ADVANCING ADOLESCENT LITERACY
(GRADES 4-8)
Model Policy

{Title} The (insert name of Act or policy)

{Intent} It is the intent of the Legislature that each student’s progression from one grade to another be determined, in part, upon proficiency in reading and writing; that district school board policies facilitate reading instruction and intervention services to address student reading and writing needs; and that each student and his or her parent or guardian be informed of that student’s progress.

The fundamental goal of an education system is to enable each student to develop the skills that are necessary for success in school and preparation for life. The Nation's Report Card reflects that there has been no statistically significant improvement in Grade 8 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Reading scores in 30 years, from 1992 through 2022, with one-third of the nation's eighth grade students reading below the basic level. Therefore, the Legislature finds that it is essential for a system of support to be provided for students in middle grades who continue to demonstrate difficulty with foundational reading and writing skills.

Definitions:

1. “Science of reading” refers to the large body of evidence that informs how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have difficulty; and how we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties.

2. “Three-cueing system” is any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, which may also be known as “MSV”.

3. “Universal screener” means an assessment that is administered three times per year (beginning, middle, and end) to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor reading outcomes and is typically brief and conducted with all students at a particular grade level.

4. “Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)” is a framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students.

5. “Department” is the state education agency.

6. “Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.” (International Dyslexia Association)

7. “Dyslexia Screening” is a brief assessment which measures critical skills which are predictors of future reading success.

8. “Structured literacy” is an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned to the science of reading. It is based on the science of how kids learn to read and is characterized by direct explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

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9. “Reading intervention” includes evidence-based strategies frequently used to remediate reading deficiencies and includes, but is not limited to, individual instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, mentoring, or the use of technology that targets specific reading skills and abilities.

10. “Educator Preparation Program” or “EPP” means any program that prepares individuals for licensure as elementary teachers, school leaders, or other school personnel.

(A) System of Support for Educators - The Department shall provide a system of support for school and district instructional leaders, teachers, literacy coaches, interventionists, tutors, and other identified personnel of fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills to support students with reading difficulties. The system of support shall include:

1) Professional learning for school and district instructional leaders, teachers, special education teachers, literacy coaches, interventionists, tutors, and other identified personnel of fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students on the following:

   a) The Department approved assessment system(s) selected by school districts to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and use the assessment data to inform instruction based on student needs.

   b) Comprehensive training grounded in the science of reading to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to support a range of students with diverse needs, students with reading difficulties, multilingual students, and students with characteristics of dyslexia, including:

      i. explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency including accuracy, morphology including morphological awareness and etymology, vocabulary, comprehension, and building content knowledge;

      ii. strategies to increase educator knowledge of reading and writing basics for students in grades four through eight;

      iii. evidence-based strategies for motivating and engaging adolescent learners;

      iv. research-based strategies for accommodations and scaffolding instruction for struggling readers and writers;

      v. approaches to assist educators in determining causes of reading difficulties, including dyslexia and other learning differences, for students in grades four through eight and how word reading, vocabulary, content knowledge, comprehension and writing are affected.

2) Job-embedded coaching support for teachers of grades four through eight that shall include the following:

   a) Provide on-site teacher training on evidence-based reading instruction and data-based decision making.

   b) Demonstrate lessons.

   c) Co-teach and/or observe teaching.
d) Provide immediate feedback for improving instruction.

e) Provide support to administrators in data-based decision making.

(3) Educator preparation programs that equip candidates seeking licensure for elementary, special education and middle school education with training and instruction to:

a) Effectively teach aligned to scientifically based reading instruction, including explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, the alphabetic principle, decoding, encoding, fluency, morphology including etymology, vocabulary, comprehension, and building content knowledge;

b) Implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials;

c) Provide effective instruction and interventions for a range of students with diverse needs, including multilingual students and students with characteristics of dyslexia;

d) Understand and use student data to make instructional decisions; and

e) Incorporate literacy instruction across content areas.

