase the percentage of grade 3 students scoring proficient in reading. |
| **3.B** | Increase the percentage of grades 3-8 students scoring proficient in reading. |
| **3.H** | Increase the percentage of students demonstrating growth on statewide assessments at each grade level and in each student group. |

# Literacy Policy Timeline



**October 2024**

First Adoption of PreK-3 Early Literacy Policy



**January 2026**

Proposed Adolescent Literacy Policy and Public Comment



**Summer 2026**

Revised and Restructured PreK-12 Literacy Policy by grade band



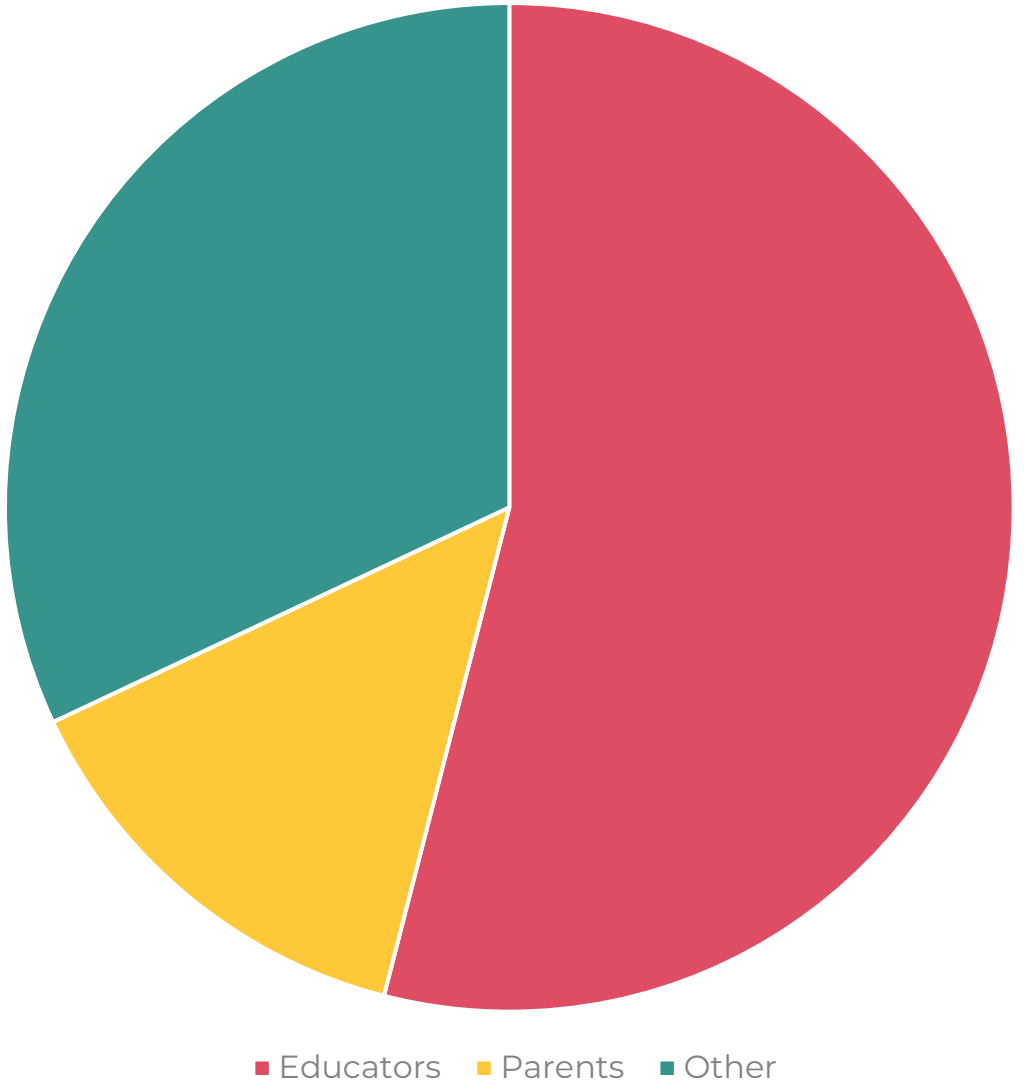
**October 2026**

Seeking Adoption of Revised Prek-12 Literacy Policy

# Public Comment by Role

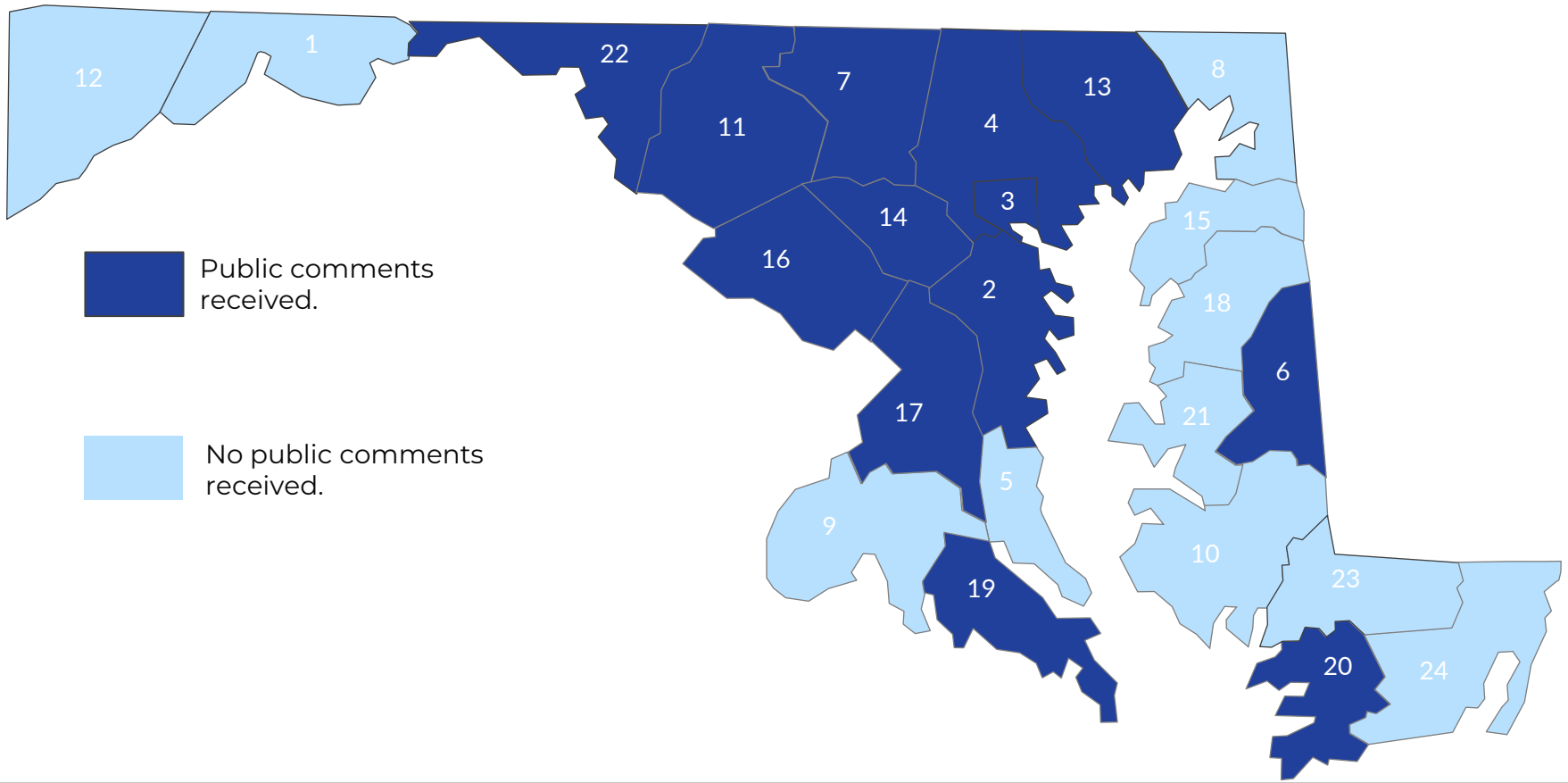
**MSDE received 58 individual comments.**

- 54% came from **educators** (teachers, school administrators, and district leaders)
- 14% came from **parents** and family members
- **Additional comments** were submitted by:
  - students
  - community members
  - business/industry representatives
  - higher education faculty



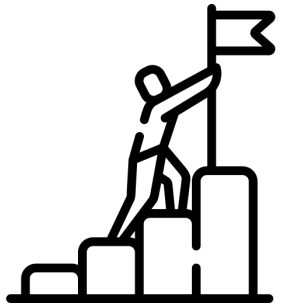
# Public Comment by Local Education Agency

**Comments were submitted across the state with 93% of responses submitted from the LEAs highlighted in dark blue. There were no public comments submitted from representatives of 11 LEAs, identified in light blue. 7% of comments were marked other.**




1. Allegany County
2. Anne Arundel County
3. Baltimore City
4. Baltimore County
5. Calvert County
6. Caroline County
7. Carroll County
8. Cecil County
9. Charles County
10. Dorchester County
11. Frederick County
12. Garrett County
13. Harford County
14. Howard County
15. Kent County
16. Montgomery County
17. Prince George's County
18. Queen Anne's County
19. St. Mary's County
20. Somerset County
21. Talbot County
22. Washington County
23. Wicomico County
24. Worcester County

# Key Themes in Public Comment



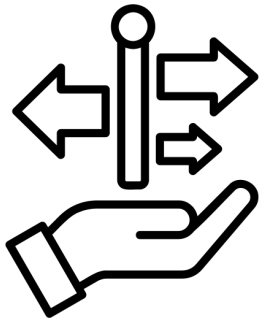
## Support of Policy Goals

- Increased literacy achievement
- Tier 1 access for all students
- Meeting needs of diverse learners
- Increased educator knowledge



## Clarification of Language and Concepts

- MTSS
- Assessment
- Professional learning
- Special population accommodations and intervention



## Need for Guidance

- MTSS scheduling & HQIM
- Assessment logistics & approved screeners
- Professional learning support
- Support for special populations

# Grade Banded Structure of Literacy Policy

**67% of all submissions (39) addressed the revised grade-banded structure**



## Support

**71%**
28 submissions **explicitly support** organizing the policy into grade bands.



## Oppose

**10%**
4 submissions **oppose** the grade bands and suggest alternative groupings.



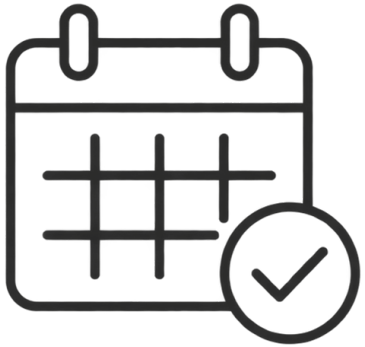
## No Clear Position

**18%**
7 submissions **did not express a clear position** on the structure.

Public comments on the Policy structure can be found on pages 1-4 of the Public Comment Summary.

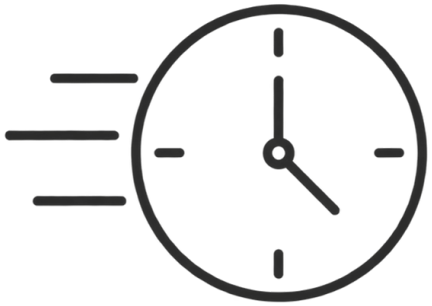
# Timelines of Literacy Policy

**57% of all submissions (33) addressed the revised timelines**



## Just Right

**36%**
12 submissions
**explicitly support** the phased timelines.



## Too Fast

**24%**
8 submissions
Express concern the phased timeline moves **too quickly**.



## Too Slow

**15%**
5 submissions
Express concern the phased timeline moves **too slowly.**

Public comments on the Policy timelines can be found on pages 5-10 of the Public Comment Summary.

# Addressing Unique Needs of Special Student Populations

**Multilingual Learners**

- Need to establish that the SRIP does not replace English Language Development services.
- Clarification around *good-cause exemptions* and use of WIDA ACCESS or ELPA targets.
- Ensuring review of multiple data sources to distinguish language acquisition vs. reading difficulty.

**Students with Disabilities**

- Need clearer guidance for students with low incidence disabilities, especially Deaf, Deaf Blind, and Hard of Hearing learners, whose instructional and screening needs differ.

**Advanced Learners**

- Clearer guidance needed for supporting advanced learners, including enrichment and MTSS alignment.
- Ensure dual-differentiation for gifted/twice-exceptional students and align policies with COMAR expectations and Science of Reading competencies.

Public comments on the Special Populations can be found on pages 11-15 of the Public Comment Summary.

# Content within the Policy

## Positive Feedback

- Broader inclusion of students with disabilities, multilingual, and advanced learners.
- Stronger Science of Reading training and guidance.
- Clearer MTSS structure and supports.
- More flexible, evidence-based intervention options.
- Improved alignment with Tier 1 priorities and multiple measures for decisions.

## Refinement Requests

- Clarity, Consistency, and Definitions
- Assessment and Screening Practices
- Teacher Training, Professional Learning, and Licensing
- Policy Implementation Burdens and Feasibility
- Curriculum Transparency and Alignment
- Communication with Families

Public comments on the Policy content can be found on pages 16-25 of the Public Comment Summary.

# General Comments on the Policy

## 81% (n = 47) of total submissions provided general feedback.

### Positive Feedback

- Clearer, inclusive policy
- Stakeholder input in revisions
- Support for adolescent literacy, MTSS, and strong Tier I instruction

### Refinement Requests

- Screening, intervention & SRIPs
- Professional learning
- Feasibility & resources
- Tier I instruction

General public comments on the can be found on pages 26-37 of the Public Comment Summary.

# Key Shifts in PreK-3

| 2024 PreK-3 Literacy Policy | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Screeners K-3 only | Promotion policy beginning 2026-2027 | Reassessment available | Coaching |
| **2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy (PreK-3 section)** | | | |
| Screeners expanded to PreK | Promotion policy beginning 2027-2028 | No reassessment option | LEA PL Flexibility |

# Key Shifts in Grades 4-8

| January 2026 Adolescent Literacy Policy Draft | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Universal Screeners 3x's for 4-8 | No SRIP with IEP | Coaching | Required Collaboration Time |
| **2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy (Grades 4-8 section)** | | | |
| Screener Progression | LEA choice for SRIP along with IEP | LEA PL Flexibility | Removed Collaboration |

# Key Shifts in Grades 9-12

| January 2026 Adolescent Literacy Policy Draft | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Screeners 9-11 | SRIPs | Timeline 2027-2028 | ELA Focus |
| **2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy (Grades 9-12 section)** | | | |
| Targeted Screening | MTSS Plans | Phased-In Timeline | Added Disciplinary Literacy |

# Next Steps for the MSDE Literacy Branch

**When the PreK-12 Literacy Policy is adopted as proposed, MSDE will continue to:**

- Expand **professional learning opportunities** to support implementation of 2026-2027 initiatives
- Meet weekly with MSDE Assessment team to build an **aligned MSTAR Literacy Assessment**
- Provide **differentiated implementation support** to LEAs regarding implementation of:
  - Science of Reading Training
  - Universal Screeners
  - SRIPs
  - HQIM
  - MTSS
  - Professional Learning and Coaching

# Thank you!

## Questions and Comments

# Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy Feedback

## PUBLIC COMMENT OVERVIEW

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) invited public comments on the Maryland Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy Draft from August 2026 through September 2026. Members of the public submitted their feedback via email and a Microsoft Form.

### Maryland Comprehensive PreK-12 Literacy Policy Draft

Overall, 58 respondents, including community members, district office staff, parents/guardians, teachers and stakeholder advocacy groups provided feedback on the draft policy.

- 48.2% (28/58 respondents) indicated support for the PreK-12 Literacy Policy
- 6.8% (4/58 respondents) indicated opposition to the PreK-12 Literacy Policy
- 44.8% (26/58 respondents) indicated no position on the PreK-12 Literacy Policy

Comment summaries are included in the table below, along with MSDE's response, and an indication of whether the comments led to a change in the policy.

