
TO: Members of the State Board of Education, Education Policy Committee

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

DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: MSDE PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness

Goal: Every student graduates high school college and career ready.

Outcomes:

- 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 PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy 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, 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. In the expansion of the policy, MSDE aims to establish coherent statewide expectations for literacy instruction, intervention, assessment, and support across all grade levels. Initial work began with separate efforts focused on early literacy and adolescent literacy; however, based on stakeholder feedback and conversations with local education agency leaders, the work evolved into a single comprehensive policy designed to better align literacy expectations across PreK-12 education.

In June 2026, MSDE's Literacy Programs and Initiative's Branch provided updates on literacy policy initiatives. This presentation led to a reorganization of the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy into grade bands and provides the Education Policy Committee with updates reflective of these revisions. Following the updates, MSDE will open the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy for public comment for a 30-day period.

Background

The PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy is a strategic initiative designed to transform literacy teaching, learning, and achievement from early childhood through secondary education. This policy supports the foundational goals of [The Blueprint for Maryland's Future](#) by ensuring that all students, regardless of

background, have equitable access to a coherent and high-quality instruction in Literacy and English Language Arts classrooms.

Executive Summary

The presentation will provide updates on the policy development process, stakeholder engagement efforts, key themes emerging from feedback, recent revisions, and areas still under consideration as MSDE continues refining the policy through public comment and ongoing collaboration with stakeholders.

Action

Information only.

Attachments

Board Policy Committee - Literacy Policy Presentation.pptx

Board Policy Committee - Literacy Policy Presentation.pdf

PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy Draft for EPC.pdf



Maryland Comprehensive Prek-12 Literacy Policy

DIVISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

Presented By | Jill Snell, Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives
Dr. Laura Aberg, Coordinator, Literacy Programs and Initiatives

August 13, 2026



MSDE Strategic Plan Goals

1

Every child has access to a high-quality early childhood program.

PILLAR 1: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Every student is matched with the resources they need to ensure their success.

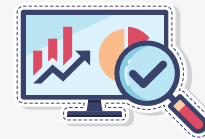
PILLAR 4: MORE RESOURCES FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

4

2

Every school has high-quality and diverse teachers and leaders.

PILLAR 2: HIGH-QUALITY & DIVERSE TEACHERS AND LEADERS



Every school and district receives a rating of ____ or higher.

PILLAR 5: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

5

3

Every student graduates high school college and career ready.

PILLAR 3: COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS



Visit the Maryland State Department of Education website to learn more about the Strategic Plan!

strategicplan.marylandpublicschools.org



STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT



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.

PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy Draft Restructuring

June 2026

Developed a revised draft PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy using feedback from stakeholder listening sessions and shared it with the Maryland State Board of Education.

July 2026

Restructured the draft PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy to better align to stakeholder expectations and improve readability by separating it into different grade banded sections including PreK-3, grades 4-8, and grades 9-12.

Literacy Policy Draft Restructuring: PreK-3

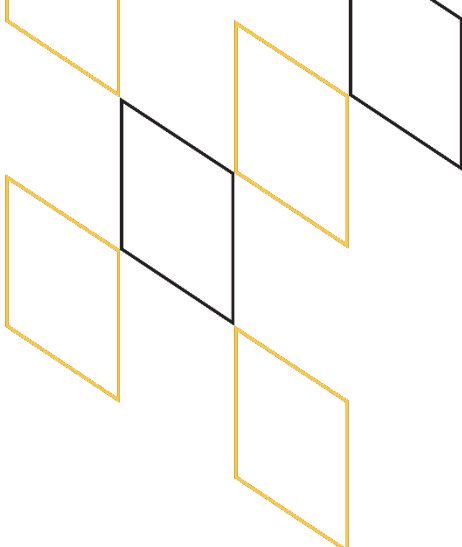
Topic	2024 PreK-3 Literacy Policy	Draft 2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy: PreK-3 Section
Coaching	Focused solely on use of coaches	Expanded to allow flexibility to LEAs with using coaches, administrators, lead teachers, or other staff as applicable to provide needed instructional supports to educators.
Assessment	PreK–3 screening and intervention focus	Refined expectations for PreK to include vetting screeners in SY 26-27, using screeners beginning in SY 27-28, strengthening Tier 1 instruction using data, and not requiring SRIPs for PreK due to developmental appropriateness.
Reassessment	Included a reassessment opportunity	Reassessment removed to allow for a more efficient and timelier process of assessment, data review, and promotion meetings with parents.
Diverse Learners	Some language addressing diverse learners	Additional language added to address the specific needs of multilingual learners, special education students, and advanced learners.
4th Grade Promotion Policy	Goes into effect SY 27-28	Goes into effect in SY 28-29 to allow for one year of standard setting with new MSTAR.