(B) Reading Instruction and Intervention - It is the ultimate goal of the Legislature that every student becomes a skilled reader. State standards for literacy in grades K-8 shall align with evidence-based instruction and scientifically based reading research. The Department shall develop a list for use in districts of high-quality core literacy curricula, supplemental instruction practices and programs, and intervention programs that consist of evidence-based literacy instruction aligned with scientifically based reading research and aligned to state standards for students in grades four through eight. No instructional materials which use the three-cueing systems method of word reading shall be used. The list shall be approved by the Board of Education.

(1) The Department shall provide an approved list of one or more reliable and valid reading assessment systems for school district use for screening and monitoring student progress toward becoming a skilled reader. The reading assessment system shall:

a) Provide a screener to be administered three times per year (fall, winter, and spring) with progress monitoring capabilities and a diagnostic tool to support teachers with targeting instruction based on student needs;

b) Measure, at a minimum, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and

c) For students who demonstrate difficulty with these skills, additional diagnostic screening in foundational skills (phonological awareness and phonics) is provided to identify specific skill deficits.

d) In determining which assessment systems to approve for use by school districts, the Department shall also consider, at a minimum, the following factors:

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

ii. The availability of accommodations for students with specialized plans;
iii. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents; and

iv. The integration of assessment and instruction the system provides.

(2) Districts shall offer reading intervention services to each 4th-8th student who consistently exhibits deficiencies in reading based upon the approved literacy screening. The reading intervention program shall be provided in addition to core reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom.

a) Be provided to all 4-8 students identified with reading deficiencies including students who receive special education services and multilingual students, including those who are newcomers in the middle grades, as determined by the Department approved assessment system administered within the first thirty (30) days of school;

b) Provide explicit and systematic instruction in phonological awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, morphology and comprehension, as applicable;

c) Monitor the reading progress of each student’s reading skills throughout the school year and adjust instruction according to student needs;

d) Be implemented during regular school hours or during before and/or after school tutoring.

e) Be implemented by a reading specialist/interventionist/coach who shall have training in science-based reading research and evidence-based literacy instruction practices.

(3) Local school boards, in collaboration with district literacy leaders, shall develop and implement programs of prevention, intervention, or remediation for students who are educationally at risk including, but not limited to, those who fail to achieve a passing score on the English-Language Arts state summative assessment in grades three through eight and multilingual students, including those who are newcomers in the middle grades. Such programs shall include components that are scientifically research-based. Local school boards shall also implement programs in grades 4-8 to enhance success.

(4) Each local school board shall employ one reading specialist/interventionist in any school serving students in grades fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth. Each such reading specialist shall be required to participate in professional learning to include:

a) Training in the identification of and the use of appropriate interventions, accommodations, and teaching techniques for students with dyslexia or a related reading disorder and shall serve as an advisor on dyslexia and related reading disorders.

b) State approved training on the definition of dyslexia and knowledge of

   i. techniques to help a student on the continuum of skills with dyslexia;

   ii. dyslexia characteristics that may manifest at different ages and grade levels;

   iii. the basic foundation of the keys to reading, including direct, explicit, sequential, systematic, and multisensory/multimodal reading instruction; and
iv. appropriate interventions, accommodations, and assistive technology supports for students with dyslexia.

(C) **Reading Success Plan** - Any student in grades 4th-8th who consistently exhibits deficiencies in reading at any time, based upon the Department approved assessment system, shall receive an individual reading success plan no later than 30 days after the identification of the reading deficiency. The reading success plan shall be created by the teacher, interventionist, principal, other pertinent school personnel and the parent(s) and shall describe the scientifically research-based reading intervention services the student will receive to remedy the reading deficit. Each student must receive intensive reading intervention until the student no longer has a deficiency in reading as determined by the approved literacy screener or the state summative assessment. The Reading Success Plan shall follow the template provided by the Department and include the following:

1. Documentation of reading intervention services and strategies;
2. At a minimum,
   a) the student’s specific deficiencies in reading as determined or identified by diagnostic assessment data or the early literacy screener provided or approved by the Department;
   b) the goals and benchmarks for student growth in reading;
   c) a description of the specific measures that will be used to evaluate and monitor the student’s reading progress;
   d) the alignment to an Individualized Education Plan for students who receive special education services;
   e) the specific evidence-based literacy instruction that the student will receive;
   f) the strategies, resources, and materials that will be provided to the student’s parent to support the student at home in make reading progress;
   g) any additional services the teacher deems available and appropriate to accelerate the student’s reading development; and
   h) may include the following services for the student: instruction from a reading specialist, trained aide, or classroom teacher with support from an aide, extended instructional time in the school day or school year, or, for students in grades six through eight, a literacy course, in addition to the required core English-Language Arts course, that provides the specific evidence-based literacy instruction identified in the student’s reading plan.

(D) **Parent Notification** - The parent of any student in grades 4th-8th who consistently exhibits deficiencies in reading at any time during the school year must be notified in writing no later than 15 days after the identification of the reading deficiency, and the written notification shall be made available in the parent’s home language, follow the template provided by the Department, and include the following:

1. That his or her child has been identified as consistently having deficiencies in reading, and a reading success plan will be developed by the teacher, interventionist, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent(s).
2. A description of the current services that are provided to the child.
(3) A description of the proposed scientifically research-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 deficiency.

(4) Notification that the parent will be informed in writing of their child’s progress towards becoming a skilled reader with each progress report.

(5) Strategies for parents to use at home to help their child succeed in reading.

(E) Successful Progression of Incoming Students in Grades 4-8 Consistently Identified with a Reading Deficiency

(1) Any incoming student in grades 4-8 identified with deficiencies in reading deficiency shall be provided with more intensified interventions to address his or her specific deficiency. Intervention services shall include effective instructional strategies to accelerate student progress and be delivered by a reading teacher, reading specialist, or an interventionist who has received intensive training in remediation of reading difficulties. The district shall provide the following:

a) Access to a reading teacher, reading specialist, or interventionist who has received intensive training in remediation of reading difficulties.

b) Reading intervention services and supports to address the identified area(s) of reading deficiency, including, but not limited to:

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

ii. Daily targeted small group reading 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; and

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

(2) Each school district shall conduct an annual review of Reading Success Plans for all students for whom a Reading Success Plan was developed during the previous school year. The review shall occur within the first 8 weeks of the current school year and include additional support and services, as described in this subsection, needed to address the identified area(s) of reading deficiency. Before and/or after school supplemental scientifically research-based reading intervention delivered by a teacher or tutor with specialized reading training.

(3) Summer school remediation programs or other forms of remediation chosen by the superintendent to be appropriate to the academic needs of the student.

a) Summer school remediation may be offered to students based on the results of the universal screener, diagnostic assessment, and/or ELA state summative assessment.

(4) A “Read at Home” plan which includes strategies for parents to use at home to help their child succeed in reading.
(F) **District Annual Reporting** - Each district school board must annually report in writing to the Department of Education by October 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

1. By grade, the number and percentage of all students in grades 4-8 performing below grade level on local or statewide assessments.
2. By grade, the number and percentage of students who had Reading Success Plans and no longer qualify for them.
3. By grade, the number and percentage of students retained in Kindergarten - eighth grade.
4. By grade, the number and percentage of students retained in grades 4-8 who have a Reading Success Plan.

(G) **Department Responsibilities** - The Department of Education shall provide:

1. A uniform format for school districts to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from district school boards and shall be provided to each school district no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.
2. The department shall annually compile the information required along with state-level summary information and report such information to the State Board of Education, the public, Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by November 1 of each year.
3. The department shall provide technical assistance to aid school districts in implementing the *insert name of Act or policy*.

(H) **State Board Authority and Responsibilities** - The State Board of Education shall have authority to enforce this chapter.

(I) The **Legislature** shall allocate sufficient funding for the implementation of this Act.