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| **Structure Comments** | | |
| We appreciate the separation of the policy into the noted grade bands. They reflect how literacy instruction and intervention differ developmentally and create clarity for how each band carries its own timeline and reporting expectations. The structure makes the policies for each grade band easier to follow. Separation is needed to show specific requirements and progression from primary to intermediate and high school levels of education. It was good to see definitions used consistently across grade bands. | In June 2026, we initially combined the PreK-3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy adopted in 2024 with the proposed draft Adolescent Literacy Policy for grades 4 into a single PreK-12 policy that did not separate the grade bands. Public comment from this reflected a lack of readability and a desire to see the PreK-3 policy separate from the added grade bands. The current revised PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy preserves the Prek-3 policy while adding grades 4-8 and grades 9-12. 4-12 was separated due to the unique needs of the high school setting. | N/A |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The grade bands for PreK-3 and grades 4-8 are too broad, considering the dynamic developmental levels of those students. Pre-K and Kindergarten should be separated from grades 1-3. The developmental gap in children turning 6 in September and those who turned 5 in August (qualifying them to enter kindergarten for the current school year) is huge. Early childhood (PreK and K; 1 and 2) and intermediate grades (3, 4, 5) are at the elementary level; grades 6-8 are junior high/middle school grades. Considering how schools allocate resources at the various levels (elementary--where foundational literacy is extremely important, middle school, and high school), the literacy policy may be difficult to implement given the current parameters. This is frustrating, considering that this is an obvious issue for things like professional development, purchasing curriculum, and planning, at the school level.<br><br>Literacy instruction in grades 4-12 differs substantially by grade span, staffing model, and discipline. Consider distinguishing grades 4-5 from grades 6-8 and more clearly defining the purpose and expectations of high-school literacy. | The unique variances applicable to specific grade bands are noted within the policy when applicable. For example, PreK has specific Tier 1 criteria separate from K-3 criteria. When planning for curriculum adoption, professional development, and making purchasing decisions, it is important to consider the unique needs of the different grade bands while also looking at vertical alignment. These are areas that MSDE can help support LEAs with through technical calls and other supports. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Separating the policy into PreK–3, grades 4–8, and grades 9–12 is an improvement because the literacy needs, screening systems, interventions and scheduling realities are different across those grade bands. However, I recommend that MSDE go one step further and distinguish grades 4–5 from grades 6–8 within the grades 4–8 section. The draft itself treats those groups differently: grades 4–5 move to screening three times per year beginning in SY 2027–2028, while grades 6–8 begin a targeted screening approach in SY 2028–2029. Presenting those requirements separately would make the policy substantially easier for families, educators and LEAs to understand. | When applicable, grades 4-5 needs are differentiated from those of grades 6-8; however, there is a large overlap for grades 4-8 as adolescent literacy begins at grade 4 despite secondary school often beginning at grade 6. Most adolescent literacy policies are specifically developed for grades 4-8 such as ExcelinEd's *Advancing Adolescent Literacy Model Policy*. | No |
| The structure would be better organized if the traditional elementary grades (which may include grade 6) were banded. Then 7-12 can also be a grade band. | There was more support from public comment to keep the initial adopted PreK-3 policy separate from the draft adolescent policy that was joined with it to create the PreK-12 policy. This allows for more continuity with the policy that was already in place. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Strongly support structuring the policy into distinct developmental grade bands (PreK–3, 4–8, and 9–12). However, to ensure a seamless PreK–12 continuum, each grade band must explicitly include structural mechanisms for dual-differentiation, curriculum compacting, and literacy acceleration alongside foundational skills. | Language was added to address advanced learners and twice exceptional students: All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment opportunities and experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance." Also added were protections for advanced learners to ensure that interventions: "Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07)." Additional support and guidance specific to the unique needs of advanced learners and twice exceptional students will be provided after policy adoption in partnership with MSDE's Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs Branch. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| **Timeline Comments** | | |
| We support the phased implementation timeline for the draft PreK–12 Literacy Policy. Extending K–3 screening to grades 4–5 in SY 2027–2028, followed by targeted screening for grades 6–8 in SY 2028–2029 and grades 9–12 in SY 2029–2030, offers a realistic and manageable approach. This gradual rollout provides local school systems and teachers with the necessary time to prepare, build staff capacity, complete procurement, and establish robust intervention and support systems for distinct student populations. | | N/A |
| Excessive assessment across all grade levels reduces instructional time for meaningful student learning. | MSDE agrees that the amount of testing students undergo is an important consideration. We believe that the sensitivity of the approved universal reading screeners will yield critical data about student reading abilities, allowing for targeted and timely intervention leading to an increase in students reading on grade level. | No |
| Universal screening explanation and movement for grades 4-5 is necessary but should be stressed this year as well due to the time frame only being one school year away. | Once the policy is approved, MSDE will provide technical assistance and professional learning to support LEAs with policy implementation in grades 4-5 | Yes |
| Accelerate the implementation timelines by having a 2027–2028 start date or shifting secondary screenings to 2028–2029—to ensure older students receive critical reading interventions without delay. | MSDE shares the urgency of these commenters. It is our intent to balance the urgent literacy needs of Maryland students with the implementation needs of our LEAs. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Budget cycles for LEAs begin in a few months, will the list of approved universal reading screeners be released in time to align to those cycles? | MSDE will release the approved list of universal screeners in the winter of 2027 to align with LEA budget cycles and support procurement planning for PreK, K–3 (new submissions), grades 4–5, and grades 6–12. To support implementation of the added grade-band requirements for the 2027–2028 school year, MSDE will provide a one-year grace period for LEAs with existing contracts for non-approved screeners. | No |
| While we support the phased rollout of the draft PreK–12 Literacy Policy as a manageable approach for preparation and capacity building, concerns remain regarding existing staffing shortages and the heavy workload burdens placed on educators and reading specialists. Commenters emphasized that without reallocated funding, additional personnel, and proper school-level support, the expanded screening and required Tier 3 interventions will strain staff capacity and take valuable time away from direct Tier 1 instruction. | MSDE will provide technical assistance and professional learning support to LEAs regarding best practices for PreK-12 Literacy Policy implementation. In addition, the draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy expands the educator roles for those who can administer universal screeners, analyze the data, and provide interventions to provide more flexibility with LEA staffing capacity. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Before these dates become operative, MSDE should publish an implementation-capacity analysis. Screening is only the first step. Students identified as at risk may require diagnostic assessment, intervention, progress monitoring at intervals of no more than 30 days, an SRIP or other documented plan, parent communication and scheduling that does not displace required coursework. LEAs need to know how much staff time, intervention capacity, professional learning and scheduling flexibility will be required. | The PreK-12 Literacy Policy utilizes a phased approach to support LEAs with strategic implementation of a coherent and consistent system of assessments that includes screening, diagnostic assessments, parent notification and collaboration on student reading implementation plans, and targeted intervention.<br><br>As part of the technical assistance provided by MSDE in SY2025-2026, LEA supervisors participated in workgroups to collaborate and more deeply understand the implementation staffing and processes of implementing the elements of the PreK-3 Literacy Policy. Per the PreK-3 Literacy Policy, LEAs implemented the screeners, diagnostic assessments, and interventions in SY 2025-2026 in preparation for full implementation in 2026-2027. The phased implementation should also prepare LEAs for enacting elements in future grade levels. | No |
| Release a single, authoritative implementation table with reconciled grade ranges and dates, alongside a consolidated calendar that clearly delineates MSDE and LEA responsibilities to ensure clarity and support successful policy rollout. This is needed for individuals who are responsible for all three levels. | MSDE will provide a consolidated timeline in guidance documents, including more detail outlining where responsibilities fall within the timeline. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The 30-calendar-day window to establish a Student Reading Intervention Plan (SRIP) is tight, particularly for schools where 30–60% of K–3 students require intervention. In the Fall, this timeline is further constrained by scheduled professional development, parent-teacher conferences, holiday closures, and labor agreements restricting work on non-workdays. | MSDE provided technical assistance and support for LEAs during SY 2025-2026 as preparation for the K-3 implementation in 2026-2027 and will continue to support LEAs with implementation of Student Reading Improvement Plan implementation for additional grade bands, including steps to consider when a high percentage of students are identified as at risk. | No |
| MSDE should provide translated family resources as well as family-friendly versions of the PreK-12 Literacy Policy. | MSDE plans to publish Family Guides, a resource for families, in Spanish. There is also a plan to collaborate with our Communications Team to create resources for educators and families. | Yes |
| MSDE has done excellent work in prescribing timely assessments. Effective assessments build the foundation for MTSS. More concerning is the lack of oversight of interventions that result from assessment recommendations. In my LEA, interventions are delivered during 30-minute daily instruction with groups as large as 10 students. The policy should outline best practices that suggest a Tier 2 intervention group size of 3-4 students whose learning profiles are clearly stated as primarily SLD. Again, the school should be required to report on the teacher credentials and SOR training course preparation. | Further guidance will be provided on evidence-based practices for intervention. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The implementation timeline indicates that LEAs will begin implementing SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students in SY 2027–2028. However, the grades 9–12 family-notification and SRIP section states that these requirements begin in SY 2029–2030, which is also when approved universal screening and follow-up diagnostics are scheduled to begin statewide.<br><br>MSDE should reconcile these dates and distinguish between pilot implementation, implementation based on existing local data, and required statewide implementation. The final policy should clearly identify:<br><br>• When high-school SRIPs first become mandatory;<br>• Which data may be used to identify students before statewide screening begins;<br>• When family-notification requirements take effect;<br>• When LEA reporting of Science of Reading professional learning begins; and<br>• When the annual reporting of screening, intervention, and SRIP data begin. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy includes a timeline for each grade band that shows the year in which each element of the policy should be implemented.<br><br>In SY 2027-2028, LEAs will implement a system of assessments for identifying students who may be at risk of reading difficulties in grades 4-5 that include universal screening, diagnostic assessments, SRIPs, targeted intervention, and progress monitoring to track student progress.<br><br>In SY 2028-2029, the system of assessments expands to grades 6-8, and in SY 2029-2030, the system of assessments expands to grades 9-12. Note that the policy describes a gated approach to the system of assessments in grades 6-12.<br><br>While parent notification is required in grades 9-12, SRIPs are not required.<br><br>LEA annual reporting of Science of Reading training is captured in both the grades 4-8 timeline and the grades 9-12 timeline. Both grades 4-8 and grades 9-12 educators who have completed Science of Reading training will begin annual reporting in SY 2027-2028. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The documentation of reporting on educator Science of Reading training is a burden on the LEA. This should completely align with MSDE licensure expectations, and the state should keep record of this information without the LEA needing to duplicate efforts; can MSDE keep track of completion rates for each LEA? There needs to be a way to streamline this process without the need to keep an excel spreadsheet.<br><br>The policy creates new local tracking and reporting obligations for Science of Reading training, screening, SRIPs, and interventions. PSSAM recommends consolidating reporting wherever possible, using information already maintained by MSDE, and developing statewide electronic tools and templates that can integrate with existing LEA systems. For example, a single comprehensive LEA screening report and a common electronic SRIP format would be preferable to multiple separate submissions. | MSDE recognizes the administrative burden posed by the required Science of Reading training report. We are actively seeking ways to reduce this lift for LEAs. The literacy branch at MSDE is working with MSDE's Division of Educator Effectiveness and will release further guidance. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| **Special Populations Comments** | | |
| The policies address all student populations and are clearly outlined. | MSDE recognizes the need to ensure all learners' needs are addressed. We will be providing additional guidance documents to support LEAs in the implementation of the policy regarding special populations. | N/A |
| We fully support implementation of the *Criteria of Excellence*. In fact, MCGATE was involved in the development/revisions of past iterations. However, it is the COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education to which school systems must comply, and this should be indicated here.<br><br>MTTS is a model inclusive of all learners. However, most school leaders and teachers still consider that the Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions target students having learning difficulties, only. Given the lack of understanding of how MTTS integrates advanced/gifted learners into Tier 2 and Tier 3, this clarification must be included in the Literacy Policy.<br><br>This requirement [Ready to Read Act Report] is glaringly misaligned with other MSDE policies and data reporting requirements. Unlike the Mathematics Policy and ESSA reporting, there is no tracking of or even acknowledgement of students achieving beyond proficiency.<br><br>A legitimate concern is whether these "approved" SOL trainers or the trainers in the schools themselves have any knowledge of the Literacy Policy requirements for advanced learners. How will they address differentiated enrichment opportunities that "experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development?" | Language was added to address advanced learners and twice exceptional students: "All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment opportunities experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development in accordance with COMAR 13A.04.07 and MSDE's *Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program* guidance." Also added were protections for advanced learners to ensure that interventions: "Do not deny advanced learners or twice-exceptional students from accessing enrichment experiences or enhanced challenge (COMAR 13A.04.07)." Additional support and guidance specific to the unique needs of advanced learners and twice exceptional students will be provided after policy adoption in partnership with MSDE's Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Programs Branch.<br><br>MSDE collects information on advanced learners through the Advanced Academics and Gifted and Talented Branch and through state ELA assessment data which shows how many students reach the highest level of proficiency. To minimize the administrative burden on LEAs, the literacy branch does not require separate or additional reporting of those who are advanced learners in ELA. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Page 20 - Students identified as “advanced learners” - this is an arbitrary designation. Not all students who are “advanced” on our literacy assessments qualify for Gifted and Talented instruction per the GT offices requirements for entrance. Our literacy office is not trained on or aware of “MSDE’s Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Program Guidance”<br><br>Thank you SO much for addressing the needs of advanced learners and citing the Criteria for Excellence for guidance.<br><br>The advancers learners should have more specific guidance as what is listed doesn't really offer "true" guidance. | Professional learning on the Science of Learning and Science of Reading is intended to address the needs of all learners. MSDE has consulted with SUNY and AIM Institute to address this concern and will ensure that PL offerings from the literacy branch address the differing needs of learners.<br><br>Not all students who are advanced learners in various aspects of literacy development are identified as gifted and talented. It is important for students to have their needs addressed, including strengths, within the MTSS process. A definition for advanced learners was added to the policy: “Advanced Learners are students who demonstrate, or show the potential to perform at, remarkably high levels of accomplishment relative to students of similar age, experience, or environment. They may demonstrate advanced performance or potential in intellectual, creative, or artistic areas; leadership; or specific academic fields. Advanced learners require and benefit from appropriately rigorous, challenging, and advanced learning opportunities that recognize their abilities, develop their potential, and promote continued growth and achievement.”<br><br>It is important for all content-areas to be aware of MSDE’s Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Program Guidance along with COMAR 13A.03.07. | |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The new ALT policy changes mean that students in this grade band are generally no longer able to be designated for the ALT instructional Framework or ALT assessment path, until they reach 3rd grade. The policy language seems to have pre-dated this new policy change, but it would be helpful if an update could address specifically that ALT is not an option in K-2, and describe ALT good-cause exemptions as regarding only 3rd graders who are newly added to the ALT pathway. | The policy stipulates that students in 3rd grade who are on the Alternate Education Framework are eligible for a good cause exemption; this remains in place. Additional guidance on supporting students receiving alternate education will be provided during literacy policy implementation support provided to LEAs. | No |
