



Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy

Model Policy | Frequently Asked Questions | 2024

What is a comprehensive early literacy policy?

A comprehensive early literacy policy ensures students receive high-quality instruction rooted in the science of reading and identifies and supports students with reading difficulties as early as possible, catching them before they fall behind.

What does comprehensive policy include?

Comprehensive policy includes evidence-based strategies in four key areas:

- Supports for Educators
- Assessment & Parent Notification
- Instruction & Intervention
- Retention & Intensive Intervention

What supports do educators need?

Educators should be trained in the science of reading, and educator preparation programs' coursework should align to evidence-based literacy instruction. Literacy coaches who provide on-the-job support for educators can also improve instruction and student achievement.

What is parent notification and why does it matter?

Schools can partner with parents to ensure student success. This includes notifying parents/guardians if their child is at risk of falling behind in reading, providing progress monitoring reports and sharing read-at-home plans and other resources that can help with literacy at home.

How does comprehensive policy catch students before they fall behind?

Comprehensive policies include screening students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade for reading difficulties three times per year. They also provide screening for characteristics of dyslexia as early as Kindergarten. Early screening and progress monitoring informs educators' decisions about instruction and intervention to help all students become skilled readers.

Why is a strong third grade promotion policy important?

Research shows that students who can't read proficiently by 3rd grade are 4 times more likely not to graduate from high school. Providing students with an additional year of learning is an important last resort for students who need extra time and support to catch up with their peers. Every state should also have multiple pathways for promotion and a good cause exemption policy that allows students with special circumstances to move on to 4th grade with an individual reading plan and appropriate supports.

Why is funding for a comprehensive early literacy policy necessary?

Schools and districts need funding to effectively implement comprehensive policies. Funding supports professional development for teachers, the acquisition of high-quality instructional materials, and reading screeners among other necessities. States should also look for ways to prioritize existing local, state and federal funds.



Spotlight on Florida

[Florida](#) has led the way in comprehensive early literacy policy implementation since 2002. Over the years Florida has strengthened its policy by increasing the number of literacy specialists, banning three-cueing and adding a literacy coach endorsement. Check out Florida's [literacy law](#), [literacy resources](#) and [NAEP results](#).



Spotlight on Mississippi

Mississippi's Literacy-Based Promotion Act passed in 2013. After six years of implementation, Mississippi made national headlines for being the only state to significantly improve Grade 4 reading outcomes on the 2019 [NAEP](#). In addition, a [recent study](#) on the effects of 3rd grade retention showed promising results. Learn more about Mississippi's [literacy law](#) and explore the state's [resources](#).

Learn More

- [Comprehensive Early Literacy Policy, Early Literacy Matters](#)
- [Early-Literacy Policy Playbook](#)
- [Comprehensive How-To-Guide](#)
- [EdWeek article: What makes a strong early literacy policy?](#)

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