

TO: Members of the State Board of Education

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

DATE: August 27, 2024

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Literacy Policy Update

Purpose

The State Board of Education will receive updates on the revised draft State Comprehensive Literacy Policy reflecting feedback received since the July 2024 Board meeting.

Background

On June 23, 2024, the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE) received a presentation and engaged in a discussion on the proposed draft State Comprehensive Literacy Policy. After the SBOE meeting, staff from the Office of Literacy Programs and Initiatives continued to synthesize feedback gathered during the original open comment period that ended July 19. This presentation will outline and summarize revisions made to the draft policy based on input from the SBOE and various stakeholders.

Executive Summary

1. Purpose of the State Comprehensive Literacy Policy
2. Feedback on Version 1 of the Draft Policy
3. Organization of the Draft State Comprehensive Literacy Policy and Revisions for Version 2

Action

No action is required; this information is for discussion only.

Attachments

AUGUST BoE Meeting - COMP. LIT. POLICY UPDATE.pptx

Draft-Literacy-Policy-8.19.24-v1.pdf

OFFICE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Maryland State Department of Education Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy Update

AUGUST 27, 2024

Presented By | Dr. Deann Collins, Deputy Superintendent
Dr. Tenette Smith, Executive Director of Literacy Programs and Initiatives





Presentation Outline

1. Purpose of the State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy
2. Feedback on Version 1 of the Draft Policy
3. Organization of the Draft State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy and Revisions for Version 2

Purpose of the State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy

- Develop a policy to align with the State Board Resolution 24-01, Statewide Adoption and Implementation of the Science of Reading.
- Clearly outline expectations for curriculum adoption, assessment, data analysis, early warning systems, interventions, and accountability.
- Provide clear connections and alignment between early literacy policy research and the needs of all students K to 3.
- Clarify and develop more rigorous requirements already embedded in previously passed state statutes, such as the Ready to Read Act and § 7-202 of Maryland's Education Code, which set minimum levels of reading ability.

Feedback on Draft Literacy Policy

During the original open comment period that ended on **July 19th**, MSDE has received close to 1,000 comments of explicit feedback on the initial draft literacy policy.

The most commonly mentioned **strengths** of the draft policy were:

- a focus on the Science of Reading (17.1% of responses)
- provision of interventions (15.7%)
- inclusion of screening/identification of students (15.1%)

The most commonly mentioned **areas for improvement** were related to:

- concerns about student retention, e.g., retention at any time, timing of retention, primarily using 1 assessment to make decisions (26.3% of responses)
- larger issues, e.g., funding, class sizes, continuing intervention beyond grade 3, attendance (20.3%)
- staffing, e.g., adequate staffing, the need to define staff roles, training (18.3%)

Organization of the Draft State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy and Revisions

Section I: Purpose	Section II: Definitions
Explains the overall rationale and purpose of the policy.	Defines the major concepts included in the policy.
Revision for V2: Inclusion of the importance of grade level promotion based on assessment data and the need for early intervention.	Revision for V2: Clarified the definitions and expectations of Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), the science of reading, and Structured Literacy.

The Importance of Early Intervention

Kindergarten – 1st Grade

2nd Grade

3rd Grade

As students' progress through their journey to becoming a proficient reader, skills are built upon, and instructional foci change based on the developmental needs of the reader.

- Oral language (including vocabulary)
- Phonemic awareness
- Phonics and Spelling
- Fluency
- Writing (including handwriting, grammar, and syntax)
- Content knowledge development

- Oral language (including vocabulary)
- Phonemic awareness
- **Advanced phonics** and spelling (including syllabication and morphology)
- Fluency
- Writing
- Content knowledge
- **Comprehension strategies**

- **Language comprehension skills (including increased focus on vocabulary)**
- **Word study**
- Fluency
- Writing
- Vocabulary
- Content knowledge
- Comprehension strategies