Literacy Policy Draft Restructuring: Grades 4-8

Topic	Adolescent Literacy Policy Draft	Draft 2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy: Grades 4-8
Educator Support	Required LEAs to provide collaborative planning and conduct Science of Reading aligned professional learning (PL)	Expanded Science of Reading PL requirement. Removed the LEA requirement for collaborative planning between general educators, special education, and English Language Development.
Assessment	- Screening began in SY 27-28 for grades 4-8 - Screening was three times a year for all students in grades 4-8	- Screening begins in grades 4-5 in SY 27-28. Grades 6-8 begin screening in SY 28-29. A phased-in timeline allows for PL, piloting, and adjustments. - A targeted approach was added for grades 6-8 to only screen students who are demonstrating a lack of reading proficiency on state assessments.
MTSS	Included language for Tier 1 instruction and reading intervention	Provided additional clarity around expectations for strong instruction in Tiers 1-3, better aligned to current MTSS expectations.

PreK–12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy Draft Restructuring Grades 9-12

Topic	Adolescent Literacy Policy Draft	Draft 2026 PreK-12 Literacy Policy: Grades 9-12
Assessment	- Screening began in SY 27-28 for grades 9-12 - Screening at BOY for all grade 9-10 students and gated for grade 11	- Grades 9-12 begin screening in SY 29-30. A phased-in timeline allows for PL, piloting, and adjustments based on adolescent literacy pilots. - A targeted approach was added to only screen grade 9 students who demonstrate a lack of reading proficiency on state assessments and to continue screening grades 10-12 for those demonstrating reading difficulty.



Closure

Next Steps



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

Monica Goldson, 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

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

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	4
PreK-12 Policy Overview.....	6
II. Early Literacy PreK-3.....	15
III. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8.....	30
IV. Adolescent Literacy Grades 9-12.....	43
VII. References.....	54
Version History.....	62

PreK-12 Policy Overview

A. PURPOSE

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, 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. **At-risk** indicates an elevated likelihood of not meeting grade-level literacy expectations without additional support.
- c. **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.
- d. **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.
- e. **Disciplinary Literacy** refers to the habits of mind, routines and practices, texts (and how those texts are created and used), and discourses of each discipline, including career and technical education, health and physical education, language arts, mathematics, sciences, and social sciences (Sedita, 2024a).
- f. **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).**
- g. ~~**Dyslexia Screening** assesses critical skills that are predictors of future reading success and helps to identify students who may exhibit characteristics of dyslexia.~~
- h. **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.

- i. **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).
- j. **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).
- k. **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 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).**
- l. **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.
- m. **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.
- n. **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).
- o. **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.
- p. **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**.
- q. **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).

- r. **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).**
- s. **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 I:** 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. All students should be provided access to Tier I instruction (Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, Students with a Student Reading Improvement Plan, etc.).
 2. **Tier II:** In addition to core instruction, Tier II support involves small group interventions that align with evidence-based practices used in Tier I instruction.
 3. **Tier III:** For students not demonstrating growth in Tier II, Tier III provides diagnostic-based, explicit interventions tailored to their needs.
- t. **Reading Difficulties** refers to a student's challenges with decoding, language comprehension, or both; which affect their ability to achieve grade-level reading proficiency.
- u. **Reading Intervention 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.**
- ~~v. **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.~~
- ~~w. **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.~~

- x. **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).
- y. **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 K-12 by focusing on how the brain processes written language (Ciancio, 2023).
- z. **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.).
- aa. **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).
- bb. **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).
- cc. **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).
- dd. **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).
- ee. **Universal Screener** is an assessment administered three times per year in grades K-3 to all students (beginning, middle, and end) 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.

