STATE READING POLICY ACTION GUIDE

How States Can Implement and Sustain Strong Reading Instruction

January 2024

National Council on Teacher Quality

CONTENTS

The last few years have been a watershed moment for reading instruction. Many states have passed new policies to support effective reading instruction, and more states may soon follow suit. (To read more about the policy changes states across the country have made, see *State of the States 2024: Five Policy Actions to Strengthen Implementation of the Science of Reading*.)

The states most successful in leveraging policy to improve reading outcomes for students have taken a cohesive and comprehensive approach focused on improving teachers' capacity to deliver great reading instruction.

This action guide outlines five key actions states should take to strengthen implementation of reading policies.

Each policy action in isolation can make a difference for students. But when done in concert, these policy actions build upon and bolster the others, leading to state policies that are greater than the sum of their parts in their ability to boost reading outcomes for students.

This action guide also shares stories of states that have leveraged these policy actions to support greater teacher effectiveness in reading. Each section explores how state leaders invested in teacher prep programs and teachers, the pitfalls they faced, and how they overcame them.

ON IMPROVING LITERACY

"If you want improved outcomes for literacy, there's hard work involved. We didn't realize that half the battle was getting there, and the other half is staying there."

Sean Ross

Executive Director, Arizona State Board of Education

Set specific, detailed reading standards for teacher prep programs

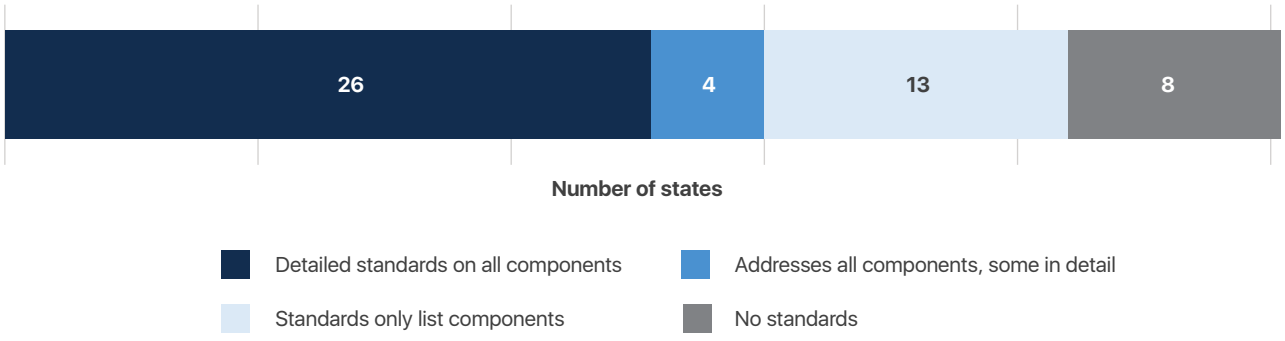
WHY THIS ACTION MATTERS

States need to clearly and explicitly communicate what teacher prep programs must teach their candidates, or programs will likely fall short of making important and necessary changes. Listing components of reading without providing more detail gives programs a great deal of leeway and undermines the efficacy of these standards. States and districts are investing hundreds of millions of dollars in professional development for teachers, often on skills they should have learned in teacher prep programs. To prevent states and districts from having to repeat these investments, every new cohort of teachers should enter the classroom well versed in scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI).

Clear standards are part of the chain of strengthening teachers' knowledge: they help programs identify what their candidates need to know and be able to do, give states the criteria through which to hold programs accountable, and set candidates up for success on aligned reading licensure tests that provide a final check on their knowledge before becoming teachers of record.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Only half of states set specific, detailed reading standards for teacher prep



WHAT STATES SHOULD DO IN SETTING TEACHER PREP STANDARDS ON READING

1 Gather input from experts and stakeholders to build stronger standards and greater buy-in:

State leaders who updated their teacher prep standards consistently shared that they achieved greater success when they brought many people to the table. Successful states include literacy experts, as well as the people most affected by these standards: prep program leaders and faculty, district leaders and teachers, and parents and caregivers. Teacher prep programs need to be able to implement these standards in their courses. State leaders should engage them in building the standards and give them an opportunity to weigh in so that they understand what the standards should look like in practice and feel more invested.

Methods of gathering input include convening stakeholders to hear concerns, establishing representative working groups to develop the standards, and inviting public comment on draft standards.

2 Build standards that are specific and detailed:

Standards should do more than list the components of reading. Consider what teachers need to know and to be able to do and what strong reading instruction looks like.

3 Include clear standards that set expectations for aspiring teachers to be well prepared to teach diverse learners to read, including English Learners (ELs) and students who struggle to learn to read:

No matter where they teach, every elementary teacher is likely to teach ELs and students who struggle to read. Standards for prep programs should clearly delineate what teacher candidates should know to support these groups of students in becoming proficient readers.

4 Tie standards to licensure test requirements:

Aligning teacher prep standards and licensure tests on reading is essential. Teachers and teacher prep programs need a consistent message about what candidates need to know and be able to do before they become classroom teachers.

5 Track outcome data:

Outcome data can help identify where programs are effectively teaching standards and where they need to strengthen instruction. For example, **Florida** publishes data linked back to teacher prep programs, including whether program completers achieve learning gains for their students (as a whole and for specific groups of students such as those who are economically disadvantaged) and completers' scores on teacher evaluations.[1] Outcome data can include pass rates on reading licensure tests and student growth data connected back to their teachers' prep programs. Evidence of success can also help build the case for keeping this focus on SBRI going.

HOW TO DO IT

UTAH

Utah turned its attention to reading because one out every two of its children could not read proficiently. While this statistic puts Utah above many states, education leaders felt it was not nearly good enough.

THE IMPORTANCE OF READING

"If we want to improve outcomes for kids and their life success, reading is critical... This is today's civil rights movement."

Jennifer Throndsen

Director of Teaching and Learning, Utah State Board of Education

The state began by gathering information about the current context. In 2016, they surveyed practicing educators to ask how confident they were in teaching the five core components of reading, finding that teachers were least confident in phonemic awareness and phonics. Addressing this problem would require a focus on the teacher pipeline, so the state convened the eight teacher prep programs across the state to enlist their help. Through those convenings, literacy faculty from the teacher prep programs worked with district literacy specialists and state education leaders to establish clear, specific standards for what teacher candidates need to learn about literacy.

These standards are both detailed and clear about what level of proficiency candidates should demonstrate. For each competency, the standards specify whether candidates should have basic conceptual knowledge, be able to apply the knowledge, or demonstrate the knowledge by the time they complete their programs. Providing this level of detail with exemplars for each competency meant that programs had clear information about what the competencies were, removing the need for any guesswork in what to teach.

While these standards were intended as suggested guidelines for programs, the prep program faculty themselves asked the state to put these standards into Board Rule (which has the effect of law) to require the programs to follow the standards. Now faculty are pushing the state to go further and create a requirement for the number of classes programs must devote to reading instruction.

These standards have laid the foundation for other steps the state is taking to strengthen literacy outcomes for children, including increasing its teacher prep program approval focus on literacy and implementing a strong licensure test (see Action 3).

The collaborative process between the state and the teacher prep programs has fostered a continuous improvement approach. Faculty can now opt into a regular convening of faculty from across preparation programs, a group which has swelled to represent about half of all core literacy faculty from the eight prep programs. Utah state staff facilitate these meetings in coordination with participating teacher prep faculty. They use the meetings to learn from one another and share what is and is not working in their programs. Participants in the convenings can also opt into training to strengthen their own understanding of SBRI, called Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). These convenings are driven by data, as the leaders use Foundations of Reading licensure test data to identify programs that have strong outcomes in certain areas so that the faculty from those programs can share how they are achieving results.

Utah has steadily pushed prep programs toward stronger literacy instruction, but at a pace that has allowed the prep programs themselves to take partial ownership over the work and to build their own capacity to follow the state's lead. This approach is one that Throndsen characterized as "gentle pressure, relentlessly applied."

Utah is one of several states that has set clear, explicit standards for candidate knowledge and demonstration of skills specifically aligned to SBRI. See an excerpt below from their standards related to phonics[2]:

Phonics

Competency	Basic Concept Knowledge	Application	Demonstration	Exemplars
Understand the alphabetic principle—that symbols represent sounds that are blended together to form printed words.	✓			Understanding of the alphabetic principle.
Understand that phonics is the connection between graphems and phonems and how they form words.	✓			Understand the connection of the sounds and corresponding letters.
Know and apply strategies for organizing word recognition and spelling lessons by following an explicit instruction phonics lesson plan.			✓	Use an explicit phonics lesson framework that includes review of a previously learned skill or concept, introduction of a new skill or concept, supported practice, independent practice, and fluent application to meaningful reading and/or writing.
Know the structure of English orthography patterns and rules that inform the teaching of single- and multisyllable regular word teaching.	✓			Define key terms (e.g., grapheme, phoneme, syllable, suffix), and identify examples of each. Map regular words by phoneme-grapheme (or grapheme-phoneme) correspondences. Sort single-syllable regular words according to written syllable type (closed, open, vowel-consonant-e, vowel team, r-controlled, consonant-le). Identify morphemes in common words, including prefixes, inflectional and derivational suffixes, roots, and combining forms.