World Class Literacy Instruction

Kindergarten – 1st Grade

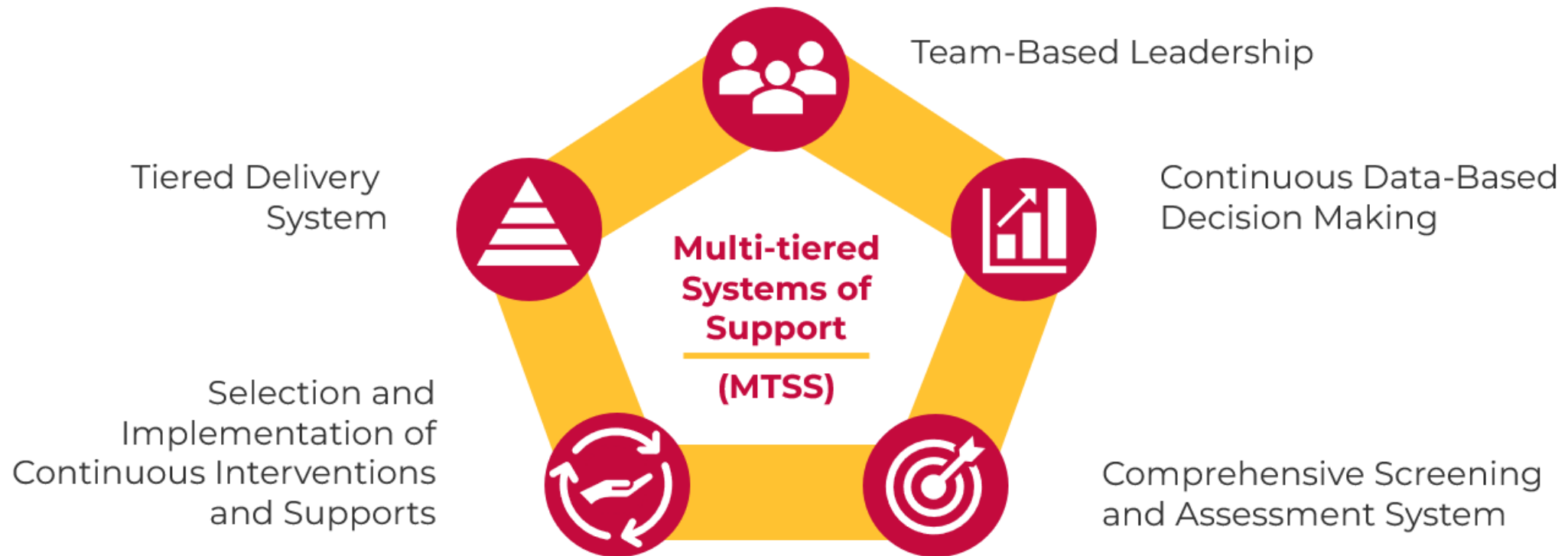
2nd Grade

3rd Grade

Instruction **remains:**

- **Explicit, systematic, engaging**, and includes the **gradual release of responsibility**
 - **Direct, clear**, and **precise** explanations.
 - Follows a developmentally appropriate **scope and sequence** with **built in review**.
 - Provides **ample opportunities** for students to **apply, practice**, and '**productively struggle**' with content and skills.
- **Data-driven**
 - **Students receive** the necessary **scaffolds, differentiation**, and **intervention** to develop **grade-level** reading proficiency and achievement.
 - **Educators use** a system of **assessments to identify** students that are "at risk" and **quickly intervene**.
 - **Universal screener** for foundational reading **identifies** students at risk for future reading difficulties.
 - **Formative Diagnostics** provide detailed information on students' **specific areas of need** and **inform instructional next steps**.
 - **Monitoring** provides **quick checks** into students' **progress towards mastery** of the targeted skills and **informs instructional next steps**.

Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



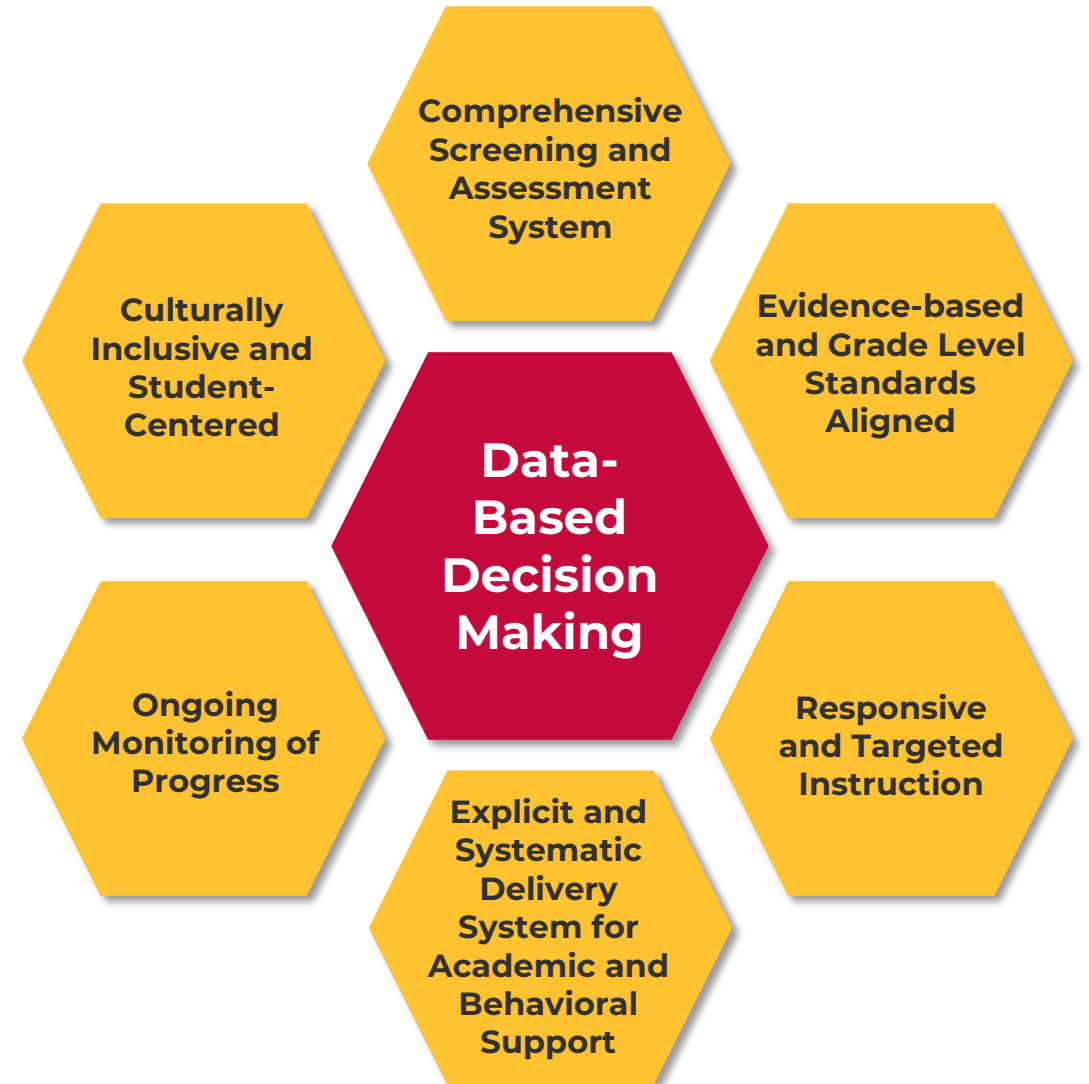
Organization of the Draft State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy and Revisions