| MSDE and all policy makers need to include educators with Deaf Ed background who thoroughly understand the language and communication needs to Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing children.<br><br>Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing children do not have hearing abilities like other children with disabilities under special education. Without knowing their communication profiles, they will be left behind. | The following was added to the literacy policy: “MSDE will issue additional guidance on supporting Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing students.” MSDE’s literacy branch will partner with other divisions to develop this guidance. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Great to see the differentiated approach to screening for MLLs. I look forward to seeing the MTSS guidance.<br><br>We would also love some specific guidance regarding newcomers/Kindergarten MLs who are new to English.<br><br>Restore language addressing accommodations for ML students and language-development considerations for newcomer students.<br><br>The lack of clear guidance regarding multilingual learners has made this process even more difficult as an ESOL teacher. When trying to determine which students require intensive reading intervention and which students are demonstrating needs associated with English language development, uncertainty can make appropriately forming and prioritizing intervention groups especially challenging. Without sufficient staffing and clearer guidance for distinguishing between language acquisition and reading difficulties, schools may struggle to implement these expectations as intended. | COMAR 13A.03.08 requires screening of all students. Multilinguals, including newcomers, are not exempt from the required K-3 reading screening. The English result should not, however, be interpreted in isolation. English and home-language screener data (if available), diagnostic data, language proficiency, and other relevant information should be considered together to identify the student's specific reading needs and appropriate supplemental instruction. The English Language Development teacher should be included in the data analysis and intervention planning. The reading intervention should not take the place of English Language Development support. MSDE will create guidance for applying the policy standards to multilingual learners. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| While we enthusiastically agree that students with disabilities including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities must have access to all tiers of instruction, we fail to understand how this will happen if they do not get a student reading improvement plan. Further, given that students with disabilities generally receive their instruction from special educators through the Individual Education Program (IEP), these students in most need are not afforded the same access as their non-disabled peers to trained interventionists, trained teachers or certified-reading specialists. The policy and current COMAR require the Individual Education Program (IEP) team to review the reading screener and diagnostic survey data and decide if the IEP should be changed — which will basically cut off access to Tier II interventions. They will not be part of the MTSS for literacy. This will result in continued segregation and low expectations.<br><br>I like the addition of this language for these learners. SWD and ELL, I am not sure the universal screener is appropriate for a child with processing disabilities/dyslexia because DIEBELS is timed. | COMAR 13A.03.08 stipulates that IEP teams review students' IEPs to determine if their reading goals need to be adjusted given additional information provided by screeners and diagnostics. Students are not denied access to Tier 2/3 reading intervention. The IEP team should determine the best support to be provided which may include Tier 2/3 reading intervention. Special educators are also required to be trained in the Science of Reading.<br><br>MSDE encourages LEAs to use the applicable accommodations listed in their adopted Universal Screener's administration manual. MSDE will provide further screening guidance to support LEAs in adhering to the policy requirement that all children be given access to a Universal Screener. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| **Content comments** | | |
| The PreK-12 Literacy Policy should require LEAs to more quickly move students into intervention. Past LEA data shows that some students are waiting months for targeted intervention support. In addition, there should be a required percentage of students identified as at risk who receive intervention as reflected in the Ready to Read Act data. | MSDE recognizes the urgency and the value in providing intervention for students identified as at risk for reading difficulties as soon as possible. We plan to provide detailed support on this aspect in follow-up guidance.<br><br>The PreK-12 Literacy Policy requires any K-8 student identified by a universal screener as at risk for reading difficulties to have a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) collaboratively developed by the student's family and the school that outlines the reading difficulty as well as the frequency and intensity of the intervention. The SRIP must be developed within 30 calendar days of screener identification. This timeline promotes timely entry into intervention. In grades 9-12, any student identified as at risk for reading difficulties must be provided with targeted intervention support. | No |
| Include language about the importance of digital literacy, including AI and information literacy, skills embedded into Tier 1 instruction in collaboration with certified school library media specialists. | MSDE has both guidance and policy for the use of AI in K-12 education on its Artificial Intelligence webpage, which also includes support for digital literacy. Additionally, MSDE is developing comprehensive guidance for school library media programs that includes recommendations for integrated instruction and effective collaboration between grade-level teachers and licensed library media specialists to support tier one instruction. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| I am concerned with the content knowledge of our 4th and 5th grade teachers. They need to be properly trained in advanced decoding + morphology + spelling + fluency + syntax + academic language + vocabulary + knowledge + comprehension + writing. It is not longer just "phonics" and these concepts run deep and the training is not present currently. | MSDE supports all teachers being trained in the Science of Reading. This policy expands the training measures beyond PreK-3 teachers. MSDE provides free coursework through SUNY and AIM. | Yes |
| It is important to address all groups, but I think that the policy is long-winded. We need to make sure we are able to tell parents, teachers, and students what the process is. | MSDE currently provides Family Guides that support families with what their child should know and be able to do at each grade level. MSDE will also provide resources that LEAs can use to communicate the policy standards with community members in a more succinct way. | No |
| There may be confusion in the reading of "leveled texts" on p. 33 in 3.a and p. 35 c.iii. While literacy professionals understand the concept, all texts are leveled by Lexile and that may be a component that guides text selection, so can this be clarified or leveled texts defined in the definitions earlier as three-cueing is defined?<br><br>Also, explicitly stating that curriculums that use 3 cuing and leveled texts for all readers helps clarify for teachers that we have to change from Units of Study to a program that is rooted in the Science of Reading. | MSDE added a definition of leveled texts to the draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy to increase clarity: “Leveled Texts are text that have been assigned to a reading level based on various factors: vocabulary, number of different words, support from context, support from pictures, page layout or written material that has been modified to match a specific reading ability or grade level. Leveled texts can hinder literacy progress by reducing decoding skill application and restricting students’ access to complex, grade-level content which limits exposure to academic vocabulary and critical thinking (Pondiscio & Mahnken, 2014; Shanahan, 2025).” Additional guidance will be forthcoming. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Skirting the time requirements for Tier 1 and interventions is less than helpful to LEAs and schools. Unless the HQIM review process is going to clearly articulate reasonable daily time allotments this places schools/LEAs in a continually tricky spot to identify how to balance everything that may be needed for students. | MSDE supports the intentional adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials, including reviewing materials for instructional time requirements. The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy elevates the time estimated by the HQIM vendor as most appropriate for their instructional materials to have the greatest effect on literacy outcomes, including supports and differentiation. Developers share the required timing for strong implementation of their program when submitting their materials for review. This is documented in the "Implementation Guidance" in the appendix of each public Instructional Materials Review report. | No |
| Clarify which specific roles and personnel are required to complete MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028. Separate licensure requirements from professional learning requirements for clarity. | MSDE worked with the licensure team to separate licensure requirements for initial licensure and licensure renewal from Science of Reading and HQIM professional learning. Please see the HQIM adoption framework, *Building a Strong Foundation*, on the MSDE HQIM webpage. | Yes |
| Foundational writing is introduced as a new term for grades 4-8. This needs to be defined. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy now includes foundational writing as part of the overall definition of writing. | Yes |
| Why is reading comprehension not listed as a core component of adolescent literacy? | MSDE considers reading comprehension as a core component of adolescent literacy. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The policy includes targeted reading and/or WRITING intervention, but this policy has yet to discuss screening for writing in grades 4-8 so why is this being introduced as a required intervention? How are we screening for this? | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy considers writing to be an integral element of literacy. We recognize that some students may need intervention through Multi-Tiered System of Supports to address writing difficulties. To provide more clarity, definitions were added for Writing Difficulties and Writing Intervention. Currently, student writing samples will yield the most evidence of student writing abilities and/or needs. | Yes |
| Will the "to be created" addendum and crosswalk for advanced decoding skills in HQIM then be used to re-evaluate if the approved HQIM actually has sequential and systematic advanced decoding skills? This has been noticed as a gap in the current HQIM. | MSDE recognizes a need for advanced decoding, morphology, and syntax skills to be expanded into the secondary space. We will provide any crosswalks or addendums along with detailed guidance for implementation in the future. | No |
| The Science of Reading training, as well as the additional clarity on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) is much appreciated as well as provisions for students with disabilities, multilingual learners, and gifted and talented students. | | N/A |
| The policy should include a clear PreK-12 framework showing how requirements across PreK-3, grades 4-8, and grades 9-12 work together to support literacy development and student progression toward CCR. The framework should clarify the relationship among Tier 1 instruction, screening, intervention, professional learning, instructional materials, and student supports, including expectations for transitions across grade bands. | Language was added to the draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy in the overall Purpose section as well as in each grade band's purpose statements. Additionally, guidance documents will provide more details regarding an overall framework for each of these elements. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Clearer MSDE Responsibilities: The policy should clearly identify MSDE's responsibilities for guidance, specific technical assistance topics, professional learning, instructional materials, and other supports associated with each major policy component, including expected timelines for delivery. This clarification would be helpful in monitoring implementation. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy stipulates MSDE's responsibilities within each section of the policy as well as in the timeline. We are committed to providing guidance, technical assistance, professional learning, and resources to support implementation of the PreK-12 Literacy Policy.<br><br>Once the draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy is approved, MSDE will create a high-level flexible plan that both proactively prepares and strategically responds to the needs of Maryland LEAs. | Yes |
| The policy should establish a coordinated timeline for HQIM review, state guidance, professional learning, and LEA curriculum adoption so that schools have access to appropriate instructional materials before new instructional expectations take effect. The policy should also clarify how HQIM requirements interact with LEA curriculum selection and implementation processes.<br><br>Where approved HQIM do not yet include sufficient advanced foundational skills, LEAs should retain reasonable flexibility to develop aligned supplemental materials and interventions. | MSDE's High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) Section recently released the first round of reviewed instructional materials for English Language Arts/Literacy on their website in English Language Arts/Literacy. They have initiated reviews for 13 additional materials in the 2026-2027 school year with results dropping in two batches: winter 2027 and spring 2027. Maryland-specific rubrics are provided on the website as well as an adoption framework for LEAs seeking new instructional materials.<br><br>The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy elevates the role of HQIM in Tier 1 Instruction and its alignment to the Science of Reading, however it does not require the use of materials identified as HQIM through the Maryland review process. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The policy should clarify how MTSS intervention requirements are intended to be implemented within the instructional day including expectations for preserving core instruction and aligning intervention time with the new 60-minute math requirements. Requirements should provide some flexibility for LEAs to structure intervention, staffing, and scheduling in ways that meet student needs without creating conflicting or duplicative efforts. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy preserves Tier 1 instruction and provides for strategic, targeted intervention following universal screening and diagnostic assessments for those students identified or predicted to be at risk of reading difficulties. MSDE convened a scheduling work group comprised of experts in the field as well as LEAs to provide detailed guidance on scheduling and preserving Tier 1 instruction as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports. This guidance is forthcoming. | Yes |
| Given the phased implementation timeline, the policy should include expectations or an action plan for strengthening literacy instruction in grades 6-12 before full implementation of the secondary requirements. The policy should identify interim steps prior to SY 2029-2030 besides screenings to support secondary students who are not meeting grade-level literacy expectations. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy attends to secondary literacy prior to SY 2029-2030 through HQIM reviews, an adoption framework, and a forthcoming HQIM implementation framework to align grades 6-12 instruction to all the strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope (Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Additionally, MSDE currently provides Science of Reading training for both elementary and secondary educators through SUNY and AIM, as well as a Pathways to Literacy Leadership course from AIM for district and school leaders.<br><br>In SY 2027-2028, MSDE will launch an Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders to support a collective vision of and support for adolescent literacy instruction. | |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The policy introduces a new requirement for LEAs to administer an MSDE-approved universal reading screener in PreK beginning in SY 2027-2028. The policy should clarify which PreK students are subject to the universal screening requirement, including whether it applies to three-year-olds as well as four-year-olds, and whether the requirement applies only to LEA-operated programs or also to private providers serving publicly funded PreK students. If the policy does apply to private providers, will private providers receive literacy funding and coaching resources proportional to those being provided to LEA classrooms? | The draft PreK-3 Literacy Policy clarifies this, "Beginning in SY 2027-2028, LEAs and approved private providers who receive state funding shall administer an MSDE-approved PreK universal reading screener to children in their PreK4 (the year before kindergarten), three times per year (beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year)." | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Across grade bands, LEAs expressed concern that several requirements may take effect before the necessary state guidance, approved assessments, professional learning, reporting structures, and implementation tools are available. PSSAM recommends that MSDE establish a clear sequence in which all required state resources are released sufficiently in advance of LEA implementation. At a minimum, LEAs should have a full planning cycle to address budget development, procurement, staffing, scheduling, professional learning, data systems, and family communication. | The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy's phased implementation allows for MSDE guidance, screener approval, professional learning, and other support to occur as each phase begins. MSDE is committed to balancing the urgency of Maryland's students' literacy needs with LEA implementation parameters.<br><br>MSDE accelerated the Universal Screener Panel Reviews for PreK, K-3 (new submissions or significantly revised submissions), 4-8, and 9-12, to ensure a timely release of approved universal screeners and guidance for each grade band. Additionally, MSDE is providing a grace year to support procurement decision timelines.<br><br>MSDE convened SRIP workgroups and MTSS support during SY2025-2026 in anticipation of the addition of the SRIP for grades K-3 per the PreK-3 Literacy Policy and plans to provide similar and additional supports going forward.<br><br>A scheduling workgroup convened by MSDE and including experts in the scheduling field as well as LEA representatives is in the final stages of their work and should release guidance this school year.<br><br>MSDE released Family Guides for PreK through grade 8 as a resource for families. The guides show what a child should know and be able to do at each grade level along with activities that can be used at home to support a child's literacy journey. MSDE will provide additional resources for LEAs to use for communication with families. | |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The draft policy contains terminology, data, timelines, and requirements that appear to be inconsistent across sections of the draft. PSSAM recommends a final technical review to reconcile these provisions and the publication of a practical implementation guide that organizes requirements by responsible party, action, timeline, decision rule, required evidence, and available state support. Such a guide would substantially improve consistency of implementation across Maryland's 24 local school systems. | MSDE has completed a review of the policy language for consistency across grade bands.<br><br>MSDE will provide a variety of supports for consistent, state-wide implementation. | |
| LEAs support using assessment data to identify students who need additional support; however, there are some concerns about over-assessment, the availability of screeners that meet all proposed specifications, and unclear decision rules in the upper grades. The policy should clarify when screening is universal, when it is targeted, which prior state assessment data trigger screening, and how the requirements apply when prior-year Maryland assessment data are unavailable. MSDE should also review the frequency and purpose of specific measures. Assessment requirements should preserve instructional time and allow LEAs to use efficient diagnostic sequences when an initial measure indicates a need for deeper assessment. | MSDE conducted panel reviews of submitted Universal Screeners using an internal rubric, which included an emphasis on minimal time to administer. The updated Universal Screener Report will include decision rules for the upper grades.<br><br>The current policy specifies more clearly the elements noted in this comment. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The Grade 3 promotion and retention provisions require additional operational detail. MSDE should provide a comprehensive annual decision calendar showing how state assessment results, reassessment, good-cause exemptions, family conferences, summer interventions, staffing decisions, and final placement can occur before the next school year. Additional clarification is needed regarding the evidence used in retention decisions, whether retention is full-grade or may be subject-specific, how retained students access grade-level instruction in areas of demonstrated proficiency, and how the policy aligns with MTSS. PSSAM recommends that these provisions not become operational until the decision process, funding implications, instructional expectations, and family communication requirements are fully defined. | The PreK-12 policy delays the retention provision for a year. MSDE will support LEAs in implementation of all aspects of the policy. | |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| **General Comments** | | |
| Correct remaining technical edits, numbering inconsistencies, and references carried over from other grade-band sections. Ensure implementation expectations are internally consistent across the document. | Revisions were made to improve clarity of language, formatting, and technical edits. | Yes |
| My concern is that students who fall well below at the BOY are immediately placed on an improvement plan - this is especially concerning in kindergarten. Students often test in the well below range but can improve by mid-year. Could the SRIP identification process wait until the MOY testing, so students are given at least a semester to receive Tier I instruction and small group before being identified as needing a SRIP. Kindergarten screening should take place later to give time for them to adjust to school and being away from home. | COMAR 13A.03.08 requires all K-3 students who are identified as being at risk of reading difficulties be placed on a SRIP within 30 calendar days. Research shows it is imperative to identify and intervene early to obtain the strongest results and ensure that no students' needs go unaddressed. Screening must take place within the first 60 days of school. LEAs are free to set their BOY screening window anytime within the first 60 days. | No |