In contrast, consider the reading teacher prep standards from Kentucky, one of 13 states whose standards only list the components of reading:

> "Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, postsecondary institutions offering teacher preparation programs for interdisciplinary early childhood education or elementary regular education shall include evidence-based reading instructional programming related to reading instruction in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension"

Or consider the short text in the **Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)**'s standard 2.a—the only CAEP standard on literacy—which several states rely upon to serve as their teacher prep program standards:

> **Under "Examples of candidate competencies for standard 2 components":**
>
> 2.a – Candidates demonstrate and apply understandings of the elements of literacy critical for purposeful oral, print, and digital communication.
>
> Course grades in content or pedagogical courses related to literacy, noting alignment of designated course projects to major content areas of literacy (phonological awareness and phonics, word recognition and analysis, conventions of standard academic English, comprehension, fluency, ability to read text closely and critically, discourse conventions, effective writing) and connecting to other curricular areas and health and physical education, and the core arts.[3]

The other national accrediting body, **Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP)**, has no specific standards related to reading instruction and makes no mention of the five core components of reading, instead relying upon the specific knowledge candidates must demonstrate based on the state's licensure requirements and standards and on national standards from the International Literacy Association.[4]

MICHIGAN

In Michigan, the state education agency was concerned when hearing repeatedly from districts that their first-year teachers were coming in poorly prepared. At the same time, the governor had established a commission on literacy and the legislature had allocated several million dollars to update the state's licensure tests. The state also learned through formal conversations with teachers, administrators, and people from teacher prep programs that the current certification structure was seen as too broad and not deep enough, so that teachers were not strong in everything they were licensed to teach. In response to the concerns raised, the state created narrower certification bands, coupled with more aligned teacher prep standards, and then developed new licensure tests.

To revise the early literacy standards, the state gathered 75 stakeholders (representing varied roles, including teachers, parents, teacher prep leaders and faculty, from a range of different locations and backgrounds) along with literacy researchers. The group decided to create new teacher prep standards from scratch, outlining what teacher prep programs should be preparing candidates to do for each licensure band. This framework is based on domains of early literacy (e.g., phonics), grounded in the four critical aspects that teachers need to know about each domain: (1) What is it, (2) How does it develop in a child, (3) How do you teach it, and (4) How do you assess it?[5]

The state built the PreK-3 certification framework and related teacher prep standards, then moved on to the grades 3-6 certification framework, engaging many of the same stakeholders. Since then, they have turned their attention to implementation. These finalized standards served as the foundation for the state's new licensure tests. The state worked extensively with prep programs to help them implement these standards and align their coursework, using the program approval process to review programs for their alignment with these revised standards. These steps included:

- A series of webinars to support prep programs' understanding of the new standards and certification structure.
- A day-long Literacy Faculty Conference with presentations from stakeholders who had been involved in writing the standards to explain the domains across the literacy teacher prep standards.
- Monthly drop-in program revision workshops hosted by the state team for prep program faculty to discuss the standards and how they are evident in coursework across programs.

It is too soon to track the effect on the state's literacy outcomes, but already the state has seen a shift in program coursework and higher pass rates on licensure tests.

HOW STATES SUPPORT A RANGE OF LEARNERS

Many states' standards now address what teacher candidates need to know to support a diverse range of learners, including English Learners and struggling readers.

CALIFORNIA

California's new literacy standards[6] for multiple subject programs (the state's general elementary certification) specifies that coursework and field experiences should include attention to struggling readers and English Learners, and provides specific skills to support these students (e.g., for struggling readers, screening students for potential learning disabilities including dyslexia; for English Learners, basing foundational skills instruction on their previous literacy experiences in their home language, helping them use English to access academic content across all subjects, and developing oral language proficiency).

COLORADO

Colorado has an entire set of standards[7] related to teaching English Learners that applies to all teacher prep programs, and which is intended to be followed in addition to (not instead of) the state's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Endorsement. These standards apply to every prep program (for example, not only elementary education, but also computer science and secondary mathematics). Programs preparing for program approval processes can complete a matrix in which they indicate what coursework satisfies each standard and substandard.

FLORIDA

Florida's reading endorsement competencies,[8] approved in 2022, include specific attention to English Learners (including performance indicators related to building oral language and phonemic awareness, using ELs' home language as a foundation for developing phonics skills, and attending to academic vocabulary). The competencies also address how to support students who speak different dialects, something that few states' standards include. These competencies also specifically address how teachers should understand and differentiate instruction for students with reading difficulties and dyslexia in each competency. Following publication of these competences, prep programs were required to submit a matrix mapping how their coursework addressed these competencies (including course name and number, related readings and assignments, and summative assessments for each indicator).

Questions for state leaders to consider:

- Do my state's current teacher prep standards provide detail and set expectations for what candidates should know and be able to do, aligned to the science of reading—beyond naming the five components of reading?
- Do my state's current standards specify how to support a range of student learners, including English Learners and students who struggle to read?
- Do the reading instructors in my state's teacher prep programs have the knowledge needed to teach SBRI? How do we know? If not, what additional training do they need?[9]

Resources

- What every elementary teacher should learn about reading instruction (From *The Four Pillars to Reading Success*, page 1)
- Ten maxims: What we've learned so far about how children learn to read by Dr. Reid Lyon
- Joint Statement: Understanding the Difference: The Science of Reading and Implementation for English Learners/Emergent Bilinguals (ELs/EBs) by The Reading League (TRL) and the National Committee for Effective Literacy (NCEL)
- Utah's Educator Preparation Program Competencies for Elementary Literacy
- Florida's matrices to map teacher prep coursework to reading competencies

Review teacher prep programs to ensure they teach the science of reading

(and do NOT teach contrary practices)

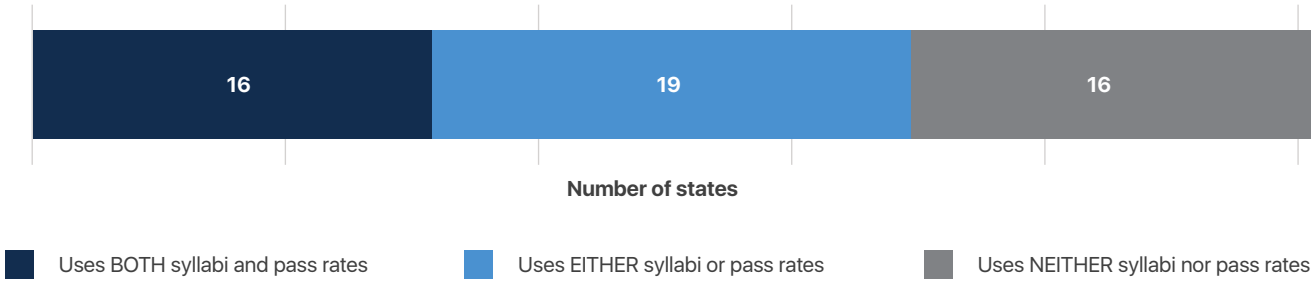
WHY THIS ACTION MATTERS

Every teacher knows that class rules are important, but they quickly become meaningless if teachers fail to enforce them. Similarly, well-defined and clearly communicated standards for teacher prep programs have limited value if states do not hold programs accountable for meeting them. Program approval offers this enforcement mechanism. It requires programs to verify that their coursework is aligned with the state's standards, that they adequately address scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI), and omit content contrary to research-based practices. When programs are out of alignment, the program approval and renewal process is the state's opportunity to either compel programs to improve or to levy consequences that should include the possibility of closing a program down.

States that have established a stronger program approval system, using detailed standards and including reviews of syllabi and licensure pass rates during program renewal, are seeing prep programs teach SBRI much more consistently than before these changes were implemented.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Few states consider both syllabi and pass rates in program approval



WHAT STATES SHOULD DO TO STRENGTHEN ATTENTION TO READING IN PROGRAM APPROVAL

States should use multiple available data sources to gather a holistic understanding of the strength of programs' instruction in reading.