Section III: Policy Standards

A. System of Support for Educators	B. Reading Instruction and Intervention	C. Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)	D. Demonstrated Readiness for Promotion
<p>Prepare teachers with the tools that are needed to be effective teachers of literacy.</p>	<p>Clarity on the expectations of world class literacy instruction in Maryland.</p>	<p>Accountability for LEAs to document and deliver necessary instructional supports.</p>	<p>Explicit criteria that students must meet to be promoted from one grade to the next.</p>
<p>Revisions for V2: Including all students in grades K-3. The inclusion of training of pre-service teachers through Educator Preparation Programs.</p>	<p>Revisions for V2: Emphasis on Tier 1/Core Instruction. Clarity on the expectations for multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).</p>	<p>Revisions for V2: Emphasis on family partnership in the development/review of SRIPs and clarity on the requirements for parent/guardian notification.</p>	<p>Revisions for V2: Revisions emphasize promotion and retention based on MSDE guidance.</p>

Solidify Tier 1 (Core) Instruction for ALL

- Policy focused on **Tier 1 (Core) Instruction/Alignment** for **ALL** students.
- Review unit and lesson plans alongside student assessment data to **determine whether and when the instructional focus addresses student skill deficit areas**.
- **Differentiate instruction** for students on, above, and/or below grade level by leveraging centers and technology.
- Incorporate instruction in **foundational skills** from earlier grade-level standards into homogenous small-group instruction, when necessary.



American Institutes of Research (AIR), 2021

Minimum Instructional Minutes and Schedule Guidance

Future MSDE guidance will provide updated language to clarify minimum instructional time. Follow-up guidance and resources will be provided to LEAs to include sample schedules.

Instruction	Range of Time	Class Configuration					Examples of Teacher-Led Activities			
Small Teacher-led Groups and Independent Student Centers 45-65 minutes per day	Time: 45-65 minutes	Whole Group Reading Instruction 25-55 minutes per day	1	4	2	5	3	Work with Core		
								Whole Group Writing Instruction 30 minutes per day	Phonics & Fluency	
									Total Minutes 90-120 minutes each day	
							Group 3: review complex blending strategies Group 4: reread the decodable book Group 5: choral reading of a new poem			

Just Read, Florida and Reading Rockets

POLICY REVISION: Parental and Guardian Partnership and Choice (1 of 2)

- Emphasis on Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)
 - Increased parents' understanding of early identification and intervention
 - Highlighted the role of the parents/family as partners in the processes.
 - Collective development and monitoring of the Student Reading Improvement Plan (i.e. Teacher, Parent/Guardian, administrative designee, and other pertinent school personnel)
 - Added more specific language to written notification requirement to ensure timely and clear communication for parents and caregivers including:
 - Timeline for family/caregiver written notification of reading difficulty.
 - Explanation of reading difficulty in "family-friendly language"
 - Description of current services provided to the child
 - Description of the specific supplemental instruction/intervention the child will receive
- Updated the role of parents and guardians in the promotion processes, including **parental agreements** for continued supports and the **parent's right to waive** a retention decision.

POLICY REVISION: Parental and Guardian Partnership and Choice (2 of 2)

- A parent or guardians **Right to Waive**
 - If the child's reading issues are not remediated by the end of third grade, retention and other supports established by the LEA shall be instituted
 - Student Reading Improvement Plan shall be reviewed for all incoming students identified with a reading difficulty. This includes detailing the:
 - additional supports and services including reading instruction,
 - intervention services, and
 - increased instructional time.
- If parents and guardians waive the recommendation for retention
 - The **parent or guardian must agree to additional supports offered by the LEA**, such as a specific summer school program, before or after school tutoring, or other instructional supports **that take place outside of the school day.**

Organization of the Draft State Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy and Revisions

Section IV: Timeline for Implementation	Section V: Responsibilities
<p>Clarifies the time expectations that MSDE and LEAs will be held to when implementing the policy.</p>	<p>Explicitly states the responsibilities that LEAs and MSDE have in the implementation of the policy.</p>
<p>Revision for V2: This entire section is an addition in response to stakeholder feedback. The timeline of the rollout of policy components was based on stakeholder feedback and knowledge of LEAs' current work.</p>	<p>Revision for V2: Includes LEAs' responsibility to annually reporting their promotion policy as well as the number and percentage of students not promoted at the end of the prior school year.</p> <p>Specifies the roles and responsibilities of MSDE to support LEAs in the implementation of the policy specifically within the components of MTSS, promotion policies, and Student Reading Improvement Plans.</p>

Policy and Reporting Expectations for Local Education Agencies (LEAs)

- LEAs will develop policies and structures that align with the requirements in legislation around **promotion and the state Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy**
- LEAs will develop and submit **reports** annually to the State Board of Education to increase transparency
- LEAs will receive **technical assistance** in developing systemic structures to support:
 - Assessment Literacy,
 - Data Analysis, and
 - Interventions and Supports.