| Why are newly hired teachers being given three years to complete the Science of Reading training, but current teachers are being told it must be complete by August 2028. As of right now, we have not seen this training. Does it exist? | MSDE has been providing free Science of Reading micro-credential courses in partnership with SUNY and AIM Institute since 2024. Those hired prior to July 2025 will have had three or more years to complete the training. Please go to our website to learn more about these opportunities: https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/pages/ela/pro-learning.aspx | No |
| Reading is a separate degree from teaching English. Is one training expected to make us all proficient in teaching reading? So when you say you will "ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read" is the expectation that in a standard English class, we would be teaching reading skills? Or is the expectation that this will be a separate class to deliver this instruction? | The language was adjusted to "ensure they have the knowledge and skills to engage all students with grade-level text." MSDE does not expect all teachers to be trained reading teachers, but we do expect all teachers to have the ability to engage students with reading grade-level texts which does require knowledge of reading in the content areas. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| My concern is that the concepts that we will be testing students on are not explicitly taught in our curriculum. Teachers do not have the training on the content or the time to embed them. We implement Tier 2 interventions when some of our students do not receive this in Tier 1. | The goals of this literacy policy are to address many of these concerns by ensuring strong Tier 1 instruction, professional learning and support for educators to be knowledgeable in the Science of Reading and targeting intervention to the needs of students. | No |
| Teachers' professional judgement should be considered. Are teachers qualified to determine what counts as "high-quality instructional materials"? If not, why? MSDE needs to get the voice of those in the profession before making decisions. | MSDE welcomes the input of educators and actively sought feedback through stakeholder listening sessions and public comment periods for the development of this policy. Educators are welcome to use the HQIM rubrics and frameworks available on the MSDE HQIM website to evaluate curricular materials. The HQIM identification framework, rubric, and companion guide were all put out for public comment to get educator feedback. The Instructional review panels who are doing the HQIM reviews are comprised of Maryland educators. MSDE is dedicated to ensuring all students have access to high-quality, grade-level, standards-aligned materials. Research reports, such as TNTP's The Opportunity Myth and RAND's educator surveys highlight the disproportional access to high-quality materials and instruction faced by students in our state and nation. | N/A |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| If SRIPS are not being developed after grade 8, is the responsibility of high school staff to support existing SRIPs that students transfer in with? The expectation for SRIPs in the transition from 8th to 9th is unclear in the current policy language. p. 48: Family Notification and Student Reading Improvement Plans (SRIP)- in section b, SRIP was crossed out. This is confusing. | The language of the policy was adapted to allow more flexibility with the MTSS process in the high school setting by removing the SRIP term. LEAs may choose to continue the formal SRIP process, or if they have a separate MTSS process that they would prefer to follow, they may do that. High school students at risk of reading difficulties will continue to be screened and provided with intervention support. Further guidance for SRIPs and MTSS will be provided to support LEAs with policy implementation. | No |
| Literacy begins before school starts. How does this policy address the inequalities that exist prior to PreK? | Yes, literacy absolutely begins before school starts and continues through adulthood. This policy addresses PreK through twelfth grade students. The Division of Early Childhood at MSDE leads initiatives to support our youngest children and their families. | No |
| I worry that Maryland - and the US generally - may not be engaging in best practices for early literacy. I know Finland is not an analogy for the US, but it is worth examining because of their impressive outcomes. The KRA and concept of "readiness" labels children when they have just walked in the door. Why can't teach ALL students as if they are at the very beginning of their journey? Would it be so terrible if some children who may have had stronger Pre-K experiences have a little extra review while others catch up? Please let children learn from PLAY. | Absolutely, our PreK students need to be playing in thoughtfully curated centers and in outdoor spaces. The policy is not meant to limit or replace play in PreK. Rather, the policy provisions for PreK are meant to expose children to early literacy concepts and help them build skills that will set them up for success and prevent reading difficulties in later years. Universal Screeners provide information for the teachers to target their instruction. There is room for explicit, joyful instruction in early literacy skills without taking away the play from a high-quality early childhood program. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| While the policy has some things that are important in making sure kids do not fall behind or slip through the cracks, the policy is difficult for school systems that don't have funding and extra personnel to conduct testing and hold the amount of parent meetings that need to occur. I would encourage the state to consider not only what schools are expected to provide, but also the staffing, resources, and guidance necessary to make those expectations feasible. A well-designed intervention framework can only be implemented effectively when schools have the capacity and clarity needed to carry it out. | The literacy policy is encouraging evidence-based best practice which includes implementing a system of assessment, providing strong Tier 1 instruction, and making data-based decisions to provide needed support. MSDE's technical and support sessions are provided to LEAs to support work with policy implementation including feasibility and logistics. MSDE is also partnering with Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity on adolescent literacy pilots, support, and guidance for LEAs. | No |
| Schools also need more appropriate interventions... we keep hearing the approved list of programs and interventions will be provided, but then MSDE keeps moving it back. I am interested in seeing the approved curriculum lists. My district is still mainly using Units of Study, and I feel that my teaching in reading is like treading water. | There are no "approved curriculum" lists provided by MSDE. LEAs have the right and responsibility to select standards-aligned materials that best meet the needs of their local context. The only requirement in COMAR is that curricular programming meets all CCR Reading/English Language Arts standards for each grade/course. MSDE's HQIM office has conducted reviews of curricular products which are available as a resource to support LEAs with evaluating their current materials or for when considering adoption of new materials. You may access these on the HQIM website: https://hqim.marylandpublicschools.org/<br><br>This policy does stipulate that LEAs are to use high-quality instructional materials which follow Science of Reading principles for structured literacy and avoid balanced literacy practices such as 3-cueing and leveled texts. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Will there be an HQIM review/list for interventions in grades 4-8? | MSDE's HQIM branch has been reviewing Tier 1 curricular materials. The reviews of materials that have been completed are on MSDE's HQIM website along with a list of materials being reviewed this school year. There is not a plan at this time to review specific intervention materials; however, guidance and support for providing strong implementation that aligns to Tier 1 instruction is being provided. | No |
| How will LEAs handle the massive backlog of students in 3rd grade when retention begins and ensure they receive adequate academic support? | This policy is meant to be preventative by setting supports in place early for students at risk for reading difficulties. The goal is to have few students who are retained by improving statewide PreK-3 Tier 1 instruction and system of support. MSDE will offer technical assistance to LEAs who need support in problem solving the student body changes as the retention policy goes into effect. | No |
| There needs to be guidance on when I child has had an SRIP for years and is making progress, but the gap is still widening, when is SST to IEP appropriate. | Placement on a SRIP may not interfere with the IEP process or deny a student from receiving needed special education services. The student's educational team and family/guardian need to stay informed of the student's progress and determine when to make needed adjustments to the support provided. MSDE will be providing additional SRIP and MTSS guidance throughout policy implementation. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Expanding universal screening will impact instructional time reading specialists spend with students. Screening, creating and implementing SRIPs SUCCESSFULLY, progress monitoring, and implementing the actual intervention is a full-time job, leaving very little time to work with teachers to build their capacity to teach highly effective core instruction. I'm sure you would agree, the best intervention for our students is having strong tier one core instruction, otherwise we may have students "at-risk" due to poor classroom teaching. | Ensuring strong Tier 1 instruction is a foundational aspect of this policy. Universal screening, SRIP creation, intervention, and progress monitoring are not the sole responsibility of reading specialists. Reading specialists need to work with their school administrators on determining a plan for how to best support the educators and students in their buildings. | No |
| The strongest principle in the adolescent-literacy sections is that literacy should be developed across disciplines while students who need additional support receive targeted intervention in addition to, rather than instead of, core instruction. I encourage MSDE to preserve the principle of disciplinary literacy clearly in the final policy and protect access to content-area knowledge building in science and social studies. What does protected Tier 1 content-area instruction mean? We need model elementary, middle and high school schedules demonstrating how intervention can occur without displacing core coursework; and publish estimated assessment, staffing and intervention-capacity requirements before statewide implementation.<br><br>The final policy should recognize disciplinary literacy, clarify the responsibilities of content-area teachers, and account for the limited availability of dedicated interventionists in many secondary schools. | Disciplinary literacy is a key aspect of developing adolescent literacy; language for disciplinary literacy was strengthened within the latest policy draft. The policy specifies that all students have access to Tier 1 instruction and are not pulled from Tier 1 instruction to provide Tier 2/3 interventions. The phrase “protected Tier 1 content-area instruction” was removed due to it causing confusion. MSDE is providing scheduling guidance and support to LEAs with building schedules that provide equitable access to Tier 1 instruction and Tier 2/3 supports. Technical support and guidance on policy implementation will be provided. We are also partnering with Maryland Initiative for Literacy and Equity on adolescent literacy pilots to assist with future guidance. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Spelling is referenced in two or three places under advanced decoding skills. Where should spelling be addressed for grades K–3 and 9–12? In foundational writing, foundational reading, or both? | Spelling is part of the foundational or transcription skills needed for automaticity with writing and is also part of the word recognition section of the reading rope as encoding (spelling) is an important aspect to the decoding strand. | No |
| When the policy refers to a “minimum” or “intervals of every 30 days,” does this mean calendar days or school days? | Language was aligned to COMAR 13A.03.08 throughout the policy and updated to reflect 30 calendar days when needed. | Yes |
| Universal Screeners section b.iii (page 32) is problematic - my screener work for MSDE is not matching what this draft said have to be “minimum” measures in grades 6-8. Why does the policy not recommend that, at a minimum, grades 6–8 screen for advanced foundational reading skills? | Reading fluency was removed from the minimum measure for grades 6-8 and 9-12. MSDE is following the assessment guidance that we have been providing to educators through our AIM Institute Science of Reading courses and research from Joan Sedita at Keys to Literacy which promotes screening for reading comprehension for secondary students and using diagnostics to gain further information on advanced decoding skills as needed. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Evidence-based practices: Section d references "evidence-based intervention program(s) and/or practices." What specific practices are intended here, and should examples or criteria be included? | Professional learning, guidance, and support provided by MSDE provides examples of evidence-based practices. The following definition is in the policy: Evidence-based means an activity, strategy, or intervention that demonstrates a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes or other relevant outcomes based on (I) strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study; (II) moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study; or (III) promising evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias; or demonstrates a rationale based on high-quality research findings or positive evaluation that such activity, strategy, or intervention is likely to improve student outcomes or other relevant outcomes; and includes ongoing efforts to examine the effects of such activity, strategy, or intervention (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). | No |
| The term "supplemental instruction" is introduced but not defined or used elsewhere in the policy. Should this term be defined, or should it be aligned with existing intervention terminology? | The term supplemental instruction was replaced when referring to reading intervention to maintain consistency throughout the policy and maintain clarity. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| The policy refers to “writing intervention” multiple times but does not define or describe the term. Should a writing intervention follow the same definition and expectations as a reading intervention? | The following definition was added for writing intervention: Writing intervention is a targeted instructional approach tailored to each student's developmental needs. For younger learners, it builds foundational transcription skills like fine motor control, posture, and orthographic awareness. As students’ progress, the focus shifts to explicit instruction in advanced composition, teaching complex cognitive processes like planning, drafting, revising, and self-regulation to improve overall writing automaticity and quality (Chung et al., 2020). | Yes |
| This year, MSDE has trained 50 literacy coaches to support and guide this educator training. The policy should outline the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches. I hope that more veteran classroom teachers who have proven successful in increasing student's reading achievement as evidenced by universal screeners and the MCAP are given the opportunity to become literacy coaches because they are nearest to the implementation of best practices utilizing high quality instructional materials and the Science of Reading. | MSDE is very pleased to have state coaches in schools to support educators. Given we do not yet know the longevity of this initiative, we did not add specifics about it to the policy. The policy outlines broader information regarding support for educators which may include coaching support. Please go to MSDE’s Instructional Coaching website for detailed information about this initiative: https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/pages/dcipl/instructional-coaching.aspx Should funding enable expansion of the initiative for future years, we encourage educators with strong knowledge of the Science of Reading and with proven results in raising student achievement to apply to open positions. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| 1.a.i- The number and percentage of students in grades PreK-3 who were screened are reported by 10/1. PreK is typically the first exposure to a structured program. There is not sufficient time to assess a PreK student when the first month of school is learning routines and school. It will not be a true reflection of the student's ability. This is extra concerning for PreK3 students. | The reporting requirements for annual October 1st deadline are for LEAs to report the previous school year's data. LEAs have the first 60 days to screen students for BOY which allows time for getting students acclimated to new routines during the first month of school. PreK3 students are not expected to be screened. PreK4 screening will begin in the 2027-2028 school year. | No |
| 2.a.ii - the universal screener only be administered at BOY to any student who did not demonstrate reading proficiency on the prior year's Maryland-approved English Language Arts assessment still captures entirely too many students - SUGGESTION - revise to students who earn a 1 on the MSTAR | MSDE will do a standards-setting process for the MSTAR after next year's first administration of the new assessment. Once standards setting is complete, MSDE will determine the cut score for the proficiency level that will determine BOY screening for grades 6-9. This information will be released once it is available. | No |
| Literacy block minutes in alignment with the expectations of the HQIM selected by the LEA is too binding. Most curricular resources require far more minutes than are ever feasible in a school setting. | MSDE supports the intentional adoption of High-Quality Instructional Materials, including reviewing materials for instructional time requirements. The draft PreK-12 Literacy Policy elevates the time estimated by the HQIM vendor as most appropriate for their instructional materials to have the greatest effect on literacy outcomes, including supports and differentiation. LEAs are encouraged to work with developers of their selected HQIM to utilize a scope and sequence which is reasonable within their school day and calendar that preserves the integrity of the curriculum. | No |
| Educator knowledge is one of the most important if not the most important factors in student reading success. The policy addresses educator preparation programs and in-service educator training; however closer attention should be paid to the quality of pre- and in-service training programs. | The policy requires Educator Preparation Programs to provide an annual report to MSDE beginning in SY 2028-2029 that provides details on the quality of their programming for preparing teacher candidates to provide literacy instruction. | Yes |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| Is an assessment a "universal screener" if not all students take it? It is helpful that not all students take it, but should it state "an approved reading assessment" rather than "universal screener"? | MSDE is applying a gated approach to universal screeners for grades 6-12 in alignment with research showing that secondary students who demonstrate proficiency on state literacy assessments are not at risk of reading difficulties. | No |
| ii. "For students in grades 10-12, a universal screener shall be administered at BOY beginning in SY 2029-2030 if the student was identified as demonstrating not achieving reading proficiency the previous school year. Student who have been designated as College and Career Reading will be exempt from screening." Most grade 9 students do not take the state assessment. This will require most grade 10 students will need to take the screener unless the grade 8 state assessment data can be used. | MSDE will provide additional guidance on screening students in grades 10-12. Only those students who continue to show reading difficulties on screeners in 9th grade would be flagged for BOY screening in grade 10, so it should be a limited number of students. Once students earn the designation of being College and Career Ready, they no longer need to be screened. | No |
| I appreciate that there is a plan to tackle illiteracy within our state but concerned by annual high turnover with the burden to introduce and instruct educators on these policies. I believe if the state went to support LEAs to reinstate textbooks and replace digital learning at the elementary level because there is no policy in place to support learning to type even though state assessments are digitized. | MSDE is providing LEAs with guidance and support on delivering professional learning. LEAs have autonomy with the format of the curricular products they use and policies surrounding digital learning. | No |
| I would also like to see retention recommended and followed through at the Kindergarten and First Grade level, especially for students who have a high absenteeism rate or demonstrate poor proficiency by the third quarter of the school year. | The third-grade promotion aspect of this policy does not prohibit LEAs from retaining students in earlier grades. The policy does not allow students to be retained more than once as a direct result of the literacy policy. Retention decisions need to follow LEA retention and promotion policies. | No |