1 Establish or maintain authority for program approval within the state:

Some states defer to national accrediting bodies for program approval rather than conducting program reviews themselves. When states instead maintain control of program approval, they can check programs' alignment with the state's own standards and can give more attention to reading and other top priorities within the state.

2 Review course syllabi for alignment to SBRI:

Syllabi provide insight into what instructors intend to teach and how they plan to provide practice opportunities and assess candidates' knowledge.

3 Incorporate pass rate data on reading licensure tests:

This data provides a short-term outcome measure of programs' effectiveness in teaching reading instruction. (For more information about the different ways to analyze pass rate data, see NCTQ's *Teacher Licensure Test Pass Rates* page.)

4 Look at longer-term outcomes:

Include data about teachers' effectiveness in the classroom (e.g., value-added measures in reading, evaluation ratings, principals' feedback on reading instruction).

5 Include experts in reviewing programs:

Reading is a complex topic, so reading specialists or experts lend useful expertise in identifying whether programs are aligned with state standards and with SBRI, or if the program is teaching content contrary to research-based practices. Consider also including K-12 teachers and school-based reading specialists, who can speak to what teachers will need to know and be able to do in the classroom.

6 Create a category of conditional or provisional approval:

This category allows the state to move beyond an "approved/not approved" binary to give clear guidance to programs about *what* they need to change. This conditional approval should be coupled with a finite and short-term deadline by which changes need to happen.

7 Set clear metrics and consequences:

While programs should receive ample support and opportunities to improve, there may be rare instances where they do not align with the state's standards for reading instruction. In the event that this happens and programs have been given sufficient time to improve, states should be ready and willing to close down a program and to guide that program's candidates to other, more effective prep programs.

HOW TO DO IT

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island has implemented several reading policy changes simultaneously as part of a Right to Read package of legislation. The legislation requires that teacher prep programs align their coursework with SBRI.

Teacher prep programs in Rhode Island have to prepare candidates for two different levels of understanding of reading instruction: For teachers who are not likely to teach early literacy (e.g., secondary teachers), they must meet an "awareness" level of familiarity, marked by completing about 10 hours of preparation. Elementary teachers, K-12 special ed teachers, and others likely to teach early literacy must meet a much higher "proficiency" bar. Rhode Island is currently reviewing plans from teacher prep programs for evidence that they meet these levels, and the state will also include this review during the regular cycles of the program approval process.

While implementing this new program approval process, Rhode Island has supported preparation programs in a variety of ways:

- The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) met with prep programs directly to explain what the scope of the review would be and what the expectations were for each program.

- RIDE provided a folder for each prep program in Google Drive with examples of rubrics and the types of paperwork they would need to complete, as well as a matrix showing what candidates would complete throughout their program.

- The state engaged with the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR Center) to provide programs with a syllabi refinement tool, which is designed to help prep programs review their syllabi for alignment with Rhode Island's competencies, outlined by the state's Right to Read Act guidelines for educator prep programs and to make a plan for how to update courses to ensure that candidates complete the program with a robust understanding of the competencies.

- Programs could work with a coach (a Rhode Island prep program faculty member who had helped develop some of these program resources) who had already gone through the review process.

- Programs were invited to submit their materials for program approval several months early so that they could receive feedback from the state and make changes

As of fall 2023, the state was in the process of reviewing programs' submissions and providing feedback. They are still seeing some reading practices that are not aligned to the state's expectations, as well as instances where programs' syllabi say they are covering the science of reading but their powerpoint slides contradict that. This approval process allows the state to look more deeply and with greater specificity at what programs are teaching their future teachers.

READING INSTRUCTION

"If you have high-quality instructional materials, you cannot just have a robot in the classroom to deliver it. The understanding of reading instruction is so much more important."

Colleen O'Brien

Literacy Specialist, Office of Instruction, Assessment & Curriculum; Rhode Island Department of Education

The state has developed trainings targeted to teachers of specific groups of students. It worked with external vendors on a Spanish-English program that meets proficiency requirements for dual-language teachers, as well as a program targeted to educators of multi-language learners, and it worked with a prep program to develop a course series for teachers of students with severe intellectual disabilities, which meets the reading proficiency expectations.

COLORADO

Colorado also revamped its program approval process, building on the state's new (and more explicit) literacy standards, issued in 2016, as well as the greater authority provided by Colorado's 2012 READ Act. To effectively apply its new authority to ensure that programs' reading instruction was aligned with state standards, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) created a detailed matrix for programs to complete prior to their site visit. In this matrix, programs provide evidence about the "level of implementation" for each standard and sub-standard, ranging from candidates having the opportunity to learn information through course readings to candidates receiving feedback and reflecting on their practice.

The program approval process includes literacy experts who attend program approval visits, review syllabi, sit in on literacy classes, and give feedback on programs' alignment to state standards. Reviewers also interview faculty, teacher candidates, and recent graduates to gauge their understanding of SBRI.

When the state began its new review process, CDE realized that under its approval structure, program review had only two possible end points: approval or probation. Putting a program on probation prevents that program from enrolling new candidates, making it an unpalatable option. Instead, CDE worked with the state board of education to create a new category, conditional reauthorization, which they codified in policy. Conditionally approved programs received a list of specific changes to make within one year. If they did so, they could be recommended for full approval.

Between 2018 and 2023, CDE conducted 23 reauthorization site visits with programs that have scientifically based reading standards in one or more endorsement areas (elementary, early childhood, special education). Seven programs were subsequently put on conditional reauthorization to address a need for deeper content for and understanding of SBRI for their candidates. Evidence from NCTQ's *2023 Teacher Prep Review: Reading Foundations* report found that after only a few years, Colorado programs are now among the best in the country for teaching SBRI, with almost no evidence of contrary practices.

OHIO

Ohio recently passed legislation that provides programs with feedback, an opportunity to improve, and then a high-stakes audit coupled with public transparency. The new legislation requires the Ohio Department of Education to complete the following actions:

- Develop an audit process to review prep programs.
- Complete an initial survey of prep programs.
- Grant a one-year grace period for institutions to meet standards.
- After one year, conduct audits of each institution.
- Revoke approval for programs that are not in alignment and have not yet addressed findings of initial audit.
- Develop and publish annual summaries of literacy instruction strategies and practices for all prep programs.
- Develop a dashboard with first-time pass rates on the reading licensure test.

Questions for state leaders to consider:

- Does my state explicitly evaluate whether elementary teacher preparation programs are aligned with SBRI? Do we have consequences if they are not?
- Do we have authority to compel alignment or a conditional renewal option during program renewal processes?
- Does my state set metrics for improvement for programs that do not meet the program review standards?
- Is my state relying on external accreditors rather than conducting our own review? If so, what information are we missing?

Resources

- Excerpt of Ohio legislation to strengthen reading instruction
- Rhode Island's Right to Read Act
- Rhode Island Syllabus Refinement Tool (including link to legislation, as well as more information on state website)
- The Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Reviewer Workbook
- Teacher Preparation Inspection–US (TPI–US), an organization that works with states and individual prep programs to conduct reviews of teacher prep programs, including a close look at reading instruction
- Colorado Educator Preparation Standards Matrices
- NCTQ's Reading Materials Database, to review whether textbooks and other materials assigned by prep programs align with the science of reading
- NCTQ's state summaries of prep program performance on the Reading Foundations standard and database of individual program scores
- NCTQ's *Teacher Licensure Test Pass* Rates page with information about licensure tests and different ways to analyze the data in them, as well as dashboards with licensure test pass rate information for numerous states

Adopt a strong elementary reading licensure test

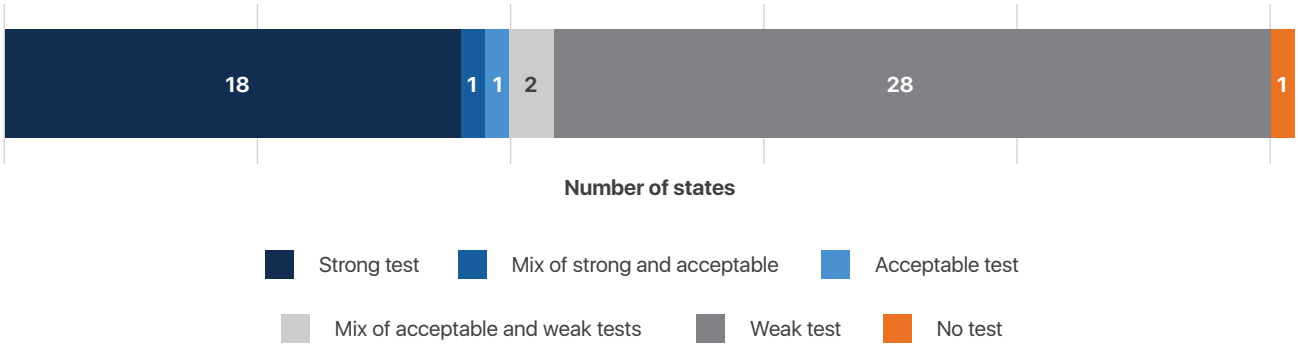
WHY THIS MATTERS

Even in states with explicit standards on reading for teacher prep programs, prep programs' quality of reading instruction varies widely.[10] Licensure tests, especially when used in concert with strong standards for prep programs and a robust program approval process, offer an important check of teachers' knowledge of reading instruction. These tests also send a clear directive to prep programs that they are expected to teach candidates this essential content and provide helpful feedback to programs on where candidates are strong and where they struggle.