Appendix

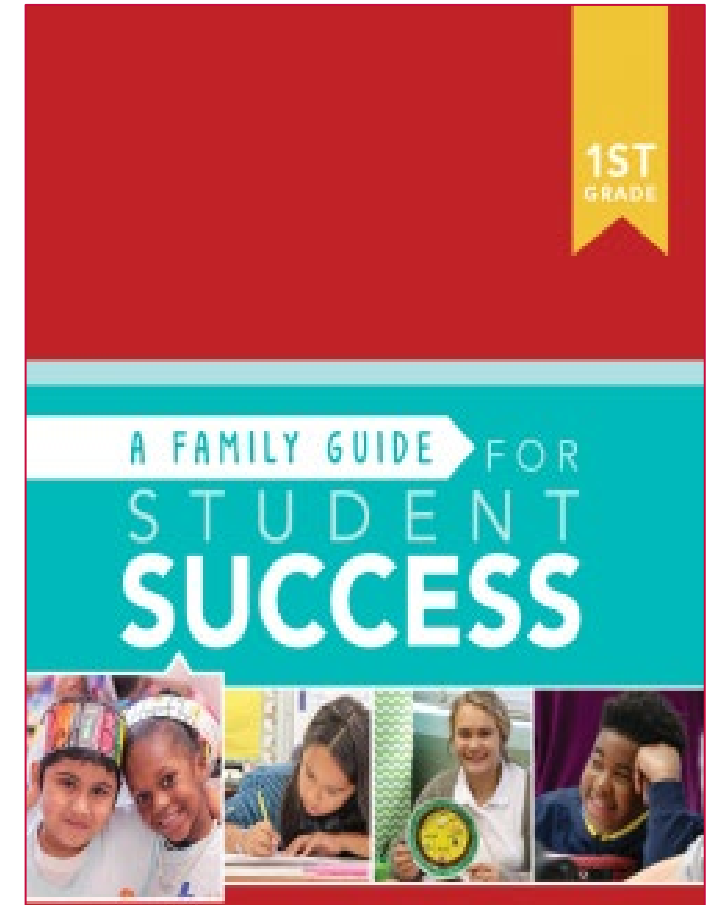
Summary of Revisions, Next Steps for Parent Engagement, & Timeline

Summary of Policy Feedback and Revisions for Draft Comprehensive Literacy Policy Version 2

Focus on Tier 1/Core Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasis on quality and purpose of core instruction
Focus on MTSS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarifies explicit support for early intervention• Provides specific criteria for reading intervention programs for students in grades K-3
Shift to Asset-Based Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offers options in lieu of retention and emphasizes intervention to support promotion
Inclusion of <u>All</u> Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft policy supports all students in K-3
Clarification on local school system roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mandates LEA policies for promotion and retention with MSDE guidance
Feature Parent/Guardian Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provides multiple touchpoints to include parents in the educational process
Connection to Existing Regulation and Statute	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ready to Ready Act, COMAR 13A.03.08, § 7-202 of Maryland's Education Code
Timeline for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A timeline is included regarding policy implementation

Next Step for Family Engagement

- 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 – 8th grade.
- Create family guides that give practical suggestions for home support, by grade level (birth – 8th grade) that includes:
 - Family-friendly definitions and examples of commonly used science of reading terms
 - Tips for parents including "Questions to ask your child's teacher"
 - Home activities around core learning (Ex. letter knowledge, working with sounds, vocabulary, etc.)



COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY POLICY TIMELINE

		2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR				2025-2026 SCHOOL YEAR				2026-2027 SCHOOL YEAR		
		FALL '24	WINTER '24-25	SPRING '25	SUMMER '25	FALL '25	WINTER '25 - 26	SPRING '26	SUMMER '26	FALL '26	WINTER '26-'27	
SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS FOR EDUCATORS	MSDE Provided Professional Learning	AIM and SUNY Science of Reading Courses Offered to MD Educators										
		Coaching Series	MSDE Monthly Regional Coaching Cohorts									
	Development of list of approved systems of assessment		Final selection of screeners							LEAs Implement approved screeners		
	Education Prep Programs					COMAR 13A.07.06 goes into effect						
READING INSTRUCTION & INTERVENTION	Vetted and approved list of HQIM developed and released				Release of approved HQIM							
	LEA MTSS Models are designed with MSDE support	MSDE supports LEA MTSS development										
STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SRIP)	LEA MTSS Models are implemented with MSDE support					Grades K-3						
	SRIP Development			MSDE releases SRIP template		LEAs implement the creation of SRIPs						
				MSDE provides TA on SRIP template								
DEMONSTRATED READINESS FOR PROMOTION	Promotion, Retention and Reporting					LEAs report promotion policy	MSDE provides LEAs TA on promotion policies			LEAs submit first annual report		
								SBOE Reviews Policy Implementation	Implementation of Retention Portion of the Literacy Policy begins			



MARYLAND STATE
BOARD OF EDUCATION

DRAFT Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy

Version 2, August 2024

Maryland State Board of Education

Stakeholder Engagement and Ongoing Revisions

Utilizing feedback from the Maryland State Board of Education (SBOE), the Literacy Advisory Panel, and close to 1,000 comments of explicit feedback from the public comment period that ended on July 19th, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has revised the Draft Literacy Policy.