| Public Comment | Response | Incorporated into Final Version |
|---|---|---|
| B1e - the LEA “must provide professional learning” for a wide range of stakeholders; this section includes all applicants seeking initial licensure and then also describes professional learning for administrators, etc. Is this supposed to be two separate statements.? | The Science of Reading professional learning requirement was separated from the requirement that LEAs train staff in their selected screeners. | Yes |
| Add a definition of "data-based decision making" or "data-informed decision making" and indicate the role of dynamic assessment strategies. | We aligned the policy to have uniform language and added a definition of data-informed decision making. | Yes |

| Start time | Completion time | Your role in the literacy education community (Select all that apply) | Which Maryland Local Education Agency (LEA) are you primarily responding from? | Structure/Organization: The PreK-12 Literacy Policy was separated into PreK-3, grades 4-8, and grades 9-12. | Content: For example, additional language was added to address the specific needs of multilingual learners, students receiving special education services, and advanced learners, expanded Science o... | Timelines: For example, Grades 4-5 universal screening was moved to SY 2027-2028. Grades 6-8 universal screening would begin in SY 2028-2029 following a targeted approach. Grades 9-12 universal s... | General Feedback |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8/28/26 9:01:30 | 8/28/26 9:02:39 | MSDE- Testing the link only.; | Baltimore City Public Schools | | | | Testing the link only to verify we can view the results. |
| 8/29/26 12:27:03 | 8/29/26 12:32:00 | Higher Education Faculty;Community Member; | Other | I appreciate the structural change, and it was good to see definitions used consistently across grade bands. | Add a definition of "data-based decision making" or "data-informed decision making" and indicate the role of dynamic assessment strategies. | See the point above - describe more about how screeners will be used. | Great to see the differentiated approach to screening for MLLs. I look forward to seeing the MTSS guidance. |
| 8/29/26 19:13:21 | 8/29/26 19:19:50 | School Administrator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | most appropriate as there are key stages in literary at these grade levels. K-2 learning to read.. grade third is the crucial age in which students should bea able to read- in order to read to understand in third. As we move to grade 4-8 student's ability to read to understand and analyze are part of the process | | | |
| 9/1/26 12:56:42 | 9/1/26 13:00:47 | School Staff; | Prince George's County Public Schools | Separation is needed to show specific requirements and progression from primary to intermediate and high school levels of education. | MTSS clarification is necessary for educators and families. | Universal screening explanation and movement for grades 4-5 is necessary but should be stressed this year as well do to the time frame only being one school year away. | |
| 9/1/26 13:14:46 | 9/1/26 13:18:11 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | | | | My concern is that students who fall well below at the BOY are immediately placed on an improvement plan - this is especially concerning with Kindergarten. Students often test in the well below range but can improve by mid-year. Could the SRIP identification process wait until the MOY testing so students are given at least a semester to receive Tier I instruction and small group before being identified as needing a SRIP. |
| 9/2/26 0:26:34 | 9/2/26 0:28:42 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | PREK-3 | KRA assessments | Beginning of the Year | |
| 9/3/26 7:54:17 | 9/3/26 9:02:04 | PreK-12 Educator; | Montgomery County Public Schools | | | Why is the screening for 9-12 separated into 9th grade and then 10-12. It seems they are all being screened at the same time. | English teachers at the secondary levels are not reading teachers. Reading is a separate degree from teaching English. Is one training expected to make us all proficient in teaching reading? This is not at all what most secondary ELA teachers are trained to do. Reading is a foundational skill.<br><br>So when you say you will "ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read" is the expectation that in a standard English class, we would be teaching reading skills? Or is the expectation that this will be a separate class to deliver this instruction?<br><br>Why are newly hired teachers being given three years in order to complete the Science of Reading training, but current teachers are being told it must be complete by August 2028. As of right now, we have not seen this training. Does it exist? |
| 9/7/26 16:26:15 | 9/7/26 16:43:22 | Family Member of a Student;PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | true | true | true | |
| 9/8/26 8:52:05 | 9/8/26 8:56:57 | District Leader;PreK-12 Educator;Family Member of a Student; | Howard County Public Schools | | Include language about the importance of digital literacy, including AI and information literacy, skills embedded into Tier 1 instruction in collaboration with certified school library media specialists. | | |
| 9/9/26 14:27:58 | 9/9/26 14:35:46 | PreK-12 Educator; | Harford County Public Schools | We have always supported all grades with interventions. But now that the SRIPS are included AND the population of students is growing but the resources to provide all of this is not. We do not have the human resources to support his plan. | I am concerned with the content knowledge of our 4th and 5th grade teachers. They need to be properly trained in advanced decoding + morphology + spelling + fluency + syntax + academic language + vocabulary + knowledge + comprehension + writing. It is not longer just "phonics" and these concepts run deep and the training is not present currently. | It is nice to have K-3 this year before 4-5 are added next year. I appreciate the building upon model. | My concern is that the concepts that we will be testing 4th and 5th grade students are not explicitly taught in our curriculum. Teachers need to embed these things so that they are taught but they do not have the training on the content or the time to put this together. We will be implementing Tier 2 interventions when some of our students do not receive this in Tier 1. This does not align. |
| 9/10/26 13:56:03 | 9/10/26 14:03:33 | PreK-12 Educator; | Montgomery County Public Schools | The decisions should be made at local levels allowing those who serve the specific students to make decisions on their behalf. Special educators will be face documentation redundancy and less time spent working with students. | Overly prescriptive! Increased workload on burdened teachers who are leaving education in DROVES!!!!! | There is WAY too much testing in all grades and less time for students to engage in meaningful content learning. | Teachers professional judgement should be taken into account. Less micromanagement. |
| 9/10/26 15:55:22 | 9/10/26 15:56:14 | District Leader; | Frederick County Public Schools | | | | If SRIPS are not being developed after grade 8, is the responsibility of high school staff to support existing SRIPs that students transfer in with? The expectation for SRIPs in the transition from 8th to 9th is unclear in the current policy language. |
| 9/10/26 16:15:11 | 9/10/26 16:15:42 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | Yes | NA | NA | NA |
| 9/10/26 19:33:43 | 9/10/26 19:41:23 | Family Member of a Student;PreK-12 Educator; | Baltimore County Public Schools | The grade bands for PreK-3 and grades 4-8 are too broad, considering the dynamic developmental levels of those students. Early childhood (PreK and K; 1 and 2) and intermediate grades (3, 4, 5) are at the elementary level; grades 6-8 are junior high/middle school grades. While not every Maryland school system separates their students into these groups (Worcester County, #1 in the state, has even smaller grade bands in their schools), most do. Considering how schools allocate resources at the various levels (elementary--where foundational literacy is extremely important, middle school, and high school), the literacy policy may be difficult to implement given the current parameters.<br><br>This is frustrating, considering that this is an obvious issue for things like professional development, purchasing curriculum, and planning, at the school level. | | If the current universal screening is any indication of how well we catch literacy deficits, it is a pointless waste of instructional time. Even elementary students who did not know the letters of the alphabet in third grade passed these screeners...and my school was number 1 in the state for ELA scores. | Literacy begins before school starts. How does this policy address the inequalities that exist prior to preK? How will this literacy initiative be funded? |
| 9/11/26 10:06:32 | 9/11/26 10:32:45 | PreK-12 Educator;Community Member; | Anne Arundel County Public Schools | | | | I worry that Maryland - and the US generally - may not be engaging in best practices for early literacy. I know Finland is not an analogy for the US, but it is worth examining because of their impressive outcomes. (See link at the end of this comment) Our practices may create frustration for children who are simply not cognitively ready to read. If we push children before their brains are ready: are we teaching them that school is frustrating? Are we teaching them that reading is not fun?? Are we teaching them to hate school when they have barely started? I cannot stand the KRA and concept of "readiness." We are literally labeling children when they have just walked in the door. Why would create achievement gaps and label children as somehow deficient when they haven't even begun their educational journey? Why can't teach ALL students as if they are at the very beginning of their journey? Would it be so terrible if some children who may have had stronger Pre-K experiences have a little extra review while others catch up? Please let children learn from PLAY - and not worksheets - just a little longer https://www.onnieducation.com/l/when-is-a-child-ready-to-read/ |
| 9/11/26 16:06:41 | 9/11/26 16:20:09 | Family Member of a Student;PreK-12 Educator; | Harford County Public Schools | I like how it is broken into grade level bands. Overall the policy is wordy and as an educator I can understand the jargon, but the average parent/community member would not. There should be a family-friend version for parents. | I like the addition of this language for these learners. SWD and ELL, I am not sure the universal screener is appropriate for a child with processing disabilities/dyslexia bc DIEBELS is timed. The advancers learners should have more specific guidance as what is listed doesn't really offer "true" guidance. | Seems unrealistic given the lack of personnel schools have available. If funding from state is not reallocated (we don't need more, we need to look at how we are using what we have)... it does not matter what year we implement fully, it won't be possible. The goal should be teachers instructing children, so anytime a teacher is not in front of kids we are losing valuable time to teach. | While the policy has some things that are important in making sure kids do not fall behind or slip through the cracks, the policy is difficult for school systems that don't have funding and extra personnel to conduct testing and hold the amount of parent meetings that need to occur. Also, there needs to be guidance on when I child has had an sRIP for years and is making progress, but the gap is still widening, when is SST to IEP appropriate. Schools also need more appropriate interventions... we keep hearing the approved list of programs and interventions will be provided, but then MSDE keeps moving it back. LEAs need this information, so they can plan a plan for purchases because there is rumor what we currently have may not be approved. MSDE needs to make a timeline and get the job done... teachers work past the duty day, so it is time MSDE meets an expectation and deadline that has been set. As a parent with a child who is dyslexic, I still feel like the state needs to specifically address the lack of resources of this population that research states is roughly 20%. Time, resources, training, money are all big topics that MSDE needs to consider and needs to get the voice of those in the profession, bc these are not decisions that can be made if you haven't stepped foot in a classroom within the last 5 years. |
| 9/12/26 19:49:04 | 9/12/26 19:52:48 | Family Member of a Student;PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I think that was a great idea. | This was helpful when planning. | I'm interested to learn more about the screenings. | Thank you! |
| 9/13/26 7:58:38 | 9/13/26 8:52:39 | Family Member of a Student;School Staff; | Harford County Public Schools | The structure makes the policies for each grade band easier to follow. | Thank you SO much for addressing the needs of advanced learners and citing the Criteria for Excellence for guidance. Also, explicitly stating that curriculums that use 3 cuing and leveled texts for all readers helps clarify for teachers that we have to change from Units of Study to a program that is rooted in the Science of Reading. | All timelines should start in the 2027-2028. There will be tens of thousands of students in middle and high schools who will not be getting the reading interventions that they need. Or, move all secondary universal screenings to 2028-2029. | The policies address all student populations and are clearly outlined. I am interested in seeing the approved curriculum lists. My district is still mainly using Units of Study, and I feel that my teaching in reading is like treading water. |
| 9/14/26 7:13:10 | 9/14/26 7:17:31 | School Staff; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I think this is a good addition. It is important to recognize the differences between age levels. | It is important to address all groups, but I think that the policy is long-winded. We need to make sure we are able to tell parents, teachers, and students what the process is. | This seems reasonable. | I think that there will be a massive backlog of students in 3rd grade. What will we do to make sure these students receive adequate support and that there is enough staff to do so? We have counties cutting budgets and staff are already run thin taking on many more responsibilities. |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9/16/26 10:36:16 | 9/16/26 10:36:50 | PreK-12 Educator; | Montgomery County Public Schools | | | | Are teachers qualified to determine what counts as "high-quality instructional materials"? If not, why? |
| 9/16/26 11:07:43 | 9/16/26 11:11:34 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I think this is an effective structure for literacy policy as it aligns with the stages of literacy learning. | Clarity is always important especially around special populations. | This is a great way to look at cohorts of learners and being able to establish trends in learning and progress. | |
| 9/16/26 10:49:53 | 9/16/26 11:15:39 | District Leader; | Prince George's County Public Schools | Why was this line, "particularly those with reading difficulties, those living in poverty, multilingual learners, students of color, especially multilingual learners and students with disabilities" removed from grades 4-8 but left in grades 9-12?? | skills remains on p. 30 (letter a), p. 32 (letter b.11)<br>- p. 31 d.i. states "Staff hired prior to July 1, 2025, who are required to pass training, are expected to pass an MSDE-approved Science of Reading training by August 31, 2028." Can those who are required to pass training be defined more closely to this statement?<br>- p. 31 e contains information on COMAR for initial licensure AND LEA professional learning for a variety of populations...maybe this should be two bullets, they are related but not fully connected.<br>- Are SRIPs from grade 5 automatically followed through to grade 6? How does the articulation process work between elementary and middle school when available interventions and scheduling will/may differ at each level?<br>- There may be confusion in the reading of "leveled texts" on p. 33 in 3.a and p. 35 c.iii. While literacy professionals understand the concept, all texts are leveled by Lexile and that may be a component that guides text selection, so can this be clarified or leveled texts defined in the definitions earlier as three-cueing is defined?<br>- p. 34 - Skirting the time requirements for Tier 1 and interventions is less than helpful to LEAs and schools. Unless the HQIM review process is going to clearly articulate reasonable daily time allotments this places schools/LEAs in a continually tricky spot to identify how to balance everything that may be needed for students.<br>- p. 34 Will the "to be created" addendum and crosswalk for advanced decoding skills in HQIM then be used to re-evaluate if the approved HQIM actually has sequential and systematic advanced decoding skills? This has been noticed as a gap in the current HQIM.<br>- Why is reading comprehension not listed as a core component of adolescent literacy in c.i. on p. 35?<br>- Foundational writing is introduced as a new term for grades 4-8 on p. 35 in g.i. This needs to be defined.<br>- p. 35 c.g includes targeted reading and/or WRITING intervention but this policy has yet to discuss screening for writing in grades 4-8 so why is this being introduced as a required intervention? How are we screening for this? | If the budget cycle for LEAs begins in the next few months, will the list of screeners be ready to support implementation for next school year in grades 4-5? | Will there be an HQIM review/list for interventions in grades 4-8? |
| 9/16/26 11:15:47 | 9/16/26 11:21:18 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I'm glad it is broken down into smaller areas of attention. | Science of Reading has helped significantly. | Too much digital screening for prek and kindergarten students. These students are unfamiliar with these tools and it becomes a disadvantage for their results. | Start getting more teacher feedback before making decisions that affect our day! |
| 9/16/26 11:38:16 | 9/16/26 11:43:21 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | Pre-K-3 | added additional clarity on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) | | |
| 9/16/26 12:58:23 | 9/16/26 13:21:27 | School Staff; | Harford County Public Schools | That makes sense! As each structure is developmentally appropriate. | Helpful! | I think the timeline is fine IF we have the support to complete such tasks. This is adding too much to the plates of educators and reading specialist, therefore impacting highly effective tier one instruction. | By now including grades 4th and 5th in universal screening that will significantly impact instructional time that reading specialists are spending in the actual classroom. Screening, creating and implementing SRIPs SUCCESSFULLY, progress monitoring, and implementing the actual intervention is a full-time job, leaving very little time to work side by side with teachers to build their capacity to teach highly effective core instruction. This really needs to be considered when making this decision. I think it's all great but only IF we have the financial stability to hire appropriate staffing. I am the only reading specialist in my building with one paraeducator to support. My job is already shifting into more of an interventionalist role, leaving very little time with teachers. As I'm sure you would agree, the best intervention for our students is having strong tier one core instruction, otherwise we may have students "at-risk" due to poor classroom teaching. |
| 9/16/26 13:41:27 | 9/16/26 13:47:47 | PreK-12 Educator; | Harford County Public Schools | | | In order to begin universal screening to SY 2027-2028, we will need additional staff. | As a reading specialist working in a K-5 building, I am concerned with the lack of human resources necessary to complete universal screening and intervention across six grade levels. My school has approximately 630 students. Primary grades are inundated with behaviors that make teaching and learning challenging. Teachers have 25-30 kids in each classroom and we have only one reading specialist. Until we are properly funded, the workload has become almost impossible to manage. |