States that have implemented high-quality reading licensure tests are more confident in incoming teachers' knowledge, and, when aligned with teacher prep standards and coursework, they are seeing higher pass rates than on the older tests.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Many states use licensure tests that do not adequately measure teachers' knowledge of reading instruction



WHAT STATES SHOULD DO TO USE READING LICENSURE TESTS

1 Require a strong (or acceptable) licensure test:

A reading licensure test should adequately address the core components of the science of reading, as well as how to teach a range of diverse students (e.g., English Learners, struggling readers). The test should focus only on reading (or on reading and English language arts), rather than combining reading with other subjects (which makes it hard to discern teachers' knowledge of reading specifically). And the test should not include content contrary to research-based practices (e.g., three-cueing) unless it makes clear that these are undesirable practices. (*See which commonly used reading licensure tests are rated acceptable or strong.*)

2 Close loopholes in testing requirements:

Require that everyone licensed to teach elementary grades (including special education teachers) demonstrate knowledge of scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI) on a comprehensive, standardized assessment before they become a teacher of record.

3 Provide training on how to use the testing company's data management system:

State education agency staff and teacher prep program leaders and faculty should learn how to use these data systems to explore trends in the data in their program, institution, or state. The training should empower them to identify candidates who need additional instruction, identify areas in which prep programs need to strengthen their reading preparation, and identify programs that excel in an area and may serve as a model to other programs.

HOW TO DO IT

UTAH

Utah is phasing in a new reading licensure test, the Foundations of Reading, over a four-year period. In year 1, programs could opt into taking the test. In year 2, everyone had to take it, but there was no cut score (or programs could set their own). In year 3, everyone was required to take it and would be held to the state's cut score, but the passing test was not required for a teaching license. In year 4, candidates must pass the test to earn a teaching license—and programs will be responsible for helping candidates succeed on the exam.

This test reinforced the new standards that Utah implemented (see Action 1) and has been a tool to give data back to programs so they can identify their strengths and areas for growth. Some programs have taken this exam more seriously, setting a minimum passing score that they communicate to candidates; others have not, and that lack of emphasis is reflected in their low passing rates (only 50% of candidates are passing the exam at these institutions).

SUPPORTING SUCCESS

"Give programs a grace period [with licensure tests], but also give them the data to show them how they're doing in reality."

Jennifer Throndsen

Director of Teaching and Learning, Utah State Board of Education

Reviewing data from this test has fostered greater collaboration among institutions. Four years ago, programs did not share data of any kind. Now the state education agency and instructors and leaders from prep programs join the Utah Council of Education Deans' group at least twice a year to examine data and talk about outcomes.

Keys to success in Utah:

- A four-year rollout gives programs time to build capacity and revamp coursework.
- The Foundations of Reading test requirement is in law, making it harder to change.
- The state engages prep programs in closely tracking candidates' data and using that data to identify strong programs that can train other program faculty.
- The state pays for aspiring teachers' first test attempt so the requirement does not pose an excessive burden on candidates.
- Utah engages their testing company to provide additional training on how to use the data management system to further explore the data.

- Every institution has to submit an internal report that includes how it is using the data to promote continuous improvement.

- Utah law requires that prep programs provide candidates with additional support (e.g., course modules, tutoring) free of charge until they pass the Foundations of Reading, up to

ARIZONA

Two years ago, Arizona passed legislation requiring that all K–5 teachers of reading (e.g., general elementary teachers, special education teachers, English Learner teachers) earn a K–5 literacy endorsement.

For in-service teachers, this requires coursework in the science of reading and in reading instruction (including interventions for struggling readers, including students with dyslexia), as well as passing the Foundations of Reading licensure test. The state has provided a list of courses and trainings that meet the criteria for this endorsement. In-service teachers have until 2028 to earn this endorsement.

Pre-service teachers, who have until 2025 to meet this requirement, must take relevant coursework in their teacher prep programs and also pass the Foundations of Reading test. To ensure that candidates were prepared to not only pass the test but to teach reading, prep programs had to add two new courses, one focused on the science of reading and one on the science of reading with a focus on reading intervention for struggling readers and students with dyslexia.

BUILD BUY-IN

"Let them learn, let them talk, let them see an exemplar."

Sean Ross

Executive Director, Arizona State Board of Education

The state heavily emphasized collaboration and building buy-in from teacher prep programs. Before the new legislation passed, the state held a series of convenings with teacher prep programs. The first convening previewed the imminent law and gave prep programs a chance to share their concerns. At the second, the state invited reading expert Louisa Moats to explain what the science of reading is and what it is not, to address misconceptions about the term, and to clarify that the science of reading and culturally relevant curricula can go hand in hand (a specific concern raised by programs). At the third meeting, Arizona invited Dr. Angela Rutherford from the University of Mississippi, who led the university's transition to the science of reading. She "spoke the same language" as the prep programs, explaining that many of her colleagues resisted the emphasis on science of reading when it first rolled out, but they now understand its value. This three-part convening series worked.

The state had earmarked Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding for a LETRS training cohort just for higher education faculty, and at the first convening, no one signed up. After the third, they filled two cohorts with 80 people registering.

To further support the transition, Arizona invited the state's testing company, Pearson, to provide an overview of the material on the test so that faculty knew what to focus on in courses. To ease the cost to teacher candidates, the state offers everyone in Arizona one free attempt. They intentionally offer only one free attempt to encourage candidates and teachers to complete the training and coursework first (since passing the test allows people to bypass the training).

MICHIGAN

Michigan used funding earmarked for updating its licensure test system to first update its teacher prep standards and then build licensure tests to match (for more detail, see Action 1). The state saw higher pass rates on its new licensure test aligned with SBRI because candidates' preparation was more closely aligned. Moreover, the state found a benefit to using a non-compensatory test (where candidates have to separately pass a subtest in each subject): Candidates were ultimately more successful because when they struggled in one area, they only needed to retake a subtest in that area, rather than studying for and paying for the entire test again.

Questions for state leaders to consider:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the licensure test my state currently uses?
- Who is required to take the test and who isn't? What does this mean for student learning?
- What additional support do aspiring teachers need to succeed on licensure tests and to understand SBRI? Who can provide this support?
- How long should my state take to roll out changes to licensure tests? What is the right balance to strike between giving programs time to understand the new requirements and adjust coursework and ensuring that elementary students have teachers entering with a strong understanding of reading instruction as soon as possible?

Resources

- NCTQ Brief: False Assurances: Many states' licensure tests don't signal whether elementary teachers understand reading instruction
- Utah legislation: prep programs support candidates to pass licensure tests
- NCTQ blog post: How states are making licensure tests free to aspiring teachers
- NCTQ blog post: How some states use licensure test pass rate data to build a stronger, more diverse teacher workforce
- NCTQ Teacher Licensure Test webpage and dashboards for more information about how to use data from licensure tests to strengthen teacher preparation
- Appendix: Guidelines for considering alternatives to licensure tests

Require a high-quality reading curriculum and train teachers on how to use it skillfully

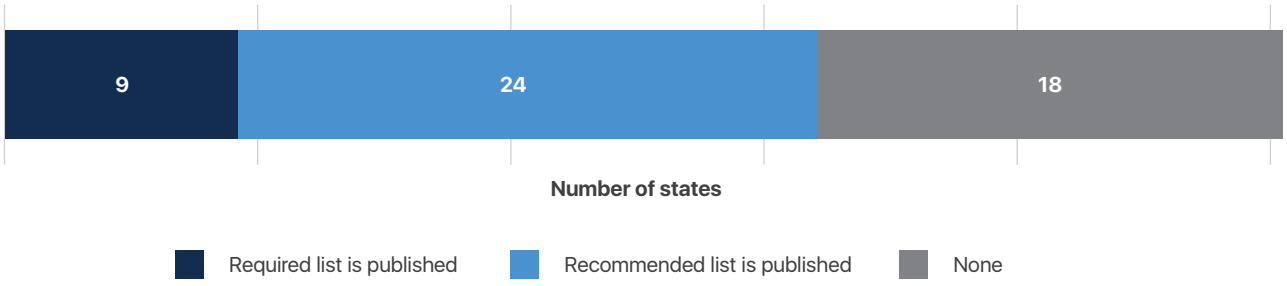
WHY THIS MATTERS

Curriculum materials aligned to the science of reading can make a real difference to students. In fact, some researchers estimate that the effect of using high-quality curriculum materials could be greater than the difference between a brand new teacher and one with three years of experience.[11] There are dozens, if not hundreds, of literacy curricula on the market, but their quality and adherence to the science of reading vary widely. Some of the most popular tend to use balanced literacy principles, methods that run contrary to the research.[12] Good curricula can also help ensure more equitable access to strong instruction. The adoption of a new curriculum should be coupled with professional learning for teachers on how to implement it effectively.