This second draft of the State Comprehensive Literacy Policy includes a number of revisions based on stakeholder feedback:

Feedback	Revisions Made to Draft Literacy Policy
Focus on Tier 1/Core Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasis on quality and purpose of core instruction
Focus on Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarifies explicit support for early intervention Provides specific criteria for reading intervention programs for students in grades K-3
Shift to Asset-Based Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offers Options in lieu of retention
Inclusion of All Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft policy supports all students in K-3
Clarification on local school system roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandates LEA policies for promotion and retention with MSDE guidance
Feature Parent/Guardian Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides multiple touchpoints to include parents in the educational process
Connection to Existing Regulation and Statute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ready to Read Act, COMAR 13A.08, §7-202 of Maryland's Education Code
Timeline for Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A timeline is included regarding policy implementation

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DRAFT

I. Purpose

Since 2013, Maryland students have fallen from their ranking of third in the nation to forty-first according to the Grade 4 National Assessment of Educational Progress' Reading Assessment. This substantial gap in reading has profound implications on the academic success and future opportunities for our students, especially for those with reading deficiencies, students living in poverty, multilingual learners, and students of color. Therefore, the need for a statewide Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy is driven by the goal of providing equitable, effective, and evidence-based instruction to all students across the state of Maryland.

It is the intent of the General Assembly, the Maryland State Board of Education, and the Maryland State Department of Education that each student's progression from one grade to another be determined, in part, upon proficiency in reading; that local district school board policies articulate clear reading instruction and intervention services to address student reading needs, and that each student and his or her parent or guardian be informed of that student's reading progress.

The Comprehensive K-3 Literacy Policy is designed to ensure instructional equity, leading to increased literacy rates for all students across Maryland. This requires consideration for the unique needs of students engaging in early literacy development and those further developing and strengthening their literacy skills through adolescent literacy instruction. This effort will impact our communities' future social well-being, resulting in a more educated workforce, reduced poverty levels, and improved health outcomes for all students.

This policy aligns with and supports the Maryland Board of Education's ambitious goal listed in SB 24-01 of improving outcomes for students from all backgrounds and, as a result, leading Maryland to rank as one of the top ten states in reading on the 4th and 8th grade NAEP exams by 2027.

II. Definitions

- A. “Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. Dyslexia is characterized by deficiencies with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These deficiencies 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](#))
- B. “Dyslexia screening” assesses critical skills that are predictors of future reading success and helps to identify students who may have characteristics of dyslexia.
1. “Educator Preparation Program” or “EPP” refers to any program based in an institution of higher education (IHE) that prepares individuals for licensure as elementary teachers, school leaders, or other school personnel.
 2. “Evidence-Based” means that the program or practice has been demonstrated to be effective through research. “Research-based” refers to the development or implementation of programs or practices that have been demonstrated to work through scientific studies, experiments, or academic research.
- C. “Good-Cause” Exemptions means students may be exempt from mandatory retention in 3rd grade for good cause but shall continue to be eligible to participate in reading camps, receive instructional supports and services, and reading interventions appropriate for their age and reading level.
- E. “Instructional Equity” means cultivating the gifts and talents of every student to reduce the predictability of which students succeed and which fail, while interrupting practices that negatively impact all student (adapted from <https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/literacy-and-equity-in-education/>)
- F. “Intensive Support” refers to providing Tier III support for struggling students who are identified as needing the increased intensity and explicitness that constitute Tier III instruction. Tier III should not be provided during core instruction time.
- G. “Literacy” is defined as the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, achieve goals, and develop knowledge and potential. It also involves the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in a way that allows people to communicate effectively and make sense of the world.
- H. “Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS)” is a framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students. MTSS provides opportunities for students that are experiencing reading challenges. MTSS supports shall address a student’s identified needs with varying intensity and durations. There are three tiers of within the MTSS framework:
1. Tier I – All students receive Tier I instruction. It should occur within the core instructional block; delivered in whole group or small group and include direct and explicit instruction.
 2. Tier II – Tier 2 support is in addition to core instruction and should be delivered in small groups supports should incorporate evidence-based approaches consistent with Tier 1 instruction.

3. Tier III – Tier 3 provides interventions for students who are not showing growth on Tier 2 progress monitoring assessments; supports must be diagnostic-based, direct and explicit instruction should be provided.
 - I. “Reading Intervention” (also referred to as “supplemental instruction in reading” or “reading supports”) are evidence-based strategies that are frequently used to address reading challenges and include, but are not limited to, individual/small group instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, instructor-led, or the use of technology paired with face-to-face supports that target specific reading skills and abilities
 - J. “Science of Reading” refers to a body of research that encompasses various disciplines, including cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education, to understand how children learn to read. It provides evidence-based insights into the most effective ways to teach reading, particularly focusing on how the brain processes written language and how instruction can best support this process. The key components of the science of reading are Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension.
 - K. “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 children learn to read and is characterized by explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
 - L. “System of Assessments” means a comprehensive assessment system that provides screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments for use in an LEA. The system of assessments should be aligned to assess key indicators of future reading success including critical prerequisite skills.
 - M. “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.” This system encourages children to guess and takes the students focus away from the word itself—lowering the chances that they will use the understanding of letter sounds to read through the word part-by-part and be able to recognize it more quickly the next time they see it.
 - N. “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. This assessment is typically brief and conducted with all students at a particular grade level to assess phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension as developmentally appropriate.