| 9/16/26 17:35:09 | 9/16/26 17:54:19 | Family Member of a Student; | Anne Arundel County Public Schools | Separating the policy into PreK–3, grades 4–8, and grades 9–12 is an improvement because the literacy needs, screening systems, interventions and scheduling realities are different across those grade bands. However, I recommend that MSDE go one step further and distinguish grades 4–5 from grades 6–8 within the grades 4–8 section. The draft itself treats those groups differently: grades 4–5 move to screening three times per year beginning in SY 2027–2028, while grades 6–8 begin a targeted screening approach in SY 2028–2029. Presenting those requirements separately would make the policy substantially easier for families, educators and LEAs to understand.<br><br>I also strongly recommend that MSDE publish a clean operative version before the public-comment process concludes. The current draft contains unresolved language such as "shall should," conflicting grade ranges, duplicated language and superseded dates. These are not merely editorial issues when words such as "shall" and "should" determine whether a provision is a requirement or a recommendation. A public commenter should be able to identify the exact policy being proposed without interpreting tracked-change artifacts. | The added attention to multilingual learners, students receiving special education services and advanced learners is important. The expansion of Science of Reading professional learning and the additional MTSS detail also make the policy more comprehensive. I support the policy's recognition that students who struggle with literacy need targeted, evidence-based intervention rather than simply more undifferentiated instructional time.<br>The draft should, however, define precisely who is considered a "staff member who supports literacy instruction." In the adolescent-literacy sections, Tier 1 literacy is embedded not only in ELA but also in content-area classrooms, including math, history/social studies, science, health and art. If teachers in those disciplines are included in the Science of Reading training requirements, the policy should say so directly and specify what discipline-appropriate training is expected.<br><br>I also ask MSDE to strengthen and clarify the protection of content-area instruction. The draft states that secondary intervention should be provided without removing students from required Tier 1 ELA and content-area courses, and it directs LEAs to protect Tier 1 literacy instruction within content-area classrooms. Those are important safeguards. The final policy should state explicitly that literacy intervention and literacy initiatives may not be implemented by reducing students' required access to science, social studies or other core academic content.<br><br>Finally, the policy should define what it means for LEAs to "protect" instructional time. If no statewide minimum number of minutes or frequency of access is intended, MSDE should explain how it will determine whether an LEA has protected Tier 1 instruction in science, social studies and other disciplines. | The phased timeline is more realistic than implementing expanded adolescent screening statewide at once. Moving grades 4–5 universal screening to SY 2027–2028, beginning targeted grades 6–8 screening in SY 2028–2029, and beginning targeted grades 9–12 screening in SY 2029–2030 provides time for training, procurement and MTSS development.<br><br>Before those dates become operative, however, MSDE should publish an implementation-capacity analysis. Screening is only the first step. Students identified as at risk may require diagnostic assessment, intervention, progress monitoring at intervals of no more than 30 days, an SRIP or other documented plan, parent communication and scheduling that does not displace required coursework. LEAs need to know how much staff time, intervention capacity, professional learning and scheduling flexibility will be required.<br><br>MSDE should also issue one authoritative implementation table. The current draft contains conflicting or unresolved grade ranges and dates in several places. Districts should not have to determine which version of a timeline is controlling. | Hunt, jesslhunt83@gmail.com.<br><br>The strongest principle in the adolescent-literacy sections is that literacy should be developed across disciplines while students who need additional support receive targeted intervention in addition to, rather than instead of, core instruction. I encourage MSDE to preserve that principle clearly in the final policy.<br><br>To make the policy implementable and transparent, I recommend that the final version:<br>(1) clearly label mandatory requirements versus recommendations;<br>(2) resolve all tracked edits and grade-range conflicts;<br>(3) define the educators covered by Science of Reading professional-learning requirements;<br>(4) define what protected Tier 1 content-area instruction means;<br>(5) provide model elementary, middle and high school schedules demonstrating how intervention can occur without displacing core coursework; and<br>(6) publish estimated assessment, staffing and intervention-capacity requirements before statewide implementation.<br><br>Middle School Implications and the AACPS Redesign<br>The grades 6–8 provisions are particularly relevant to current middle-school scheduling decisions in Anne Arundel County. AACPS's 2026–27 pilot at Bates, Arundel and Corkran substantially increases Math and ELA time while Science and Social Studies move to an alternating-day structure. Based on the published pilot calendar and A/B structure previously analyzed, Math and ELA receive approximately 11,690 instructional minutes each across the school year, while Science receives approximately 5,970 minutes and Social Studies approximately 5,720 minutes before accounting for testing, assemblies, weather closures, field trips or other lost instructional time.<br><br>That structure deserves examination against the direction of the proposed state literacy |
| 9/16/26 20:31:25 | 9/16/26 22:21:46 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | This is a suitable structure, organization, and approach. | MTSS is a viable approach that I prefer over the old RTI techniques of addressing academic efficiencies. | I feel the timeline should be moved up to an earlier date unless there are logistical reasons it must be postponed. | |
| 9/17/26 7:11:24 | 9/17/26 7:20:18 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I think it was a good idea to separate the Literacy Policy. | Again, this was a great idea to address and separate the structure and give teachers extra support with the different levels of learners in one room from multilingual learners to TAG! | I agree with moving the screening for 4-5 to 2027-2028. I gives teachers time to prepare. | The MTSS at first looks like a lot of work for the teachers but, once everyone begins to fully understand how collaborating and working together All of our students needs will be met from academic to social emotional. |
| 9/17/26 11:17:20 | 9/17/26 11:53:34 | District Leader; | Baltimore County Public Schools | This is useful. | I appreciate that each of these components are addressed. I have questions/concerns about content in the ML and Students with Disabilities portions for the PreK-3 grade band, regarding good cause exemptions and possibilities for retention. The text regarding good cause exemption for MLs contains this phrase, which is not yet clear: "or who have demonstrated to be on track to meet<br>the English language proficiency as measured by WIDA." Being "on track" is not something that WIDA measures--they simply give a proficiency score as a snapshot of a student's English proficiency at that moment in time. The ELPA targets that Maryland stipulates do spell out expectations for growth/progress over time as demonstrated on the WIDA ACCESS assessment. Should LEAs understand "demonstrated to be on track [toward] English language proficiency" to mean meeting annual ELPA targets as spelled out by the MD Accountability System?<br><br>Also--the new ALT policy changes mean that students in this grade band are generally no longer able to be designated for the ALT instructional Framework or ALT assessment path, until they reach 3rd grade. The policy language seems to have pre-dated this new policy change, but it would be helpful if an update could address specifically that ALT is not an option in K-2, and describe ALT good-cause exemptions as regarding only 3rd graders who are newly added to the ALT pathway. | | We would also love some specific guidance regarding newcomers/Kindergarten MLs who are new to English. We are finding that 60-70% of our K MLs meet criteria at the beginning of the year to receive supplemental instruction in foundational literacy in addition to what they receive in their core instruction as well as ELD. Any guidance referencing the unique case of students who are new to English (and subsequently testing as "At Risk" for reading difficulties, as they have not yet learned the language) would help us to provide guidance to schools around schedules, services, and possible curriculum adjustments. |
| 9/17/26 13:33:15 | 9/17/26 13:35:45 | PreK-12 Educator; | St. Mary's County Public Schools | | | | I think the Kindergarten Dibels window should start a few weeks later. This year it started the first week of school. Kids in kindergarten need a few weeks to adjust (form bond, routines/procedures) with their teacher prior to testing. Some of these students have never been away from home before. |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Don't wait for secondary students! We already have a "lost" generation who were taught whole language that we haven't addressed. The delay creates a hole for thousands and thousands of students to fall in.<br><br>If we use MAP as our screener, we're ready to roll -- we've been using it biannually grades 1-9 for ages. | |
| 9/17/26 16:04:11 | 9/17/26 16:07:45 | PreK-12 Educator; | Montgomery County Public Schools | | | | |
| 9/17/26 19:37:12 | 9/17/26 19:39:47 | PreK-12 Educator;School Staff;Family Member of a Student;Community Member; | Baltimore County Public Schools | This makes sense if we are providing public education for Pre-K students. | | | We need this change to tighten our interventions and make sure kids are on track, but I think the most important piece should be our Tier I instruction and the materials, teacher training, coaching, and monitoring of students in this tier. |
| 9/17/26 20:00:00 | 9/17/26 20:05:56 | PreK-12 Educator; | Carroll County Public Schools | | Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing children do not have hearing abilities like other children with disabilities under special education. Without knowing their communication profiles, they will be left behind. | | MSDE and all policy makers need to include educators with Deaf Ed background who thoroughly understand the language and communication needs to Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing children. Reach out to the Governor's Office of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing for guidance. |
| 9/17/26 20:10:37 | 9/17/26 20:16:23 | Attorneys and Advocates for Students with Disabilities; | Other | please see comments in #6 | please see comments in #6 | please see comments in #6 | Respectfully submitted 09.12.2026 by Beth Benevides and Payton Aldridge, Co-Chairs<br><br>The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC) is a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland. We provide this response to the solicitation for public comment on the PreK-12 Literary Policy. Members of the Education Advocacy Coalition (EAC) are not content experts in literacy. However, we do have members with expertise in the legal underpinnings of special education and from that perspective we would like to share our feedback.<br><br>While we enthusiastically agree that students with disabilities including those with the most significant cognitive disabilities must have access to all tiers of instruction, we fail to understand how this will happen if they do not get a student reading improvement plan. Further, given that students with disabilities generally receive their instruction from special educators through the Individual Education Program (IEP), these students in most need are not afforded the same access as their non-disabled peers to trained interventionists, trained teachers or certified-reading specialists.<br><br>The policy and current COMAR require the Individual Education Program (IEP) team to review the reading screener and diagnostic survey data and decide if the IEP should be changed — which will basically cut off access to Tier II interventions. They will not be part of the MTSS for literacy. This will result in continued segregation and low expectations.<br><br>PreK–12 Literacy Policy Review Questions<br>The following questions identify areas where the policy may need additional clarification, more consistent terminology, or stronger alignment across grade bands. |
| 9/18/26 9:37:53 | 9/18/26 10:24:42 | K-5 Central Office Literacy Specialist; | Prince George's County Public Schools | The structuring is helpful. It would be nice for there to be a quick way to see the basic requirements across the three areas for individuals who are responsible for all three levels. | Overall Feedback: There is inconsistent use of terminology: reading interventions, literacy interventions, and supplemental instruction. Reading intervention is defined, but literacy intervention is used in section Pk-3IIB2j. There is also inconsistent language around SRIP. In one place, it is referred to as an individual reading improvement plan.<br><br>Regarding the Stakeholder engagement, the timeline ends in July of 2026. I wonder about the future for stakeholder engagement moving forward.<br><br>Section PreK-3 IIB1.d Who will be providing the instructional support to educators? The coaching language has been removed, but now it is not clear who is responsible for this support. It's hard to move forward without the clarity for this expectation.<br><br>Section PreK-3 IIB1f MSDE will provide guidance, technical assistance, and training on developing and<br>implementing frameworks for MTSS and interventions embedded within the SRIP as outlined<br>in section II.B.3. --Limited support has been provided so far regarding interventions and MTSS for SRIP. If SRIPs are being implemented this school year, additional support would be beneficial now.<br>Section PreK-3 IIB2biv: Schools need clarity on how to protect Tier 1 time in combination with union requirements for planning, developmentally appropriate breaks, and limited staff. Sample schedules would be appreciated. How does district leadership who work on school schedules become familiar with HQIM requirements? | For districts to have time and resources to procure screeners for grades 4-5 and 6-8, it would be helpful for the timeline for 27-28 to be pushed back. This is especially challenging in our current fiscal environment.<br><br>30 calendar days to develop a SRIP is not enough time to analyze results, schedule and hold meetings with parents and develop a SRIP. This is especially true for schools that have 30-60% of their K-3 students performing WBB on the screener. 30 calendar days in the Fall is challenging with professional development, MSEA conference, parent/teacher conferences, Veterans Day, and Jewish holiday school closings. Union requirements limit the work on non-work days. By using calendar days, there is an assumption that the work continues when school is not in session. In addition, the wording for PK-3 II3b is awkward. | The organization and clarity are much improved!!! We appreciate the flexibility in retention requirements. It appears that additional information can now be used when considering retention. The idea of MSDE providing decision rules is good, but LEAs still need flexibility. |
| 9/18/26 10:29:35 | 9/18/26 10:32:15 | District Leader; | Anne Arundel County Public Schools | Anne Arundel County Public Schools appreciates the revised organization of the policy into the developmental grade bands of PreK-3, Grades 4-8, and Grades 9-12. This structure makes the document easier to navigate and allows literacy expectations, interventions, and supports to be tailored to the developmental needs of students at each stage. Feedback from secondary educators has been particularly positive regarding the addition of a dedicated Grades 9-12 section, which more directly addresses adolescent literacy and recognizes the unique needs of secondary students.<br>AACPS also appreciates the inclusion of additional language addressing diverse student groups and the effort to establish a comprehensive approach to literacy development across the PreK-12 continuum. | and literacy development across grades. Several areas, however, would benefit from additional clarification and guidance.<br>Multilingual Learners and Family Communication<br>The policy should more explicitly address the needs of multilingual learners, including students who are literate in a language other than English. AACPS recommends:<br>•**C**larifying expectations for multilingual learners who enter school with strong literacy skills in their home language but are still developing English proficiency.<br>•**D**eveloping and providing statewide multilingual parent notification templates and resources to support consistent communication across local school systems.<br>Given the potential impact of retention decisions on multilingual learners, clear language-access expectations are especially important.<br>Assessment and Newcomer Students<br>AACPS recommends restoring the language previously included on page 32, Section F: "administered with appropriate accommodations and language development considerations, including MSDE guidance regarding timing and interpretation for newcomer students."<br>This language appropriately acknowledges that assessment results for newcomer multilingual learners require specialized interpretation and safeguards against inappropriate instructional decisions.<br>English Language Development Services<br>On page 35, Section J notes that all students, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, must have access to all levels of tiered instruction. AACPS strongly supports this expectation and recommends adding language that explicitly states:<br>Multilingual learners receiving literacy interventions must continue to receive English Language Development (ELD) instruction in addition to reading intervention services. Reading interventions should supplement, not replace, language development instruction.<br>Accelerated and Advanced Learners | AACPS supports the phased implementation approach and the overall implementation timeline. The gradual rollout recognizes the complexity of systemwide literacy reform and provides districts time to establish procedures, acquire resources, and build staff capacity.<br>However, AACPS encourages MSDE to consider the following:<br>•**P**lease be mindful of local budget development and procurement cycles when establishing implementation dates for universal screeners in Grades 6-8 and Grades 9-12.<br>•**E**EAs will need sufficient lead time for selecting and purchasing screening tools, training staff, updating data systems, and developing intervention structures.<br>•**M**SDE should provide translated family resources<br>In addition, AACPS recommends that MSDE reconcile several implementation dates that appear inconsistent throughout the draft. AACPS believes a consolidated implementation calendar that clearly distinguishes MSDE responsibilities from LEA responsibilities would improve clarity and support successful implementation. | AACPS commends MSDE for developing a comprehensive policy that establishes a statewide vision for literacy instruction and intervention from early childhood through high school graduation. The revised organization, increased attention to secondary literacy, and phased implementation approach represent significant improvements.<br>As the policy moves toward adoption, AACPS encourages MSDE to:<br>•**S**trengthen guidance related to multilingual learners and multilingual families.<br>•**R**estore language addressing accommodations and language-development considerations for newcomer students.<br>•**C**larify expectations regarding advanced learners within MTSS.<br>•**P**rovide additional guidance regarding professional-learning approval, reporting, and compliance processes.<br>•**C**larify transitions among screening, intervention, SRIPs, IEPs, Section 504 Plans, and Six-Year Plans.<br>•**C**orrect remaining technical edits, numbering inconsistencies, and references carried over from other grade-band sections.<br>•**E**nsure implementation expectations are internally consistent across the document.<br>Finally, AACPS encourages MSDE to consider the cumulative instructional demands created by the Literacy Policy, Mathematics Policy, and MTSS guidance for secondary schools. We look forward to the anticipated sample schedules and implementation supports that will help local school systems maintain fidelity to all requirements while preserving high-quality instructional programming for students. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | am concerned that these students are too often considered as an addition to policies and practices that were not originally designed with their linguistic needs in mind. It is inequitable to evaluate a multilingual learner's academic success or determine the need for intervention based primarily on an assessment that may not adequately distinguish between a reading difficulty and the ongoing process of English language acquisition.<br><br>I appreciate the recommendation that assessments also be administered in a student's home language to provide a more holistic understanding of their literacy skills. However, because this is recommended rather than required, I am concerned that many LEAs may not have the capacity, staffing, or resources to implement this additional assessment consistently, particularly when they are already working to meet the numerous requirements outlined within the policy. As a result, multilingual learners may continue to be evaluated primarily through English-language measures that do not fully capture what they know and can do. Greater clarity could be provided by requiring consideration of multiple sources of information before multilingual learners are identified as struggling readers or placed into intensive reading interventions. This should include WIDA ACCESS score reports, English language proficiency levels across domains, length of time in U.S. schools, educational history, literacy development in the student's home language when that information is available, and input from educators who work directly with the student. These factors are essential for distinguishing between difficulties related to literacy development and those associated with acquiring an additional language.<br><br>I am particularly concerned about the use of Tier 3 interventions without sufficient consideration of language acquisition. Tier 3 interventions are designed to address significant and persistent academic difficulties; English language development serves a different purpose. Multilingual learners certainly can have reading difficulties and may require intensive intervention, but developing proficiency in English should not, by itself, be interpreted as evidence of a reading deficit. Policies should provide explicit guidance to | I can only speak from my experience at the school level, but staffing capacity has made meeting these expectations extremely challenging. We simply do not have enough staff to provide Tier 3 interventions at the level outlined, particularly while also meeting the many other instructional and intervention needs within the school.<br><br>The lack of clear guidance regarding multilingual learners has made this process even more difficult as an ESOL teacher. When trying to determine which students require intensive reading intervention and which students are demonstrating needs associated with English language development, uncertainty can make appropriately forming and prioritizing intervention groups especially challenging. Without sufficient staffing and clearer guidance for distinguishing between language acquisition and reading difficulties, schools may struggle to implement these expectations as intended. | I would encourage the state to consider not only what schools are expected to provide, but also the staffing, resources, and guidance necessary to make those expectations feasible. A well-designed intervention framework can only be implemented effectively when schools have the capacity and clarity needed to carry it out. |