States successfully implementing high-quality curricula are partnering with existing organizations to review curricula and are using transparency and funding to push districts to choose higher-quality materials.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Just over half of states provide districts with any guidance on reading curricula



WHAT STATES SHOULD DO TO IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY READING CURRICULA IN SCHOOLS

1 Leverage existing resources for reviewing curricula:

Consider resources like the Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines Reviewer Workbook to guide your own review of curricula, or use existing analysis like EdReports and What Works Clearinghouse.[13]

2 Publish a list of reviewed, high-quality reading curricula and the criteria used for evaluation:

Ensure the list aligns with the science of reading and is absent of content contrary to research-based practices (e.g., three-cueing, miscue analysis). Be sure the curriculum includes resources to teach ELs and struggling readers. Providing a list of high-quality required curricula (which can be based on existing reviews from resources like EdReports) takes the guesswork out of curriculum selection for districts and greatly cuts down on the time and energy district leaders must devote to examining curriculum options. If this is not feasible, provide a recommended list—and couple that guidance with a tool and training to enable districts to vet curricula on their own.

3 Evaluate whether curricula provide support for a range of learners, or identify supplemental curricula that effectively support a range of learners:

Core curricula should be designed to meet the needs of all learners, including English Learners and struggling readers. States should examine whether core curricula meet these needs, and if they do not, states should identify supplemental curricula that could augment the core materials. For example, Texas includes "supports for all learners" in its rubric for evaluating course materials, and Rhode Island provides a list of "non-negotiables" for selecting curricula that support multilingual learners.

4 Provide transition funding for districts moving toward approved or recommended curricula:

States spend a tremendous amount of money on purchasing curricula materials, some of which are not aligned with the science of reading. By restricting funding to only those materials that have been vetted by either a trusted third party or through a research-based curriculum review protocol, states can encourage districts to use better materials and ensure that good money is not funding bad instruction. For districts, purchasing an entire new set of curricula is costly; states can ease this transition by providing funding for the new materials.

5 Provide funding to support teacher professional learning and skillful implementation of new curricula:

Some states have invested in aligned professional development from state-approved providers to support teachers to skillfully use the new curriculum. In fact, recent research found that when teachers reported that professional learning helped them to use their curriculum materials to meet student needs, they were less likely to say that the curriculum materials were too challenging for their students—and more likely to use the materials.[14]

6 Provide guidelines for teacher prep programs on how to skillfully implement high-quality instructional materials:

Prep programs often ask candidates to design lessons or entire units from scratch. Yet as more districts and states are moving toward high-quality instructional materials, teachers need to know less about how to create lessons and more about how to implement or adapt pre-developed, research-based lessons. The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has developed a new set of competencies and standards for teacher prep program coursework and clinical practice, which can be applied as program approval standards, among other uses.

HOW TO DO IT

Several states have partnered with other organizations such as EdReports, which conduct independent reviews of curricula, and then use these reviews to create websites identifying which districts in the state use which curricula, along with information about the quality of those curricula. Some states are investing in coaches to support teachers in implementing new curricula.

RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island (RIDE) created a "Curriculum Visualization Tool" that pulls in information from EdReports to determine a quality rating for each curriculum. The tool allows users to drill down by local education agency (LEA) or school to see what the curriculum is in math and English language arts at each grade and whether it meets the expectations set by EdReports, is locally developed, or has not been rated. This makes it easy to scroll through and see, for example, the one district in the state that is using a curriculum that "does not meet expectations for high quality."

ARKANSAS

Arkansas considers how all literacy systems work together, in what Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Education Jacob Oliva described as an "educational house." In this metaphor, the concrete foundation is strong standards outlining what students need at each grade level. The floor of this house is the curriculum that teachers use to teach those standards, the walls are training for teachers, and the roof is how the state and schools measure student learning.

The state has sought to build a stronger house over the last few years, starting with revising literacy standards for students. The new standards are more grounded in the science of reading and more explicit about the types of texts with which students should engage. Now the state is evaluating instructional materials using ratings from EdReports to ensure their alignment with SBRI, resulting in a list of approved curricula.

To support teachers' use of these curricula, the state has hired about 80 literacy specialists to work in the highest-needs schools, focusing on training teachers on reading and on how to teach these curricula. The state's law is very explicit that literacy specialists can go into classrooms and provide direct coaching and support (which does not factor into teacher evaluation), since in some states, teacher contracts have prohibited literacy specialists from providing direct feedback to teachers.

The state enforces curriculum requirements by tying funding directly to whether districts use approved curricula. To monitor districts' use of curricula, districts provide assurances in annual reports about which curricula they use as their primary instructional tool(s).

The state does not yet collect data about all supplemental materials, since these are far more varied and complicated, but it is exploring this area.

Arkansas is also considering how to support all students, including English Learners. The state is part of several national collaboratives that engage in this work, including evaluating supplemental curricula for the needs of English Learners, specifically looking for evidence of explicit attention to listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

THE NEED TO ACT NOW

"We have to act with urgency. These kids are in their critical foundational years. This can't be a 20 year plan."

Jacob Oliva

Secretary, Arkansas Department of Education

The state continues to work on building the "roof" of its instructional house, developing new assessments that are aligned to its elementary standards. The state is also working on a coordinated progress monitoring tool to provide a snapshot of student performance in K–3.

Questions for state leaders to consider:

- Does my state know if schools and districts are using high-quality reading curricula?
- Does my state tell the public about the curricula in use and whether they are high quality?
- Does my state financially support or help districts transition to high-quality instructional materials, including funding materials and training?
- If my state is providing resources for districts to review curricula, do we also need to provide training on how to use those review protocols?

Resources

- Reading League's Curriculum Evaluation Guidelines Reviewer Workbook
- EdReports,[15] including newly released "Science of Reading" snapshots, which indicate whether the curricula address the five core components of reading for each grade level
  - See how Rhode Island is using EdReports to rate curricula
  - See how Arkansas is using EdReports to rate curricula
- What Works Clearinghouse[16]
- Helpful resources that outline the parameters of effective reading instruction (From *The Four Pillars to Reading Success*, page 7)
- Additional Curriculum Review Protocols (From *The Four Pillars to Reading Success*, page 7)
- CCSSO's competencies and coursework/clinical experience standards

Provide professional learning and ongoing supports to sustain implementation of the science of reading

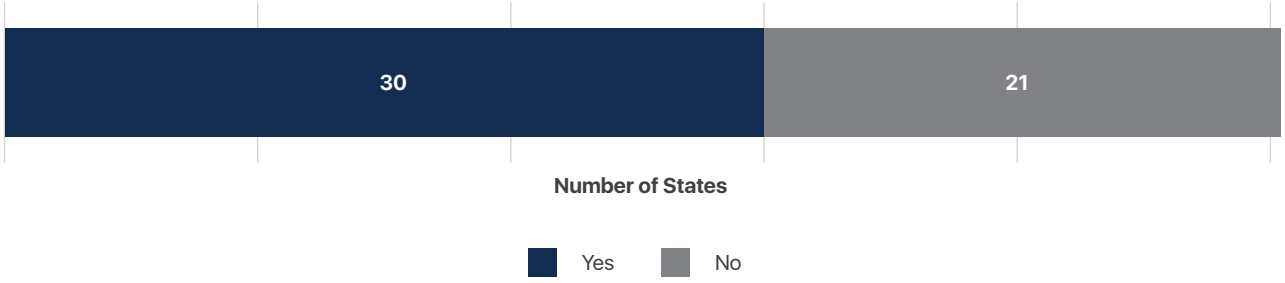
WHY THIS MATTERS

Many teachers have not learned scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI) and are eager to learn to increase their positive impact on students. States can select strong curricula[17] that are aligned with the science of reading, but teachers cannot effectively implement them if they do not understand SBRI. Teachers need to be ready to identify misconceptions, provide scaffolded support, and redirect or correct students when needed. No curriculum can possibly predict every possible response or differentiation teachers will need; teachers themselves need to be familiar with the research on reading so that they can build upon their curricula.