III. Policy Standards

A. SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR EDUCATORS

1. Beginning in SY 24-25, the Department shall provide professional learning for all general education, special education, multilingual learner teachers, administrators, and other staff who support literacy instruction for students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read. The system of support shall include:
2. The system of assessments for school districts use must include statewide universal screening (Education Article 4-136), dyslexia screening, and progress monitoring of student growth toward grade-level reading. Beginning in SY25-26, the system of assessments shall:
 - a. Include a MSDE vetted and approved universal screener to be administered three (3) times per year (fall, winter, and spring beginning of year, middle of year, and end of year) to be used as a progress monitoring tool that:
 - i. Measure, at a minimum, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension; and
 - ii. Serves as diagnostic tool to support teachers with targeting instruction based on student.
 - b. Accurately and reliably identify students who demonstrate a reading difficulty and are at risk for poor learning outcomes.
 - c. Include a vetted and approved dyslexia screener to be administered to all students. The dyslexia screener should be administered annually during the spring of kindergarten and at the beginning of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades to identify students who may have demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia. The dyslexia screener must assess, as developmentally appropriate, all of the following foundational reading skills:
 - i. Phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - ii. Sound symbol recognition;
 - iii. Alphabet knowledge;
 - iv. Decoding skills;
 - v. Rapid naming skills including letter naming and letter sound fluency;
 - vi. Encoding skills; and
 - vii. Oral reading accuracy and fluency.
 - d. In determining which assessments to approve for use by LEAs, 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 professional development needed to administer, analyze the data and develop instructional pathways; and
 - iii. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.
3. Beginning in July 2025, COMAR 13A.12.01-.07 and COMAR 13A.07.06 requires that applicants and existing educator license holders must demonstrate proficiency in reading instruction aligned with the science of reading. Those individuals seeking initial licensure in early childhood education (Pre-K through 3rd grade), elementary education (grades 1-6), special education, and multilingual learners may demonstrate proficiency through a standardized assessment or an attestation by a Department-recognized assessor using a Department-approved observation measure. Additionally, existing certificate holders will be required to demonstrate proficiency at renewal beginning in 2025, which may be done in one of the following ways:
 - a. Submission of a passing score on a reading instruction test approved by the State Board of Education;
 - b. Completion of coursework or professional learning approved by the Department;
 - c. Submission of attestation of proficiency through observation completed by a Department-recognized assessor; and
 - d. Completion of training provided by the Department in the science of reading to fulfill the requirements of renewal.
4. Professional learning is required to be offered by the Local Education Agency (LEA) for administrators, classroom teachers, including special education, speech, and English language teachers as well as other key staff (content and program supervisors, coordinators, coaches, interventionists on the system of Assessments selected by school LEAs and approved by the Department to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and analyze the collected data in a structured problem-solving model to inform instruction based on system and student needs.
5. Educator preparation programs that prepare candidates seeking licensure for 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 1, intervention design in Tier 2 and 3;

- e. Understand the negative impacts of the three-cueing systems model, how to identify it in curriculum or instructional material, and why it is a flawed model of teaching children to read; and
 - f. Pass a state board-approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates' knowledge of the science of reading.
6. Coaching should be provided to support educators with the implementation of the science of reading:
 - a. School-based teacher training on evidence-based reading instruction and data-based decision-making to support the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction;
 - b. Co-Planning;
 - c. Co-teaching; and
 - d. Observations with timely feedback cycles for improving instruction.
7. LEAs must maintain an accurate record of which educators have demonstrated proficiency in reading instruction.
8. By September 15 of each academic year, this list shall be submitted to MSDE.
9. Districts must ensure all general education teachers, special education teachers, multilingual learner teachers, and administrators in grades k-3 have foundational training in the science of reading by December 1 of each school year.