| 9/18/26 10:50:33 | 9/18/26 11:11:55 | PreK-12 Educator; | Somerset County Public Schools | I don't see an issue with how the policy is organized by these grade-level clusters. | | |
| 9/18/26 11:09:34 | 9/18/26 13:24:03 | PreK-12 Educator; | Baltimore County Public Schools | Pre-K and Kindergarten should be separated from grades 1-3. The developmental gap in children turning 6 in September and those who turned 5 in August (qualifying them to enter kindergarten for the current school year) is huge. Literacy skills are developmental and to rush a child who just turned 5 into meeting the same criteria as a child who turned 6 the first month of kindergarten is cruel. I have been teaching Pre-k and K for 33 years. I have seen kindergarten go from play based to highly academic in that time to the detriment of students. We are harming children by pushing them to do things they are not developmentally ready for. | We just got word that students who scored below whatever benchmark the STAR test has for the beginning of the year, have to be given intervention for deficits. THEY HAVEN'T HAD ANY INSTRUCTION FOR THOSE SKILLS YET!!!!!! How can you have an intervention when they haven't been given the opportunity to learn the skills in the class? This makes absolutely no sense whatsoever. | | There has been recent research coming out from Europe on brain development and pushing children to decode before they are developmentally ready. The research states that those students who are pushed into formal decoding before the age of 7 are at a disadvantage regarding comprehension skills by age 11. Reading isn't just decoding. Decoding is what allows us to mechanically read the symbols. But TRUE reading is understanding the the meaning. We are creating a generation of people who find reading stressful and painful instead of enjoyable and empowering. I think the American Education system has reached a time of crucial decision making. Children's brains do not develop any faster than they did 50 years ago, yet every piece of curriculum has forced 4 and 5 years olds to master skills that were expected of 7 and 8 year olds not even a generation ago. The test makers drive the curriculum, we all know that. Test makers and curriculum writers make millions, if not billions, of money off school systems. What I have seen is the standardized tests written in such a way as to ensure mass failure so that the curriculum writers can push an inappropriate and inadequate curriculum that ensures mass failure so that those same curriculum writers can then sell interventions. |
| 9/18/26 14:39:49 | 9/18/26 14:41:54 | Community Member; | Howard County Public Schools | Emphasize to LEAs the differences between PK-3 elements and 4-5 elements- we are seeing some parts of the PK-3 strategies get extended up to 4-5 at the expense of other subjects (particularly instrumental music) | | | In section 2.b.iv (page 17), the policy states "LEAs shall implement instructional minutes and scheduling that protect Tier 1 literacy instruction in ELA and content-area classrooms (including math, history/social studies, science, health, and art), consistent with MSDE guidance." Art should be made plural to encompass all arts disciplines (inclusive of music, dance, and theatre). Additionally, the protection of Tier 1 time should be clarified to allow for periodic pullouts from all courses.<br><br>Some LEAs are already using this draft language to justify ending the practice of 4th and 5th instrumental music pull-outs, which is a critical foundational component of student learning and instrumental music programs. This practice sets students up for future success, including college and career readiness. The current pull-out system is designed thoughtfully to ensure that students miss any given subject infrequently, and they are given structured opportunities to ensure they do not fall behind on instruction as a result. Students should be allowed to continue this critical component of their foundational music education, especially if LEAs and schools are able to demonstrate that it does not negatively impact students' Tier 1 instruction in other subjects. |
| 9/18/26 14:34:21 | 9/18/26 14:44:21 | PreK-12 Educator; | Harford County Public Schools | I don't have much feedback re: the organization of the policy | I don't have much feedback re: the content | I have very big concerns about starting the universal screening for Grades 4-5 next year. As a singular reading specialist at a PK-5 school of 450 students, the burden of testing will become undoable with adding these two grades. We just do not have the staffing to support this volume of testing and required intervention. I do not feel this policy acknowledges the broad differences among schools (staffing, student population, level of needs, budget, etc). | I'm getting increasingly frustrated at the rate that reading specialists are being stretched thin without any additional compensation to acknowledge the amount of responsibility and administrative tasks included in our jobs. The fact that we get paid on the same scale as special area teachers is not equitable. I do not say that to diminish those teachers, as they are critical to our school staff. But there's a very clear difference in the levels of responsibility and administrative work, and an inequitable amount of planning time and salary compensation to reflect that. I also feel there is a continuing mixed message from MSDE as far as the direction we'd like to see reading specialists and literacy leaders go in. We all know that lifting Tier I instruction is the biggest impact on student performance, intervention, and achievement. Yet this increasingly growing amount of testing, progress monitoring, and intervention is eroding our ability to do any coaching with our teachers. And at a time when mentors have been cut from many districts, and we see a rise in teacher shortages and conditionally certified teachers, we are leaving a lot of classrooms without the very support in Tier I that would mitigate the need for early reading intervention. There's clearly a dual need for an interventionist and a literacy coach in every single elementary school. And at schools like mine, where all those responsibilities fall on just one person, it's becoming entirely too much to ask of one person. I believe everything in the policy is important, but then we need support from the state to appropriately fund and staff schools to implement this policy well. Otherwise, if it can't be done at a high level, it's a huge burden on schools yet will not yield the results it intends to yield. |
| 9/18/26 15:06:21 | 9/18/26 15:09:25 | District Leader; | Caroline County Public Schools | The structure would be better organized if the traditional elementary grades (which may include grade 6) were banded. Then 7-12 can also be a grade band. | Please see general feedback below. Content comments include a page number. | Please see general feedback below. Timeline comments include a page number. | Page 15 - Teacher certification / SoR training - LEAs have no way to require SoR training when there is a not a tie to certification, especially when may teachers already completed SoR training that was approved during Maryland LEADS, but is not now.<br><br>Page 18 - literacy block minutes in alignment with the expectations of the HQIM selected by the LEA is too binding. Most curricular resources require far more minutes than are ever feasible in a school setting.<br><br>Page 20 - L. Students identified as "advanced learners" - this is an arbitrary designation. Not all students who are "advanced" on our literacy assessments qualify for Gifted and Talented instruction per the GT offices requirements for entrance. The Literacy office is not trained on or aware of "MSDE's Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Program Guidance"<br><br>Page 25 - C. Timeline for Implementation<br>1.a.i- The number and percentage of students in grades PreK-3 who were screened are reported by 10/1.<br>PreK is typically the first exposure to a structured program. There is not sufficient time to assess a PreK student when the first month of school is learning routines and school. It will not be a true reflection of the student's ability. This is extra concerning for PreK3 students.<br><br>Page 27- timeline for SY 2026-2027 remove Pre-K from screener report. It should be K-3. For Pre-K the criteria and tiered system to assess risk for admission to PreK 3 and Prek 4 should meet the requirement.<br><br>III. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8<br><br>B1a.i-iii. LEAs provide job-embedded professional learning on the Science of Reading - this |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | Reading, Writing and Spelling Instruction must be integrated seamlessly in a multisensory structured language framework outlined by the core principles of the Science of Reading: Direct, explicit, systematic, sequential, multisensory and evidence-based. Educator knowledge is one of the most important if not the most important factor in student reading success. The policy addresses educator preparation programs and in-service educator training; however closer attention should be paid to the quality of pre and in-service training programs.<br><br>Educator Preparation (p16): The Policy must address Educator Training Programs in Maryland that prepare classroom teachers and reading specialists. The Reading League Compass outlines guidelines to ensure that Educator Prep programs align to best practices in the Science of Reading. In Maryland, only 14 of educator prep programs earn an A or A+ while in Mississippi, 80% of their educator prep programs earn an A or A+. Both of the universities in Maryland that earn an A are located in districts with high levels of reading performance (Hood in Frederick County) and Salisbury in Worcester County (recent state testing shows Worcester students making the most growth).<br><br>In-Service Training: MSDE has been investing in Science of Reading classroom and administrator training that has included both synchronous and asynchronous training. This year, MSDE has trained 50 literacy coaches to support and guide this educator training. The policy should outline the roles and responsibilities of literacy coaches:<br>a. How are coaches assigned to schools?<br>b. Do coaches have training in the curriculum they are supporting?<br>c. How are coaches evaluated?<br>d. Who measures the impact of coaching? Will teacher knowledge be assessed and will impact on student learning be measured? |
| 9/18/26 15:07:00 | 9/18/26 15:18:41 | Community Member; | Prince George's County Public Schools | This has been confusing, however these comments relate to k-12. | Reading, Writing and Spelling Instruction must be integrated seamlessly in a multisensory structured language framework outlined by the core principles of the Science of Reading<br>As noted in references throughout the policy, MSDE recognizes national standards published by IDA and The Reading League. We recommend that MSDE require districts to select criteria aligned to<br>COMPASS guidelines published by National Reading League. In addition, while some LEAs publish the ELA curriculum used in k-5, other districts do not. The Policy should require all districts to publish their ELA curriculum at the elementary level. | MSDE has done excellent work in prescribing timely assessments. Effective assessments build the foundation for MTSS. More concerning is the lack of oversight of interventions that result from assessment recommendations. In MCPS, interventions are delivered during 30-minute<br>daily instruction with groups as large as 10 students. The policy should outline<br>best practices that suggest a Tier 2 intervention group size of 3-4 students whose learning profiles are clearly stated as primarily SLD. Again, the school should be required to report on the teacher credentials and SOR training course preparation. | |
| 9/18/26 21:03:19 | 9/18/26 21:06:46 | Family Member of a Student;District Leader; | Anne Arundel County Public Schools | Overall, the separation of the policy into PreK–3, grades 4–8, and grades 9–12 makes the document easier to navigate and allows the adolescent literacy provisions to respond more directly to the needs of secondary students. Feedback received from a high school English department chair was supportive of the revised structure, the additional language addressing specific student groups, and the proposed implementation timelines. The department chair described the policy as a strong plan that could move literacy instruction in a positive direction. | implementation\.<br><br>1. Accelerated and advanced learning within MTSS<br><br>The grades 9–12 section acknowledges advanced learners in several places\. It calls for sufficient Tier I instructional time to provide differentiated supports for advanced learners and states that identified advanced learners must have access to literacy\-focused enrichment aligned with MSDE's Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program guidance\.<br><br>Although these additions are welcome, they do not yet constitute a clear plan for accelerated learning\. Most of the MTSS language focuses on identifying and remediating reading difficulties\. The policy does not explain how LEAs should represent or address the upper "diamond" of MTSS for students who have already demonstrated proficiency and require acceleration, greater complexity, or advanced pathways\.<br><br>MSDE should provide more explicit guidance addressing:<br><br>- How advanced literacy needs should be identified and monitored;<br>- What acceleration, enrichment, and increased complexity should look like within Tier I and beyond Tier I;<br>- How literacy supports for advanced learners should connect to existing gifted and talented programs, advanced coursework, dual enrollment, AP/IB pathways, and local identification processes;<br>- How access and outcomes for advanced learners will be monitored, particularly for students from historically underrepresented groups; and<br>- Whether LEAs will be expected to document advanced\-learning services with the same degree of intentionality applied to intervention services\. | 5. Implementation timeline and internal consistency<br><br>The implementation timeline indicates that LEAs will begin implementing SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students in SY 2027–2028\. However, the grades 9–12 family\-notification and SRIP section states that these requirements begin in SY 2029–2030, which is also when approved universal screening and follow\-up diagnostics are scheduled to begin statewide\.<br><br>MSDE should reconcile these dates and distinguish among pilot implementation, implementation based on existing local data, and required statewide implementation\. The final policy should clearly identify:<br><br>- When high\-school SRIPs first become mandatory;<br>- Which data may be used to identify students before statewide screening begins;<br>- When family\-notification requirements take effect;<br>- When LEA reporting of Science of Reading professional learning begins; and<br>- When the annual reporting of screening, intervention, and SRIP data begins\.<br><br>A consolidated implementation calendar with separate columns for MSDE deliverables and LEA responsibilities would make the transition substantially clearer\. | 14. Technical editing and clarity<br><br>The grades 9–12 section retains visible revision language, inconsistent numbering, and several references carried over from the grades 4–8 section, including a reference to "any grade 4 student" within the high\-school MTSS provisions\. There are also conflicting or overlapping grade references and dates\.<br><br>A final technical edit is needed to ensure that each requirement clearly applies to grades 9–12, that numbering is sequential, and that superseded language is removed\. These corrections are important because LEAs will rely on the final document to establish local procedures, assign staff responsibilities, communicate requirements to families, and determine compliance\. |
| 9/18/26 21:07:13 | 9/18/26 21:10:32 | PreK-12 Educator;Community Member; | Montgomery County Public Schools | | Explicit language around Newcomer and Level 1 EML students is necessary to help schools understand that these students do not need an SRIP during the first year here as the need is not a literacy gap it is language acquisition. | The impact on schools will vary greatly when the retention of 3rd grade students begins. What plans are in place to add further staffing to highly impacted schools? |
| 9/19/26 7:58:57 | 9/19/26 8:04:08 | District Leader; | Washington County Public Schools | This is helpful. | I appreciate the inclusion of Science of Learning.<br><br>Coaching was replaced with a more broad description of "instructional support." Knowing the emphasis on providing training to literacy coaches, it seems appropriate to keep the term "coaching."<br><br>"When available, it is highly recommended that an additional screener be administered in the student's home language to establish a more holistic understanding of the student's overall language and literacy knowledge..." This comes at a huge cost for the LEA. For DIBELS, this requires the test administrator to speak the language. Although a great practice, it will be very difficult for districts to follow if there is not financial backing.<br><br>"For out-of-state and in-state transfer students... LEAs will test students within 30 calendar days of enrollment." - Although this is a great practice, the implementation of this will fall on the schools. Considering the screener is giving three times a year within windows, this could over assess a student in a few weeks of time. This should be left to the LEA and schools to determine the best timing to assess a newly enrolled student.<br><br>On page 19 and 20, how are j and k different? Section k includes preK. I assume this is a typo.<br><br>Demonstrated Readiness for Promotion: "The student did not score at the required performance level on the grade 3 MSDE-adopted State English Language Arts Assessment."- It was recently shared at the MSDE ELA Supervisor meeting that only the computer scored reading claim portion of the MSTAR would be used for readiness for promotion. The statement in the policy is misleading. It could be possible for a student to not meet the proficiency level on the reading portion and then later be considered proficient with the | August 31, 2028: LEA staff who support grades 1 through grade 6 literacy instruction and were hired by July 1 2025 are expected to have completed Science of Reading (SoR) professional learning. (Staff hired after July 1, 2025 are expected to complete SoR professional learning within three years of their hire date). - The documentation of this is a burden on the LEA. This should completely align with MSDE licensure expectations and the state should keep record of this information without the LEA needing to duplicate efforts. Is it a guarantee that SUNY and AIM will continue to be funded by MSDE? If not, requiring SoR training will become a financial burden to LEAs. Can MSDE create their own SoR course for free and keep track of completion rates for each LEA? There needs to be a way to streamline this process without the need to keep an excel spreadsheet. | h. "For each student receiving intervention, schools should develop a Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP) within 30 days of identification that specifies goals/benchmarks, intervention type/focus, service frequency and duration, progress-monitoring cadence aligned to MSDE guidance, and exit criteria; align with Individualized Education Plans (IEP)/504 as applicable;"- MSDE will need to provide guidance on this that aligns with the MSDE Special Education department's guidance.<br><br>f. "If a student has reading goals on their IEP..." MSDE will need to provide guidance on this that aligns with the MSDE Special Education department's guidance.<br><br>"LEAs must annually report the number of employees who have completed MSDE-approved training in the Science of Reading following the MSDE timeline for phased-in implementation." - The documentation of this is a burden on the LEA. This should completely align with MSDE licensure expectations and the state should keep record of this information without the LEA needing to duplicate efforts. Is it a guarantee that SUNY and AIM will continue to be funded by MSDE? If not, requiring SoR training will become a financial burden to LEAs. Can MSDE create their own SoR course for free and keep track of completion rates for each LEA? There needs to be a way to streamline this process without the need to keep an excel spreadsheet. This should NOT be a responsibility of the LEA.<br><br>"SY 2028-2029 LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 4-5."- Will additional SoR training options be approved by MSDE? Will we have to pay for SUNY and AIM courses? This should align with the MSDE licensure requirement and records should be kept by MSDE.<br><br>ii. "For students in grades 10-12, a universal screener shall be administered at BOY beginning in SY 2029-2030 if the student was identified as demonstrating not achieving reading proficiency the previous school year. Student who have been designated as College and |