States that emphasize teacher training are seeing enthusiastic responses from teachers and are making progress tracking data on student outcomes.

CURRENT PRACTICE

Three in five states require reading training for all elementary teachers



WHAT STATES SHOULD DO TO ENSURE ALL TEACHERS ARE TRAINED IN READING INSTRUCTION:

1 Secure funding:

Training teachers requires money. Many states were able to leverage Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to provide training to at least a portion of teachers. If states were not able to use ESSER funds, consider dedicating funds to provide professional learning now. With training on SBRI, more than 90% of children can learn to read.[18] The cost of providing training to teachers is likely to be far less than the cost of providing remediation (also known as Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction) to students who struggle.[19] If you cannot afford to train all teachers at once, consider how to target teachers. Should teachers of certain grades be prioritized? Teachers in high-need schools or districts? A literacy specialist in each school who can share the instruction with their fellow teachers? This decision should be informed by data about your state's current performance and areas of need.

2 Identify quality training program(s):

Numerous training programs are on the market (see *Resources*, below, for a link to a list of recommended programs) and vary in their cost and time requirements. Some states have selected a single program, while other states give teachers a choice between several options. States should play a role in vetting these programs, especially when they are providing the funding. For a list of professional learning programs recommended by NCTQ's expert panel, see *The Four Pillars*, page 8.

3 Limit the burden on teachers:

Teachers already have a full plate, and completing a training program requires more time and energy. Consider steps to limit this burden, such as providing teachers plenty of time to complete the requirement, providing the training at different times (e.g., during the summer, on weekends or after hours, or during the school day with substitute coverage), and aligning the training with the credit hour requirements teachers must complete to renew their license.

4 Build data systems to measure outcomes:

Track data on teachers' completion rates and feedback, and then on students' reading outcomes after their teachers have completed the training. Tracking this data can help identify what's working well and what needs to change and can make the case for future investments in training.

5 Share successes:

Especially for states that are rolling out training requirements gradually, sharing success stories from teachers and their students is a powerful tool to build buy-in and encourage more teachers to sign up for the training—and to take it seriously.

HOW TO DO IT

Both the District of Columbia and Arizona started small and scaled up. They leveraged available funding, identified successes, and used early wins to make the case to bring training to a wider scale of teachers.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE)[20] used ESSER funds from the pandemic to purchase training from TNTP on the science of reading. This training required a one-time payment of nearly $1 million from OSSE, and the training now lives on the state's learning management system, where it is offered asynchronously to teachers across the state at no cost. The state also leveraged federal ESSER funding and Comprehensive Literacy State Development grant funding to provide Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) training for a large share of teachers and administrators, with a heavier emphasis on early childhood teachers (D.C. offers free universal preschool). Between the money from the state and an additional push for this training from District of Columbia Public Schools (the traditional public school district within D.C.), altogether, nearly 10% of the teacher workforce has either started or completed training in SBRI.

OSSE has encouraged teachers to take either of these SBRI trainings by offering a stipend ($1,000 for the TNTP training and $1,200 for the more time-intensive LETRS training). D.C. has seen high rates of teachers completing the training, as well as anecdotal evidence that teachers enjoy the training and find it valuable. The state's communication team is sharing these stories to build further teacher engagement. OSSE is also building out a data system that will allow them to track whether they see greater student outcomes for teachers who went through the trainings.

To sustain these successes, D.C. has focused on training administrators in SBRI as well, so that they understand the importance of reading instruction and can support their teachers. Further, the state convened an Early Literacy Education Task Force that recently proposed additional measures to the city council, including informal walkthrough observations of teachers' reading instruction, building off of one developed by **New Mexico**. These walkthroughs would not be tied to teachers' evaluations, but rather would give teachers low-stakes feedback to help them focus on continuously improving their reading instruction.

READING TRAINING HELPS TEACHERS SUCCEED

"We are very cognizant that reading training takes time, and time is a finite resource. We're being as strategic as possible, and leaning into existing activities when possible. We're providing more resources and structure to educators, which will enable them to be more successful, feel more successful, and sustain them in their profession."

Elizabeth Ross

Assistant Superintendent, Teaching and Learning, OSSE

ARIZONA

Arizona recently passed legislation requiring all elementary teachers to earn a K–5 literacy endorsement, which necessitates additional training. But even before that legislation passed, the state had begun a steady effort to train teachers, especially in high-need areas. Arizona attributes much of its success to collaboration and bringing the right people to the table. A decade ago, *Read On Arizona* assembled people from across the state to coordinate action on literacy, often doing work that the government is not able to, such as fundraising. The state also collaborated with other successful states through "learning collaboratives," where leaders from the states visited each other, exchanged lessons learned, and problem solved (with Mississippi in 2016–17 and later with Florida).

The state started small, training a few hundred teachers in SBRI. Based on early successes, the state education agency was able to work with the governor's office and state legislature to designate ESSER funding to train 4,000 teachers in LETRS, and many districts used their own ESSER money to train more teachers.

Since Arizona could not financially afford to train all teachers, they took an ingenious approach to identify which districts and teachers to focus on first. They worked with a group called the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), which houses data in numerous fields (e.g., transportation, environmental) for local governments across the state, but did *not* yet have education data. The Arizona SEA and Read On Arizona provided MAG with education data, and they built a cross-sector data set that used variables such as chronic absenteeism and standardized test data, as well as census data, average age of first doctor visit, unemployment claim data, and COVID outbreak numbers to identify "hot zones" across the state that would most benefit from intensive reading instruction.

Then the state funded training for the entire district or charter network in that zone. Over the last three years, the state has trained 4,000 teachers, and individual school districts have been able to train at least another 9,000 teachers. Early indicators, such as the state's National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data following the pandemic, suggests that this approach has been promising: Arizona is one of only 22 states that had no significant change in NAEP fourth-grade reading scores (whereas the other 30 states saw significant score decreases).[21]

ADDRESS THE PAIN POINTS

"Identify the pain points for teachers, schools,and systems; make overt, concerted efforts to address those pain points, and be really transparent about how you addressed them. . . . The more we communicated, the more we heard back that people really appreciated how much time we put into thinking about time and money."

Sean Ross

Executive Director, Arizona State Board of Education

With the newly required literacy endorsement, which all in-service and pre-service K-5 teachers of reading (including special education teachers) must earn, all elementary teachers must now complete literacy training (though in-service teachers have until 2028 to do so). In-service teachers can choose from a list of state-approved trainings to meet the 90-hour training requirement. To ease the burden of this policy, the state is aligning the required credit hours with the number of credits teachers already need to acquire for recertification during that time period, making the training free to teachers, and offering the training at a number of different times so that teachers can take the training on a schedule that works for them. (For more detail about these requirements, see Action 3).

Perhaps best-known are the efforts of Tennessee and Mississippi, which both undertook expansive efforts to retrain teachers on the science of reading.[22] As a recent FutureEd report details, Mississippi began by training literacy coaches, then extending LETRS training to all K-3 teachers and K-8 special education teachers, though this training was only required for "teachers in schools with the lowest literacy results."[23] A subsequent research study found that after completing the LETRS training, teachers had increased scores on a measure of their knowledge of early literacy skills. Ratings of teachers' quality of instruction, teaching competencies (e.g., planning, classroom management), and student engagement all increased compared to teachers who had not started the training.[24] Tennessee contracted with TNTP to provide 60 hours of professional development on reading to elementary teachers across the state; teachers were paid a $1,000 stipend for completing the training, and teachers in grades K-2 also received curriculum materials. Both states have seen substantial increases in teachers' knowledge of literacy skills.

Questions for state leaders to consider:

- How can my state identify high-quality professional learning in SBRI?
- If my state needs to prioritize professional learning for teachers for financial reasons, which students would benefit most?
- What data can we collect to measure outcomes and identify early successes?
- Who can we partner with to build buy-in for this work?

Resources

- Recommended professional development resources (from *The Four Pillars to Reading Success*, page 8)
- District of Columbia task force recommendations
- New Mexico Structured Literacy Administrator Walkthrough Tool for informal, literacy-focused classroom walkthroughs and feedback
- Massachusetts example of procurement language to support curriculum implementation, including funding for professional development and purchasing access to high-quality curricula for teacher prep programs

In discussions with states, several themes emerged across all five policy actions.

These states shared a commitment to helping all children learn to read and found that their efforts were most impactful when they focused on several policy actions in concert, as each of these strengthens the other.