B. READING INSTRUCTION AND INTERVENTION

1. Per the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, the Ready to Read Act, and COMAR 13A.03.08, it is the ultimate goal of the General Assembly that every student read at or above grade level by the end of grade 3.
2. ALL K-12 students must receive Tier 1 instruction, also known as core instruction. Tier 1 instruction is defined as evidence-based, systematic, differentiated, and explicit instruction, and shall not include the three cuing systems model of instruction. Tier 1 instruction also:
 - a. Addresses one or more of the five components of reading with intentional focus on identified area(s) driven by the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards for Literacy/ELA;
 - b. Requires assessment of each student's reading competency and used throughout the year that includes the types of assessments outlined in Section A;
 - c. Utilizes a scope and sequence that is delivered explicitly with judicious review, allowing for active and engagement students; and
 - d. Each LEA should identify an adequate number of daily instructional minutes for literacy Tier I instruction. LEAs should consult with Superintendent's Guidance regarding the number of minutes for Tier I literacy instruction.
3. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) shall provide a vetted and approved list of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) for LEAs to adopt. These materials must be aligned with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards, grounded in scientifically based reading research designed to reduce the risk of reading failure. These materials shall:
 - a. Address the core components of foundational literacy;
 - b. Integrate culturally and linguistically sustaining practices; and
 - c. Not include the three-cueing systems model.
4. Each K-12 student who exhibits difficulties in reading shall receive additional instruction aligned to their identified needs through multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) which includes:
 - a. A proactive, school-wide framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students with areas of concern;
 - b. Program-specific monitoring tools that LEAs should use to collect and analyze intervention data to make instructional decisions;
 - c. Opportunities for students that are experiencing reading challenges to be identified early, receive targeted intervention to support their needs, and have their progress closely monitored over time;
 - d. Home partnerships with parents and caregivers as an integral part of the decision-making team; and
 - e. Supports that address a student's identified needs with varying intensity and duration across the three tiers.

5. The reading intervention program shall:
 - a. Be provided in addition to core reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom;
 - b. Be implemented during regular school hours and shall not impede students' access to Tier 1, grade-level aligned instruction;
 - c. Be provided in addition to the Tier 1 reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom;
 - d. Be aligned to the science of reading for grades K-3;
 - e. Be provided to all K-3 students demonstrating a reading difficulty or who need supplemental instruction in reading. This includes students with the risk factors of dyslexia as determined by the Department approved assessment administered within the first thirty (30) days of school;
 - f. Be provided in an explicit, systematic, sequential manner, with cumulative instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as applicable; and
 - g. Screen students in grades K-3 three times per year (Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year) and monitor the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year in order to adjust instruction according to student needs.

C. STUDENT READING IMPROVEMENT PLAN (SRIP)

1. Beginning in 25-26 SY, any student in kindergarten or grades K-3 who is identified as demonstrating difficulties in reading at any time, based upon the Department's vetted and approved assessment system, and any 4th-grade student promoted for good cause shall receive a Student Reading Improvement Plan (per COMAR 13A.03.08) no later than 30 days after the identification of the reading deficiency area(s) of need.
2. The Student Reading Improvement Plan shall:
 - a. Be created by the teacher, principal or designee, other pertinent school personnel in partnership with the parent/guardian(s);
 - b. Describe the evidence-based reading intervention services the student will receive to remedy the reading deficit;
 - c. Include the necessary frequency and intensity to remediate the identified areas of need and accelerate learning;
 - d. Meet the requirements for core instruction and reading interventions outlined in section B above; and
 - e. Be updated annually if a student exhibits the need for a reading intervention.
3. Each student must receive intensive reading intervention until the student no longer demonstrates difficulty in reading as determined by the LEAs approved system of assessment.
4. **Parent/Guardian Partnership and Notification** – The parents/guardians of any K-3 student who exhibits a difficulty 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 family-friendly written notification must include the following:
 - a. An explanation that their child has been identified as having difficulties in reading;
 - b. A description of the current services provided to the child;
 - c. 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 deficiency;
 - d. An invitation to collaborate on the development of an individual reading improvement plan with the teacher, principal or designee, and other pertinent school personnel; and
 - e. Notification for the possibility of retention – if the child's reading issues are not remediated by the end of the grade level year, retention and other supports established by the LEA may be instituted.
5. **Transfer or Newly Enrolled Students Identified with a Reading Difficulty** – Any transfer or newly enrolled student identified with a reading difficulty shall be provided more intensified interventions to remedy their specific area(s) of need and accelerate student progress.

D. DEMONSTRATED READINESS FOR PROMOTION

1. Grade three students must demonstrate sufficient reading skills according to the State Board of Education's required performance level for promotion grade four (See MD Code, Education, § 7-202. Minimum levels of reading ability) Screener results shall not be used for promotion purposes. Students meeting promotion requirements shall demonstrate the following to be promoted to grade 4:
 - a. Scoring above the required performance level on the grade 3 English language arts assessment.
 - b. Scoring above the required performance level when given a reassessment opportunity.
2. **Good Cause Exemptions** – The district school board may only exempt students from retention if they qualify for a good cause exemption. Specifically, a student who is promoted to grade 4 with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading intervention that includes specific reading strategies prescribed in the student's individual reading improvement plan until the deficiency is remedied. The LEA shall assist schools and teachers with the implementation of reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among students with reading deficiencies. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:
 - a. Students with Disabilities whose Individual Education Plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law.
 - b. Students who have received less than two years of instruction aligned to WIDA standards or who have demonstrated to be on track to meet the EL proficiency as measured by WIDA.
 - c. Students with Disabilities who participate in the statewide English Language Arts assessment and who have an Individual Education Plan, or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than 2 years, but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading, or was previously retained for 1 year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.
 - d. Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years but still show a deficiency in reading and were previously retained for 1 year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade. No student shall be retained more than once.
 - e. If the student cannot demonstrate sufficient reading skills on one of the two options and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, they must be retained.
3. **Requests for Good Cause Exemptions** – Requests to exempt students from the mandatory retention requirement using one of the good cause exemptions shall be made consistent with the following:
 - a. Documentation shall be submitted from the student's teacher to the school principal indicating that the student's promotion is appropriate. Such documentation shall consist only of the good cause exemption being requested, and the existing Student Reading Improvement Plan or Individual Education Plan (IEP), as applicable.