-
- 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).**
-

C. ESSTAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Timeline	Activity
October 2024	PreK-3 Policy District Supervisors and Coordinators
November 2024	PreK-3 Policy Division of Educator Effectiveness Division of College and Career Pathways
December 2024	PreK-3 Policy Chief Academic Officers Maryland READS Network Project for Adolescent Literacy (PAL) Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE) District Leaders and Educators
January 2024	PreK-3 Policy 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 First draft of Literacy Policy released for public comment Meetings held with local education agency (LEA) staff, various community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel to discuss the policy and gather feedback Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board
July-August 2024	PreK-3 Policy Version two of the Literacy Policy released for public comment Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board

Timeline	Activity
August-September 2024	PreK-3 Policy Version three of the Literacy Policy released for public comment Meetings held with LEA staff, community organizations, and the State Literacy Advisory Panel for feedback Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board Public Hearing on the proposed Literacy Policy conducted during the August 27 th Board meeting
October 2024	PreK-3 Policy Version four of the Literacy Policy released Information and updates provided to the Education Policy Committee and State Board, and request for adoption Adolescent Literacy Policy LEA Literacy Supervisors and Coordinators
November 2024	Adolescent Literacy Policy Division of Educator Effectiveness Division of College and Career Pathways
December 2025	Adolescent Literacy Policy Chief Academic Officers Maryland READS Network Project for Adolescent Literacy (PAL) Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE) LEA leaders and educators
January 2026	Adolescent Literacy Policy Open to public comment
March-April 2026	PreK-3 Policy and Adolescent Literacy Policy Combined Revisions made based on public comments and policies are combined into a PreK-12 policy

Timeline	Activity
May-June 2026	PreK-12 Policy Input Version one was shared with stakeholders for feedback Chief Academic Officers Maryland Initiative for Literacy Equity (MILE) Institutes of Higher Education (IHE) LEA literacy and advanced learners' leaders LEA school leaders and educators Students 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 Version two was created based on stakeholder feedback and updates presented to the State Board
July 2026	Revised PreK-12 Policy Version three was created, shared with the State Board, and public comment release was requested

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 students 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 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 Comprehensive PreK-3 Literacy Policy 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, 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. Beginning in School Year (SY) 2024-2025, MSDE shall provide professional learning for all general education, special education, English Language Development 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).
- b. 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. The 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.
- c. Educator preparation programs 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 readers (“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 I and intervention design in Tier II and III;
- 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.

~~d. 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. 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 databased 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 observations with timely feedback cycles to improve instruction.

- e. Districts must report the number of general education teachers, special education teachers, **English Language Development** ~~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 by September 15 of each year.
- f. 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 PreK-3 students must receive Tier I literacy instruction, also known as core instruction, aligned to the Science of Reading **using High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM). Following structured literacy principles,** Tier I 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 I instruction must also:
- 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);
 - ~~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);**
 - 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, and art), consistent with MSDE guidance;**
- v. Be comprised of an adequate number of daily instructional minutes for literacy Tier I 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) portal. 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. 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 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;
 - b) Measures, 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. 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).**
 - v. 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, 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, to identify areas of transfer, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).**

- 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.**
- h. For out-of-state and in-state transfer students, LEAs shall request universal screening data to accompany transfer records.**
- i. If LEAs do not receive current screening results with the transfer records, LEAs will 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** ~~develop instructional pathways~~; and
 - iii. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.
- j. Per the COMAR 13A.03.08 (Students at Risk for Reading Difficulties): Each ~~PreK-3~~ student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive **literacy 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 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. 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

- vii. 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 PreK-3 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive **targeted Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 literacy 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 I, grade-level aligned instruction **(Durrance, 2023)**;
 - iii. **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 courses.**
 - iv. Be provided to all PreK-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
 - v. 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)**.
 - vi. **Match the specific skill profile (e.g., multisyllabic decoding/morphology, connected-text fluency with prosody, syntax/grammar, foundational writing, academic language, vocabulary/knowledge); are developmentally appropriate; and are delivered with adequate dosage and fidelity (Brown & Stollar, 2025; MTSS Center 2022; MTSS Center 2023b)**;
 - vii. **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 in accordance with 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) of any **PreK-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. 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. ~~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 ~~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** above;
 - v. Be reviewed and updated annually with the parent/guardian(s) if a student exhibits 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 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 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.
 - c) 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.
 - d) 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 their 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 I 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. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Timeline	Policy Component
Beginning SY 2024-2025	- MSDE provides professional learning for Maryland educators and Literacy Coaches - MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance in designing their MTSS model
Fall 2025	MSDE releases the SRIP ~~template~~ checklist and provides training on ~~its~~ their 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-SY 2025-2026	~~MSDE will provide a list of reviewed instructional materials, indicating their HQIM designation for LEA consideration~~ - MSDE provides technical assistance on grade promotion policies.
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