- **Coherence matters! Address multiple areas in tandem to strengthen students' reading outcomes:** Every action builds on or is supported by every other action related to reading. For example, revising teacher prep program standards helps familiarize prep programs with these concepts, which can lay the groundwork for requiring a new licensure test system. The data from the licensure test helps reinforce the need for programs to provide preparation aligned with the standards. A program approval process is most effective when it relies on clearly defined standards and can make use of outcome data on licensure tests. States and districts will have an easier time transitioning to high-quality curricula if their teachers are already trained on scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI) and supported by high-quality professional development. Funds for training in-service teachers will go further if states can be confident that incoming teachers are completing their preparation program already well versed in reading instruction and do not need additional training.

- **Build collaboration and collective impact:** State leaders repeatedly shared that when they involved stakeholders in the design of new policies, they were more invested and more likely to follow new laws and policies–and the policies were better when they prioritized collaboration.

- **Give stakeholders time to adjust to new policies, but backstop these changes with consequences for those who are unwilling to change:** Gradual implementation allows time for prep programs to change course requirements, for districts to purchase new curricula, and for candidates to study for new licensure tests. But at some point, states have to rely on policy and on enforcing accountability measures for those who refuse to comply.

- **When prioritizing limited resources, identify the top needs and start there:** States have found creative ways to stretch their dollars and prioritize where they go. And given limited resources, all investments should come with evaluation of their impact.

- **Evaluate outcomes:** Evaluating outcomes of these policies helps states identify what is working and what is not, informs where to direct future resources, and makes the case for further investment. Most of the states we interviewed are still in the early stages of gathering data, but all shared the early evidence they are tracking (often anecdotal in nature). These states all have plans for how to track outcomes for teachers (e.g., engagement in training, pass rates on licensure tests) and students (e.g., student assessment outcomes on both local and national assessments). In some cases, states are building out data systems to better track teachers from their prep programs into the classroom.

- **Recognize that literacy starts before kindergarten:** While NCTQ's analysis in this report focuses on the elementary years, literacy starts at birth—and more states are recognizing this through their increasing emphasis on early childhood programs.

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APPENDIX

Guidelines for considering alternatives to licensure tests

While states have historically used licensure tests to assess teachers' knowledge before entering the classroom, many states have loosened their requirements over the last few years.

One way that states have lowered requirements is by offering a choice of different licensure tests, which often vary in quality. Another way states have done this is offering other measures in lieu of licensure tests, such as portfolios, transcript reviews, or completion of a teacher prep program.

The ultimate goal of any of these measures should be to ensure that every person who becomes a licensed teacher has a thorough understanding of the science of reading, among other content and skills, and is prepared to help their children become proficient readers. Any measure of teachers' knowledge of reading should be scrutinized for its ability to meet that goal.

When considering alternative measures, states should answer the following questions:

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1 How fully does this measure address the range of knowledge that candidates need to know?

A measure should verify candidates' knowledge across all components of reading (phonemic awareness and phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension), including checking that candidates both understand those components and know how to teach them. For example, a performance assessment offers many benefits but may allow candidates to select a specific topic on which to teach a sample lesson (e.g., exploring a specific phoneme). This narrow focus does not provide insight into candidates' knowledge of the broader range of the science of reading.

Without clear guidelines, a portfolio would also allow candidates a great deal of flexibility in the types of lesson plans, student work, and other evidence they provide, and would not guarantee coverage of all components of reading.

States using portfolio assessments should provide explicit guidance about the content for which a candidate must demonstrate mastery, as well as what artifacts or evidence are considered acceptable. For example, if candidates are asked to provide lesson plans, then states need to set clear parameters about content, grades, method of instruction, etc. Otherwise a candidate may be able to submit a lesson on a topic with which they are deeply familiar and have had a great deal of time to refine, but which will not provide insight into their understanding of how to teach any topic beyond the one addressed in that one lesson. Similarly, many states now require high-quality instructional materials, rather than allowing teachers to create their own lessons. Consequently, a more relevant task would be to instruct candidates to submit an analysis of an existing curriculum and describe its alignment to student standards or to select an existing lesson and describe the reading skills that students would be required to learn before and after the lesson selected.

Similarly, teacher prep programs' coursework varies in its attention to the science of reading,[25] so using a transcript review or program completion may need to be coupled with a thorough program approval process that reviews programs' reading instruction.

2 What is the time and cost burden to candidates?

The most commonly required reading subtest (the Praxis 5002) is part of an elementary content test that costs $180 for the first attempt and then $64 to retake any subtest afterward. Other approaches offer a range of costs. Portfolios require substantial time but may only require the cost of supplies (and perhaps not even that if done virtually). Performance assessments tend to be more costly than content licensure tests; the edTPA costs $300 for the first attempt and then between $100 to $300 for subsequent retakes.

3 What is the time and cost burden for assessment reviewers?

The benefit of a standardized assessment is often that its grading is relatively automated, and expert reviewers may only need to score essays or short answer responses. However, more subjective or open-ended assessments, such as performance assessments, portfolios, or transcript reviews, may require a great deal of time in both training and scoring.

4 How valid and reliable is the assessment?

A measure of teachers' knowledge should meet the basic properties of being valid (measuring the constructs that it intends to measure, in this case knowledge of the science of reading, rather than creativity, classroom management, etc.) and reliable (scoring is consistent over time, between raters, etc.). These expectations have been described in more detail by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)'s criteria for assessments used by teacher prep programs,[26] but the same principles should apply to measures states use as well. Some forms of assessments, such as portfolio reviews, may be difficult to standardize so that they are valid and reliable measures. Others, such as formal performance assessments, may face reliability challenges despite being run by testing companies. For example, the edTPA has been critiqued as having insufficient reliability in its scoring process.[27]

Guidelines for the evaluation and scoring of any qualitative materials, such as essays, videos of instruction, or portfolios, should include specific "look-fors" for each standard and clear guidelines about what happens if those are absent or inadequate in the portfolio.

5 Does this assessment have potential bias or a differential impact for different groups of candidates?

Licensure tests generally undergo a review to identify bias, both by examining the content of individual items and by reviewing outcomes on items to determine whether some questions tend to produce different outcomes among groups of test takers. Other assessments should undergo similar processes to ensure that the content of the assessment is not biased, and that the outcomes are not biased against some groups of test takers.[28]

ENDNOTES

1. RMC Research Corporation. (2023). *Florida teacher preparation programs: 2022 annual program performance reports summary and analysis*. Florida Department of Education. https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7502/urlt/23AnnTeachPrepReport.pdf

2. Find the full set of standards here: https://www.schools.utah.gov/file/ea384350-8d16-433d-b31c-f3fa0d045147

3. Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2021). *CAEP 2018 K-6 elementary teacher preparation standards: Initial licensure programs*. https://caepnet.org/~/media/Files/caep/standards/2018-caep-k-6-elementary-teacher-prepara.pdf?la=en

4. Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation. (2023). *Guide to AAQEP accreditation* (p. 17). https://aaqep.org/files/2023%20Guide%20to%20AAQEP%20Accreditation.pdf

5. Find the full set of Michigan standards for preparation of teachers of lower elementary (PK-3) education here: https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/educator_services/prep/standards/approved_lower_elementary_pk3_education_preparation_standards.pdf?rev=19ca40ad8ac548aaa85bd0dd6595f96e

6. California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. (2022). *Literacy standard and teaching performanceexpectations for preliminary multiple subject and single subject credentials*. https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/ms-ss-literacy-standard-tpes.pdf?sfvrsn=eea226b1_12

7. Colorado Department of Education. (No Date). *Educator preparation standards matrices*. https://www.cde.state.co.us/educatortalent/educatorpreparation_standards_matrices

8. While generally quite strong, one drawback of these competencies are that they include running records among potential informal assessments. NCTQ encourages the use of more reliable progress monitoring tools, such as an oral reading fluency test, even when used for informal assessments.

9. Past research has found that teacher prep faculty have an uneven understanding of SBRI (Joshi, R. M., & Hougen, M. (2012). Peter effect in the preparation of reading teachers. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 16(6), 526-536; Joshi, R. M., Binks, E., Hougen, M., Dahlgren, M. E., Ocker-Dean, E., & Smith, D. L. (2009). Why elementary teachers might be inadequately prepared to teach reading. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 42(5), 392-402; Kurtz, H., Lloyd, S., Harwin, A., Chen, V., & Furuya, Y. (2020). *Early reading instruction: Results of a national survey*. Editorial Projects in Education.), and a more recent survey by EdWeek similarly found that some reading faculty in teacher prep programs hold misconceptions about reading. For example, this survey found that 65% of postsecondary instructors still teach three-cueing, a discredited process, while only 57% of instructors would first tell a student to sound out a word that they don't know. For this reason, several states have offered reading training to faculty as part of their efforts to improve literacy instruction.