- b. The school principal shall review and discuss the recommendation with the teacher and determine if the student meets one of the good cause exemptions. If the school principal determines that the student has met one of the good cause exemptions based on the documentation provided, the school principal shall make such recommendation in writing to the district school superintendent. The district school superintendent shall accept or reject the school principal's recommendation in writing.
4. **Parent/Guardian Notification of Retention and Waiver Process** – The LEA shall assist schools with providing family- friendly, written notification to the parent/guardian of any student who has been identified as qualifying for retention no later than 15 days after the decision has been made by the LEA. The notification must provide:
 - a. An explanation for why the child has not met the reading level performance required for promotion;
 - b. If applicable to the LEA's promotion policy, the reason the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption;
 - c. A description of the proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remedy the identified area(s) of reading difficulty in the retained year;
 - d. An option for the parent or guardian of the child to waive the decision to retain; and
 - e. What LEA offered support options such as specific summer school programs, before or after school tutoring, or other instructional supports that take place outside of the school day the parent/guardian of the student may choose from in lieu of retention.
5. Scoring above the required performance level of 735 on the grade three English language arts assessment.
6. The parent or guardian must agree to another support offered by the LEA, such as a specific summer school program, before or after school tutoring, or other instructional supports that take place outside of the school day (provided to students that do not meet promotion requirements).
7. **Successful Progression of Retained Students at the end of the 2025-2026 School Year** – Beginning with 2026 -2027 school year, students retained under the provisions of paragraph (D) must continue to be provided intensive reading intervention to remedy the student's specific reading difficulty. Each LEA shall conduct a review of Student Reading Improvement Plans 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 shall provide the following for retained students:
 - a. Additional time shall not impede students' access to Tier 1 or core instruction.
 - b. Reading intervention services and supports to correct 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.

- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. Frequently monitoring the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year and adjust instruction according to student needs.
- f. 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.
- g. A "Read at Home" plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in parent training workshops and/or regular parent-guided home reading activities which are aligned to scientifically based reading research.

IV. Timeline for Implementation

Policy Component	Timeline
Implement K-3 Literacy Policy	Beginning 24-25 SY without retention requirements
MSDE provides LEAs TA in designing MTSS model	Beginning 24-25 SY
MSDE provides professional learning for Maryland educators and Literacy Coaches	Beginning 24-25 SY
MSDE released Student Reading Improvement Plan template and provides training on its use	Spring-Summer 2025
MSDE releases approved list of HQIM	Summer 2025
LEAs report promotion policy to MSDE	September 1, 2025
LEAS implement K-5 MTSS Model with MSDE support (which includes SRIPs)	Beginning 25-26 SY
MSDE provides TA on promotion policies	Winter-Spring 2025-2026
State Board of Education Reviews Policy Implementation	July 2026
LEAs submit first annual report on the district school board's policies and procedures for student promotion and retention annually if substantial changes are made	September 1, 2026
LEAS implement 6-12 MTSS Model with MSDE support (which includes SRIPs)	Beginning 26-27 SY
LEAs implement MSDE approved universal screeners	Beginning 26-27 SY
Implement Retention Portion of Literacy Policy	Beginning 26-27 SY

V. Responsibilities

A. LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Each LEA must annually report in writing to the Department of Education by September 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:
 - a. The number and percentage of all students not promoted in grades K-12 organized by grade level and student group,
 - b. The number and percentage of all students in grades K-2 performing below grade level on local assessments organized by grade level and student group,
 - c. The total number and percentage of students whose parents/guardians waived retention and agreed to another support offered by the LEA.
 - d. The proposed supports and interventions delivered for students who were promoted due to parent/guardian waiver
 - e. 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
 - f. Any substantive changes made to the school board's district's policies and procedures for student promotion and retention
 - g. 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.
2. LEAs are responsible for maintain an updated list of all teachers who have received adequate professional learning in the Science of Reading.
 - a. By September 15 of each academic year, this list shall submitted to MSDE.
 - b. Districts must ensure all general education teachers, special education teachers, multilingual learner teachers, and administrators in grades k-3 have foundational training in the science of reading by December 1 of each school year.
3. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on the test-based student portfolio.
4. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on the alternative reading assessment.

B. MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The Department of Education shall establish a uniform format for local education agencies to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from local education agencies and shall be provided to each LEA 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, and the General Assembly by November 1 of each year.
3. The department shall provide technical assistance to aid LEA boards in implementing the literacy policy developed by LEAs.
4. MSDE will provide examples of promotion policies for consideration.
5. MSDE will review the submitted promotion policies to ensure adherence to the requirements.
6. The department shall provide technical assistance to LEAs around planning, scheduling, and identifying appropriate interventions for students at each grade band.
7. MTSS Guidance document and professional learning series for administrators, ELA supervisors, and interventionists in grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12.
8. MSDE will provide sample parent notification letters, and a format for the Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP).
9. 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 – 8th grade.

C. STATE BOARD

The State Board of Education shall adopt regulations to implement the requirements of this section.

VI. References

A. Laws & Regulations

1. Literacy law
 - a. Literacy standards

B. Board Policies and Resolutions

2. SOR Resolution

C. Superintendent's Guidance

DRAFT

VII. History

A. Dates

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