Timeline	Policy Component
~~Beginning~~ SY 2026-2027	- LEAs implement ~~PreK-5~~ K-3 MTSS Model with MSDE support (which includes SRIPs) - 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. MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report for PreK-3.
Beginning SY 2027-2028	LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in PreK. 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 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.)
Beginning SY ~~2027-2028~~ 2028-2029	- Implement retention portion of Literacy Policy LEAs begin annual reporting of PreK screening data. MSDE provides continued support for literacy policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning. EPPs begin annual reporting of SoR course completion. MSDE publishes EPP completion rates annually.
SY 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, teachers of multilingual learners, 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, dual language immersion learners, 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 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. Adolescent Literacy Grades 4-8

A. PURPOSE

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. **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):**
 - 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 assessments and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention design.~~ **(Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.);**
 - iii. ~~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.

~~iv. 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).~~

b. 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.

c. 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 elementary education, secondary ELA, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading using HQIM.** ~~seeking licensure for secondary ELA, content area, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles with training and instruction to:~~

a) Teach advanced foundational 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 I and to design Tier II/III 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 the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) for candidates pursuing elementary education and secondary ELA, special education, and ESOL licensure; Proficiency in teaching the five core components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) for candidates pursuing elementary education (4-5) and secondary (6-8) ELA, 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.**
- d. **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 to 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.**
- e. 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. The 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.
- f. 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** ~~II~~ 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, ~~local 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 foundational 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;**

- 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, 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, and to identify areas of transfer, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).

- 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 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.
- 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~~ 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–~~12~~ **8** must receive Tier I 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 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 art**), 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, 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) 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 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, 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.

- f. ~~Until IMR updates are adopted,~~ LEAs should prioritize materials that meet Tier I expectations and avoid approaches not supported by the Science of Reading.
- g. 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); 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 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**
 - iv. ~~Secondary~~ Scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) provide intervention without removing access to required ~~core~~ Tier 1 ELA **and** content ~~-area~~ courses.
- h. For each student receiving intervention, schools ~~shall~~ **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;
 - i. **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.**
 - j. **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.**

~~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 **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 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) **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** fits 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 1 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;
 - 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 reading goals on their IEP:
 - i. The IEP 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. 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~~
Summer 2026	MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports MSDE releases grades 4-8 family guides to support at-home literacy

Timeline	Policy Component
School Year (SY) SY 2026-2027	~~MSDE and select LEAs pilot assessment tools and workflows; refine timelines, data turnaround, and reporting~~ ~~MSDE publishes professional learning (PL) provider vetting criteria~~ - MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance on MTSS for secondary schedules 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 MSDE issues an updated approved universal screener report which includes recommended screeners for grades 4-8 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 - Selected LEAs pilot intervention service models LEAs report SoR PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 4-8 - 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 LEAs implement grades 4-5 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS ~~LEAs implement SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students~~ - MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including guidance documents, technical assistance, and professional learning

Timeline	Policy Component
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 (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.~~ ~~LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 4-5 screening and intervention data.~~ ~~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 - LEAs implement grades 6-8 SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students into their MTSS ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~ - LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 4-5 - MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning - EPPs begin annual reporting of SoR course completion - MSDE publishes EPP completion rates annually.
September 15, 2029 October 1, 2029	- LEAs begin annual reporting of grades 6-8 screening and intervention data ~~LEAs submit first annual adolescent literacy report to MSDE~~
SY 2029-2030	- LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 6-8 - MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning ~~Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide~~
SY 2030-2031	Full implementation of 4-8th grade 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 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, dual language immersion learners, 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 administrators, ELA supervisors, and educators in grades 4-8.**
- 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 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; and**
 - 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).**
 - 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' reading **and writing** proficiency to ensure access to rigorous coursework, readiness for 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,** 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. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) shall 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;**
- 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 assessments and analyze the results to inform instruction and intervention design.~~ **decisions (Bailey et al., 2020; Center on Intensive Intervention, n.d.);**
- iii. ~~Coaching~~ Instructional support ~~should be provided to support~~ **assist** educators with implementing **Tier 1** instruction **embedded in LEA-selected high-quality instructional materials (HQIM)** aligned with the Science of Reading research and data-based decision-making **which may** include **e 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.