| 9/19/26 11:21:24 | 9/19/26 11:25:01 | School Staff; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I think it's a good idea. | Great! | I think the literacy plan is a great way for us to address the needs of all of our learners. |
| 9/19/26 11:26:36 | 9/19/26 11:33:20 | PreK-12 Educator;Family Member of a Student;School Staff;Community Member; | Prince George's County Public Schools | | | I appreciate that there is a plan to tackle the illiteracy within our state. I am concerned due to the high turn over of educators from year to year and with such high-turn over, more of a burden to introduce and instruct educators on these policies as they are overburdened on their roles learning curriculum and addressing all other aspects of being an educator. I believe if the state went to supporting LEAs to reinstate textbooks, and replace digital learning at the elementary level because there is no policy in place to support learning to type even though state assessments are digitized. |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9/19/26 12:07:57 | 9/19/26 12:54:26 | Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE); | Other | MCGATE strongly supports structuring the policy into distinct developmental grade bands (PreK–3, 4–8, and 9–12). However, to ensure a seamless PreK–12 continuum, each grade band must explicitly include structural mechanisms for dual-differentiation, curriculum compacting, and literacy acceleration alongside foundational skills.<br><br>PreK–3 & 4–8: The structural framework must mandate flexible cluster grouping (such as Winebrenner's Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model) so that advanced, twice-exceptional (2E), and multilingual learners receiving foundational support in Tier 1 are not subjected to repetitive ceilings on mastered content.<br><br>Grades 9–12: Adolescent disciplinary literacy must incorporate advanced structural linguistics (Greek/Latin roots, morphology, and etymology) and Socratic inquiry to ensure advanced readers are continually challenged.<br><br>EPP & Inservice Alignment: The organizational structure across all grade bands should directly link to Educator Preparation Program standards (COMAR 13A.07.06 / 13A.12.02) and continuing professional development pathways (COMAR 13A.12.01) to ensure educators in every band are trained to accelerate literacy beyond grade-level baselines. | While MCGATE appreciates the addition of language for special populations and expanded Science of Reading (SoR) training, the current content remains heavily weighted toward deficit reduction and remediation. To achieve true equity and educational rigor under the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the content must be strengthened in three critical ways:<br><br>1. Dual-Differentiation in MTSS & SRIPs: Student Reading Intervention Plans (SRIPs) under Section II.B.2.g must mandate dual-differentiation for twice-exceptional (2E) learners. Skill remediation or ELD language supports must be delivered concurrently with high-level cognitive engagement and talent development, ensuring students are never pulled from advanced instruction for Tier 2/3 remediation.<br><br>2. Advanced Science of Reading Strands: Expanded SoR teacher training must explicitly extend beyond basic phonics into advanced structural linguistics (Latin and Greek morphemes), scaffolded critical thinking ladders (e.g., Jacob's Ladder), shared inquiry, and text-centered Socratic dialogue.<br><br>3. Preservice & Inservice Mandates: Mandatory SoR modules required for certification renewal (COMAR 13A.12.01) must include a specific course unit on Accelerated, Differentiated, and Cluster-Grouped Literacy Instruction. | MCGATE agrees with the phased timeline for universal and targeted screening across upper grade bands. However, the implementation timeline for educator professional development in dual-differentiation must not be delayed.<br><br>-Diagnostic Pre-Assessment: As universal screeners roll out in SY 2027–2028 (Grades 4–5) and SY 2028–2029 (Grades 6–8), screeners must be paired immediately with diagnostic pre-assessments capable of identifying students who have already mastered grade-level literacy content to prevent instructional ceilings.<br><br>-Immediate PD Integration: Training in cluster grouping, curriculum compacting, and 2E asynchronous masking must be integrated into the initial wave of MSDE Science of Reading modules starting in SY 2025–2026 and SY 2026–2027. Waiting until full upper-grade screener rollout to train teachers in literacy acceleration will leave advanced and 2E learners unserved for several academic years. | MCGATE recommendation: Shift from Deficit-Only Remediation to PreK–12 Dual-Differentiation & Acceleration<br><br>The Maryland Coalition for Gifted and Talented Education (MCGATE) commends MSDE's commitment to evidence-based Science of Reading (SoR) instruction. However, the policy currently operates under a deficit-reduction lens that risks capping the potential of advanced, twice-exceptional (2E), and multilingual learners. To align with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, MSDE must embed two non-negotiable structural elements:<br><br>1. Systemic Teacher Preparation (EPP & Inservice Alignment):<br>Preservice (COMAR 13A.07.06 / 13A.12.02): Higher Education and EPP coursework must mandate competency in dual-differentiation, advanced structural linguistics (etymology/morphology), 2E asynchronous masking, and Universal Design for Acceleration (UDA).<br><br>Inservice (COMAR 13A.12.01): Mandatory SoR modules required for teacher certification renewal must include explicit training in research-backed cluster grouping (e.g., Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model), diagnostic pre-assessment/compacting, and Socratic dialogue.<br><br>2. Non-Deficit MTSS & SRIP Structures:<br>Dual-Differentiation Mandate: Section II.B.2.g must specify that Student Reading Intervention Plans (SRIPs) provide targeted remediation/language support concurrently with high-level cognitive engagement. 2E and high-potential students must never be removed from enriched Tier 1 instruction or advanced talent development opportunities for skill-deficit intervention.<br><br>Upper-Grade Linguistics: Upper-grade bands must leverage advanced morphology to foster deep vocabulary acquisition and critical reasoning for all readers. |
| 9/19/26 16:07:56 | 9/19/26 16:13:49 | Advocate for Gifted Education; | Howard County Public Schools | While separating the policy into PreK–3, 4–8, and 9–12 grade bands is logically sound, the structural framework currently lacks cross-referencing to existing statutory mandates under COMAR 13A.04.07 (Gifted and Talented Education).<br><br>PreK–3 & 4–8 Structural Continuum: Each grade band must explicitly mandate structural mechanisms for dual-differentiation, diagnostic pre-assessment, and curriculum compacting alongside foundational skills. The structure must embed flexible cluster grouping (such as Winebrenner's Schoolwide Cluster Grouping Model) so advanced and twice-exceptional (2E) learners are not subjected to repetitive ceilings on mastered content during Tier 1 literacy blocks.<br><br>Grades 9–12 Disciplinary Literacy: The secondary structure must incorporate advanced structural linguistics (Greek/Latin roots, multi-tiered morphology, and etymology) and Socratic inquiry to ensure advanced adolescent readers are continually challenged.<br><br>EPP & Professional Development Alignment: The structural organization across all bands must directly link to Educator Preparation Program standards (COMAR 13A.07.06 / 13A.12.02) and continuing licensure renewal pathways (COMAR 13A.12.01) to train candidates in literacy acceleration—not just remediation. | The added language for special populations is appreciated, but the draft policy remains heavily weighted toward an deficit-centered framework. As a Gifted Education Coordinator and NBCT Mentor, I urge MSDE to align Science of Reading (SoR) implementation with COMAR 13A.04.07 through three critical content revisions:<br><br>Preservice EPP Mandates (COMAR 13A.07.06 / 13A.12.02): Higher education literacy coursework must explicitly prepare teacher candidates in neurodiverse and asynchronous development—specifically how 2E learners' advanced verbal reasoning can mask foundational skill gaps (or vice versa)—and in Universal Design for Acceleration (UDA).<br><br>Non-Deficit MTSS & SRIP Protections: Section II.B.2.g (Student Reading Intervention Plans) must mandate dual-differentiation. Crucially, the policy must state that under no circumstances shall a student be restricted from advanced learning, GT cluster placements, or subject acceleration in literacy as a prerequisite or condition for receiving Tier 2/3 remediation.<br><br>Inservice Training & NBPTS Alignment: Mandatory SoR training for licensure renewal (COMAR 13A.12.01) must reflect National Board (NBPTS) accomplishment-based differentiation standards, expanding beyond basic phonics into advanced morphology, scaffolded critical thinking ladders (e.g., Jacob's Ladder), and shared inquiry. | Phasing in upper-grade universal and targeted screening allows LEAs time to build capacity; however, the timeline for teacher training in literacy acceleration and dual-differentiation must not be delayed.<br><br>Immediate Diagnostic Pre-Assessment: As universal screeners roll out across grade bands, MSDE must require that screeners are paired immediately with diagnostic pre-assessments capable of identifying students who have already mastered grade-level literacy concepts, preventing instructional ceilings.<br><br>Early PD Integration: Professional learning modules in cluster grouping, curriculum compacting, and 2E asynchronous masking must be integrated into the initial wave of MSDE Science of Reading training modules starting in SY 2025–2026 and SY 2026–2027. Waiting until full upper-grade screener rollout to train teachers in literacy acceleration will leave advanced and neurodiverse learners unserved for several academic years. | RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY: Dr. Karuna Skariah, NBCT \| Gifted Education Coordinator, Educator, and National Board Certified Teacher Candidate Mentor<br><br>On behalf of Maryland's advanced, twice-exceptional (2E), and advanced neurodiverse learners, I urge MSDE to shift the PreK–12 Literacy Policy from a deficit-only remediation lens to a comprehensive framework grounded in dual-differentiation and statutory alignment with COMAR 13A.04.07 (Gifted and Talented Education).<br><br>Systemic Educator Preparation (EPPs & Licensure Renewal):<br><br>Preservice Mandates (COMAR 13A.07.06 / 13A.12.02): Higher Education EPP coursework across Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary, SPED, and ELD must require competencies in advanced structural linguistics (morphology/etymology), 2E asynchronous masking, and Universal Design for Acceleration (UDA).<br><br>Inservice Alignment (COMAR 13A.12.01 / 13A.04.07.04): Mandatory Science of Reading modules for Professional Development Points (PDPs) must align with National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in accomplishment-based differentiation, including cluster grouping (e.g., Winebrenner Model), diagnostic compacting, and Socratic dialogue.<br><br>Non-Deficit MTSS & SRIP Protections:<br><br>Dual-Differentiation Protocol: Section II.B.2.g (Student Reading Intervention Plans) must mandate that skill remediation occurs concurrently with high-level cognitive engagement.<br><br>Access Safeguard: Policy text must explicitly prohibit schools from withholding access to GT cluster placements, advanced learning, or literacy acceleration as a condition or prerequisite for receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 reading intervention. |
| 9/19/26 17:33:36 | 9/19/26 18:14:17 | PreK-12 Educator; | Prince George's County Public Schools | I hope that decision-makers keep in mind that an overwhelming number of students in grades 6-8 are reading over 3 grades below grade-level. There are many 8th graders in my school that are readng on a k-3 grade-level, and these are not isolated cases. | It is important that literacy policies address the needs of all different types of students. | Middle school and high school teachers generally do not have enough training in intervention beyond putting students on digital reading platforms after universal screenings. They don't know what to do in small groups, don't have the time in a 50-60 minutes block to facilitate small groups, and don't know how to manage a whole class while providing small group instruction. | |
| 9/19/26 21:47:18 | 9/19/26 22:10:28 | School Staff; | Prince George's County Public Schools | The decision to divide the structure/organization of the policy into these categories is great because each group represents various academic and socio-emotional needs. The approaches and strategies utilized to reach them should be based on this critieria. | Adding this language was a great addition because it clarified the needs of these learners and the professional development that would be available to teachers to help these students access the curriculum and instruction successfully, i.e. Science of Reading training as well as MTSS training. Because the Science of Reading and MTSS are ever evolving and changing as the body of evidence and research grows, then we must update and refine our practices to reflect this phenomena. | Moving the universal screening for these grades gives the LEAs and their staff more time to plan their targeted approaches for these grades. | I hope that more veteran classroom teachers who have proven successful in increasing student's reading achievement as evidenced by universal screeners and the MCAP are given the opportunity to become literacy coaches because they are nearest to the implementation of best practices utilizing high quality instructional materials and the Science of Reading. I would also like to see retention recommended and followed through at the Kindergarten and First Grade level, especially for students who have a high absenteeism rate or demonstrate poor proficiency by the third quarter of the school year. What HQIM materials are best for students who need Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions. Are they truly receiving consistent intervention that improves their skills on the reading and writing rope? |
| 9/19/26 23:48:10 | 9/19/26 23:50:45 | Business/Industry Representative; | Other | We appreciate the separation of the policy into the noted grade bands. They reflect how literacy instruction and intervention differ developmentally, and create clarity for how each band carries its own timeline and reporting expectations.We recommend a single consolidated implementation calendar covering all grade bands, so all stakeholders can see every deadline in one place. | sessions and public comment. The added language for multilingual learners, students receiving special education services, and advanced learners is meaningful. So is the clearer MTSS framework and the expanded Science of Reading training with defined completion dates. We also appreciate several changes that respond directly to educator feedback: Tier 2 and 3 intervention may now be delivered by any staff member trained in the intervention, districts may adapt SRIP templates, an IEP may substitute for an SRIP, and promotion decisions now rely on multiple measures rather than a screener alone. Replacing daily small-group intervention for retained students with ongoing Tier 2 or Tier 3 support based on need is a real improvement, as is moving the LEA reporting deadline to October 1. The flexibility on screeners in a students home-language and adherence to IEPs as required by IDEA is also appreciated.<br><br>We urge MSDE to address several remaining areas:<br><br>Funding: Protected collaboration time is named but not resourced. Supports for retained students (SRIP review, before- or after-school intervention, and Read at Home plans) carry significant staffing and time costs with no dedicated funding attached.<br><br>Six-Year Plan: Implementation expectations, monitoring responsibilities, and timelines need to be stated clearly.<br><br>Retention: The policy should explain how student growth, developmental readiness, and whole-child considerations factor into decisions.<br><br>Documentation: The 30-day SRIP and progress monitoring cycles and the 10-school-day family notification requirement still add to existing IEP, 504, and school improvement reporting. MSDE should align these systems so educators are not documenting the same information more than once. | We appreciate the phased approach: grades 4-5, targeted screening for grades 6-8 and targeted screening for grades 9-12 in SY 2029-2030. Moving the retention provisions to SY 2028-2029 also gives districts needed lead time. | Thank you to MSDE and the State Board for engaging with educators and MSEA throughout this process. The changes in this version show that feedback was heard, and educators share the goal of strengthening literacy for every student. Our remaining concerns are less about the policy's design and more about whether schools will have the resources to carry it out. We ask MSDE to identify funding for the new obligations, particularly collaboration time, intervention staffing, training, and support for retained students.<br><br>We also ask that SBOE's annual implementation review include educator capacity indicators, such as staffing, workload, and licensure status, alongside the student data already required. MSEA looks forward to continuing to work with MSDE so that this policy is ambitious and achievable. |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Policy Version 3 that may constitute barriers to the literacy development of gifted and advanced learners.<br>This comment addresses three areas: Reading Instruction, Assessment and Intervention, Maryland State Board of Education Policies, and MSDE Responsibilities<br><br>Reading Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention<br>l. All students identified as advanced learners shall have access to literacy-focused enrichment opportunities in accordance with MSDE's Criteria for Excellence: Gifted and Talented Education Program guidance (p. 20).<br>We fully support implementation of the Criteria of Excellence. However, it is the COMAR 13A.04.07 Gifted and Talented Education to which school systems must comply, and this should be indicated here.<br>According to a flow chart distributed to us by Dr. Anthony Vargas it is the COMAR 13A.04.07 that governs and gives authority to implementation of the Criteria for Excellence and all school system program guidelines.<br>Remarkably, COMAR 13A.04.07 is not even listed as a reference in this policy.<br>Most Maryland schools leaders have not read or even heard of the Criteria for Excellence. However, most Maryland school leaders are quite interested in knowing about state regulations, COMAR, which have governing authority for their programs to which they are accountable and for which their compliance is reported to the state.<br>A second issue with this statement about advanced learners is that is does not accurately align with either the Criteria for Excellence or COMAR 13A.04.07. The accurate statement from the Criteria for Excellence for enrichment, across all subject areas, is this:<br>Enrichment: Experiences that extend, deepen, or accelerate learning for gifted students beyond standard grade-level content, fostering creativity, higher-order thinking, and talent development (Renzulli, 2021; Kaplan, 2019). Criteria for Excellence, p. 6.<br>Authority for this definition, in addition to the research cited, is from COMAR 13A.04.07: .03 Programs and Services. | reads about MTTS on p.6:<br>MTSS – Tier 2 & Tier 3: Targeted supports within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports that address advanced learners' unique needs, including acceleration, enrichment, or interventions for gifted students who may also require social-emotional support. Tier 2 provides supplemental enrichment or enhanced challenge, while Tier 3 offers individualized, intensive support—including for twice-exceptional (2e) students (Ecker-Lyster & Niileksela, 2017; Hodges et al., 2018).<br>Given the lack of understanding of how MTTS integrates advanced/gifted learners into Tier 2 and Tier 3, this clarification must be included in the Literacy Policy. As stated before, we can't expect that school leaders have read the Criteria for Excellence, but they will be reading the Literacy Policy.<br>Here is how a revised statement that clarifies confusion about MTTS would appear in the Literacy Policy:<br>iv. Daily targeted small group reading Ongoing Tier 2 or Tier 3 intervention based on student needs, including explicit and systematic instruction. Targeted supports within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports are used to address advanced learners' unique needs. Tier 2 provides supplemental enrichment or enhanced challenge, while Tier 3 offers individualized, intensive support—including for twice-exceptional (2e) students.<br>Once again, this statement is aligned with the MSDE Universal Design for Learning policy by removing potential barriers for learners, including the twice-exceptional.<br><br>Maryland State Board of Education Policies<br>b. The SBOE shall annually review the implementation of this policy including analysis of the following by district and student groups, p 28.<br>This requirement is glaringly misaligned with other MSDE policies and data reporting requirements. Unlike the Mathematics Policy and ESSA reporting, there is no tracking of or even acknowledgement of students achieving beyond proficiency.<br>Why does the MSDE BOE not care who is excelling? There is no accountability for student |
| 9/19/26 23:39:02 | 9/19/26 23:51:50 | Community Member; | Other | | |