10. Ellis, C., Holston, S., Drake, G., Putman, H., Swisher, A., & Peske, H. (2023). *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening elementary reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality. https://www.nctq.org/review/standard/Reading-Foundations

11. Kane, T. J. (2016). *Never judge a book by its cover - use student achievement instead*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/never-judge-a-book-by-its-cover-use-student-achievement-instead/

12. A national survey found that several curricula that teach content contrary to research-based practices, including Fountas & Pinnell and Units of Study, were also among the most popular. [EdWeek Research Center. (2020). *Early reading instruction: Results of a national survey*. https://epe.brightspotcdn.com/1b/80/706eba6246599174b0199ac1f3b5/ed-week-reading-instruction-survey-report-final-1.24.20.pdf]. Evaluations of these programs are available from EdReports at https://www.edreports.org/.

13. EdReports approaches its reviews from the perspective of alignment and fidelity to College and Career Ready standards, with reviews specific to each grade level. On the topic of early reading,

EdReports considers a program's adherence to foundational skills as well as the capacity of materials to build knowledge in young readers, a reasonable proxy for efficiency and effectiveness. EdReports recently added a section looking at whether each curriculum aligns with the science of reading. It does not consider cost or the academic outcomes reported by various studies.

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC)—part of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)—gives effectiveness ratings to interventions, such as reading programs, based on the number of high-quality studies done on those interventions and the findings from those studies. WWC intervention reports document the cost of commercial products, if known, but do not discuss their alignment with scientific research on early reading.

14. Doan, S. & Shapiro, A. (2023). *Do teachers think their instructional materials are appropriately challenging for their students? Findings from the 2023 American Instructional Resources Survey.* Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA134-21.html#:~:text=Three%20in%20ten%20K%E2%80%9312,the%20majority%20of%20their%20students.

15. **EdReports** approaches its reviews from the perspective of alignment and fidelity to College and Career Ready standards, with reviews specific to each grade level. On the topic of early reading, EdReports considers a program's adherence to foundational skills as well as the capacity of materials to build knowledge in young readers, a reasonable proxy for efficiency and effectiveness. EdReports also recently added a new "science of reading snapshot." This review does not consider cost or the academic outcomes reported by various studies.

16. The **What Works Clearinghouse** (WWC)—part of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)—gives effectiveness ratings to interventions, such as reading programs, based on the number of high-quality studies done on those interventions and the findings from those studies. WWC intervention reports document the cost of commercial products, if known, but do not discuss their alignment with scientific research on early reading.

17. For over a decade, NCTQ's *Teacher Prep Review* has consistently found that prep programs are inconsistent and often lacking in their attention to SBRI. For the most recent report, see Ellis, C., Holston, S., Drake, G., Putman, H., Swisher, A., & Peske, H. (2023). *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening elementary reading instruction.* Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality. https://www.nctq.org/review/standard/Reading-Foundations

A 2019 EdWeek survey found that more than a quarter of K-2 and elementary teachers mistakenly thought that sight word recognition was one of the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel, nearly 20% of teachers could not correctly identify how many phonemes are in the word "shape," about 80% of teachers had the misconception that skilled readers rely on context and visual cues to know what a word says (whereas in reality skilled readers are far more likely to sound out words), and 35% of teachers entered the classroom feeling "somewhat" or "completely unprepared." EdWeek Research Center. (2020). *Early reading instruction: Results of a national survey.* https://www.edweek.org/research-center/research-center-reports/early-reading-instruction-results-of-a-national-survey

18. Torgesen describes this finding in Torgesen, 2004. Specifically, the analyses he describes were based on the proportion of students reaching the "low average level" of word reading skills by second grade. While word reading is not the same as reading comprehension, it is a necessary precursor to comprehension, and measures of word reading fluency (and gains in that fluency) are predictive of broader student reading performance (Smith, J. L. M., Cummings, K. D., Nese, J. F., Alonzo, J., Fien, H., & Baker, S. K. (2014). The relation of word reading fluency initial level and gains with reading outcomes. *School Psychology Review*, 43(1), 30–40.). For more on studies finding that 90% or more of students can read with proper instruction, see: Torgesen, J. K. (2004). Preventing early reading failure. *American Educator*, 28(3), 6–9; Torgesen, J. K. (1998). Catch them before they fall: Identification and assessment to prevent reading failure in young children. American Educator, 22(1–2), 32–39. www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/torgesen.pdf; Lyon, G. R. (1998). *Overview of reading and literacy initiatives* (Report to Committee on Labor and Human Resources, U.S. Senate). Bethesda, MD: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institute of Health. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED444128.

pdf; Vellutino, F. R., Fletcher, J. M., Snowling, M. J., & Scanlon, D. M. (2004). Specific reading disability (dyslexia): What have we learned in the past four decades? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 45(1), 2–40; Al Otaiba, S., & Fuchs, D. (2006). Who are the young children for whom best practices in reading are ineffective? An experimental and longitudinal study. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 39(5), 414–431.

19. For one cost estimate of reading interventions, see Shrestha, P., Tracy, T., Mazal, M., Blakeney, A., Kennedy, N., & May, H. (2022). *A cost analysis of Reading Recovery and alternate interventions under the i3 Scale-Up*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Education Research Association (AERA). https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1R4eZlidReG-1zFA4LKL9nX9sPbkM-t0q

20. While the District of Columbia is not a state, for the purposes of this analysis, we refer to D.C. or the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) as the "state," to distinguish it from DC's traditional public school district, District of Columbia Public Schools, or DCPS. OSSE oversees both the traditional public school district, DCPS, as well as a large number of charter school local education agencies, which teach about half of public school children across the city.

21. National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *State average scores*. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading/states/scores/?grade=4

22. Olson, L. (2023). *The reading revolution: How states are scaling literacy reform*. FutureEd. https://www.future-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/The-Reading-Revolution.pdf

23. Olson, L. (2023).

24. Folsom, J. S., Smith, K. G., Burk, K., & Oakley, N. (2017). *Educator outcomes associated with implementation of Mississippi's K–3 early literacy professional development initiative*. REL 2017–270. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Southeast. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/southeast/pdf/REL_2017270.pdf

25. Ellis, C., Holston, S., Drake, G., Putman, H., Swisher, A., & Peske, H. (2023). *Teacher Prep Review: Strengthening elementary reading instruction*. Washington, DC: National Council on Teacher Quality. https://www.nctq.org/review/standard/Reading-Foundations

26. Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2017). *CAEP evaluation framework for EPP-created assessments*. Washington, DC: CAEP. Retrieved from http://caepnet.org/~/media/Files/caep/accreditation-resources/caep-assessment-tool.pdf?la=en; Regional Educational Laboratory at Marzano Research. (2019). *Examining the reliability and validity of teacher candidate evaluation instruments* [PowerPoint slides]. REL Central. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/central/pdf/slides-reliability-and-validity.pdf

27. SCALE and Pearson refuted the concerns in a response, Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning and Equity. (2019). *Affirming the validity and reliability of edTPA: A response authored by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE) and Pearson*. Retrieved from https://cga.ct.gov/ed/tfs/10000001_Archived%20-%20edTPA/20200115/Chair%20Alfano%20Report/Affirming-Validity-and-Reliability-of-edTPA.pdf. In a follow-up article, Gitomer, Martínez, and Battey provided some additional context for their concerns, reiterated the limitations of the edTPA, and raised some new concerns about the Technical Advisory Committee. Gitomer, D. H., Martínez, J. F., & Battey, D. (2021). Who's assessing the assessment? The cautionary tale of the edTPA. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 102(6), 38–43. Retrieved from https://kappanonline.org/whos-assessing-assessment-cautionary-tale-edtpa-gitomer-martinez-battey/. An annual edTPA Administrative Report set to be released in summer 2021 intends to support the test's validity and reliability.

28. For example, a review of the edTPA found that Hispanic test takers systemically scored lower than white test takers. Goldhaber, D., Cowan, J., & Theobald, R. (2017). Evaluating prospective teachers: Testing the predictive validity of the edTPA. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(4), 377–393. Another study found that differences in scores between Black and white test takers were growing over time. Petchauer, E., Bowe, A. G., & Wilson, J. (2018). Winter is coming: Forecasting the impact of edTPA on Black teachers and teachers of color. *The Urban Review*, 50(2), 323–343. However, disparities in scores do not necessarily indicate bias in the instrument.