~~iv. 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).~~

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

c. 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 Reading using HQIM.** ~~seeking licensure for secondary ELA, content-area, special education, ML, and Reading Specialist roles with training and instruction to:~~

a) Teach advanced morphology and etymology, 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 I and to design Tier II/III interventions; and

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

d. 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 to 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.

e. 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 grades ~~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 grades ~~9 and 10~~ **10-12**, 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;
 - ii. **Measure, at a minimum, reading fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension for grades 9-12;**
- 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, **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, 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, and to identify areas of transfer, and to better distinguish between language acquisition needs and potential reading difficulties (Esparza Brown & Sanford, 2011; IDA, 2022).**
- h. 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.**
- i. **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.**
- j. **LEAs will notify parents/guardians of their child's screening results (Learning Heroes, 2025).**
- k. 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~~ **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~~ **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 1 ~~literacy~~ instruction in ELA and **other** content-area **instruction** ~~classrooms~~ (including **math**, history/social studies, science, health, **and art**), 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 6–12, 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) 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 foundational 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 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); 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 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**
 - iv. ~~Secondary~~ Scheduling models (e.g., flex blocks, intensive semester courses, extended learning) provide intervention without removing access to required ~~core~~ **Tier 1 ELA and** content-**area** courses.
- h. For each student receiving intervention, schools shall 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.
- i. **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.**
- j. **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.

- 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. 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 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 fits~~ 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 1 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;**

~~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.~~

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 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 a Student Reading Improvement Plan.

C. 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~~
Summer 2026	MSDE releases HQIM implementation guidance and initial IMR reports

Timeline	Policy Component
School Year (SY) ~~2026-2027~~ SY 2026-2027	~~MSDE and select LEAs pilot assessment tools and workflows; refine timelines, data turnaround, and reporting~~ ~~MSDE publishes professional learning (PL) provider vetting criteria~~ ~~MSDE provides LEAs technical assistance on MTSS for secondary schedules~~ 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 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 ~~2027-2028~~ SY 2027-2028	- MSDE launches Adolescent Literacy Leadership Collaborative for district leaders ~~Selected LEAs pilot intervention service models~~ LEAs report SoR PL completion to include staff who support literacy for students in grades 9-12 ~~LEAs implement SRIPs and progress monitoring for flagged students~~ - MSDE publishes adolescent-literacy standards crosswalk and alignment notes 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 (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~~ ~~MSDE publishes adolescent literacy competencies and EPP review rubric.~~

Timeline	Policy Component
SY 2028-2029	- Statewide instructional implementation: Tier 1 adolescent literacy routines and MTSS interventions required statewide MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning
SY 2029-2030	LEAs implement MSDE-approved universal screeners and follow-up diagnostics, as needed, in grades 9-12 LEAs begin to provide ongoing SoR PL support for grades 9-12 MSDE provides support for the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy implementation including technical assistance and professional learning - 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
SY 2030-2031	Full implementation of 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 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 (4–9–12) 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, dual language immersion learners, 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. **Every Student Succeeds Act 2015**
2. **Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647 (2004)**
3. Literacy Standards Regulation
4. Ready to Read Act (SB 734)
5. Ready to Read Regulations (COMAR 13A.03.08)
6. Education Article 7-202
7. ~~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>

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://cedar.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 (NCSE 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](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20094045.pdf)

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

Maryland State Department of Education. (2026, May 19). *High-quality instructional materials*

matter. HQIM. <https://hqim.marylandpublicschools.org/about/>

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-leters-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-act>
<https://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](https://wyo.gov)

Version History

- A. The PreK-3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy was adopted October 22, 2024.
- B. The Comprehensive Adolescent Literacy Policy Draft was combined with the PreK-3 Comprehensive Literacy Policy in April 2026 following public comment and stakeholder input from January-February 2026.
- C. Version 2 of the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy was created in June 2026 following stakeholder listening sessions and shared with the State Board of Education.
- D. Version 3 of the PreK-12 Comprehensive Literacy Policy was developed in July-August 2026 and released for public comment.