

Education Programs

Literacy and the READ Act

I. Purpose

This policy aligns with Minnesota law established in the READ Act and the Edina Strategic Plan to advance academic excellence, growth, and readiness.

II. General Statement of Policy

The school district recognizes the centrality of reading in a student's educational experience.

III. Definitions

- A. "Evidence-based" means the instruction or item described is based on reliable, trustworthy, and valid evidence and has demonstrated a record of success in increasing students' reading competency in the areas of phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Evidence-based literacy instruction is explicit, systematic, and includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students.
- B. "Fluency" means the ability of students to read text accurately, automatically, and with proper expression.
- C. "Foundational reading skills" includes phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, and fluency. Foundational reading skills appropriate to each grade level must be mastered in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3. Struggling readers in grades 4 and above who do not demonstrate mastery of grade-level foundational reading skills will continue to receive explicit, systematic instruction to reach mastery.
- D. "Literacy specialist" means a person licensed by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board as a teacher of reading, a special education teacher, or a kindergarten through grade 6 teacher, who has completed professional development approved by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) in structured literacy.

- E. "Literacy lead" means a literacy specialist with expertise in working with educators. A district literacy lead will support the district's implementation of the READ Act; provide support to school-based coaches; support the implementation of structured literacy, interventions, curriculum delivery, and teacher training; assist with the development of personal learning plans; and train paraprofessionals and other support staff to support classroom literacy instruction.
- F. "Literacy coach" means an instructional leader with specialized knowledge in the science of reading, evidence-based practices, English Language Arts state standards, as well as the knowledge of how to work with educators as adult learners. A district literacy coach will provide job-embedded professional development.
- F. "Multi-tiered system of support" or "MTSS" means a systemic, continuous improvement framework for ensuring positive social, emotional, behavioral, developmental, and academic outcomes for every student. The MTSS framework provides access to layered tiers of culturally and linguistically responsive, evidence-based practices and relies on the understanding and belief that every student can learn and thrive. Through a MTSS at the core (Tier 1), supplemental (Tier 2), and intensive (Tier 3) levels, educators provide high quality, evidence-based instruction and intervention that is matched to a student's needs; progress is monitored to inform instruction and set goals and data is used for educational decision making.
- G. "Oral language," also called "spoken language," includes speaking and listening, and consists of five components: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.
- H. "Phonemic awareness" means the ability to notice, think about, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken syllables and words.
- I. "Phonics instruction" means the explicit, systematic, and direct instruction of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent and the application of this knowledge in reading and spelling.
- J. "Progress monitoring" means using data collected to inform whether interventions are working. Progress monitoring quantifies rates of improvement and informs instructional practice and the development of individualized programs using state-approved screening that is reliable and valid for the intended purpose.
- K. "Reading comprehension" means a function of word recognition skills and language comprehension skills. It is an active process that requires intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through

interactions between the text and reader. Comprehension skills are taught explicitly by demonstrating, explaining, modeling, and implementing specific cognitive strategies to help beginning readers derive meaning through intentional, problem-solving thinking processes.

- L. "Structured literacy" means an approach to reading instruction in which teachers carefully structure important literacy skills, concepts, and the sequence of instruction to facilitate children's literacy learning and progress. Structured literacy is characterized by the provision of systematic, explicit, sequential, and diagnostic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and oral language development, and reading comprehension.
- M. "Three-cueing system," also known as "meaning structure visual (MSV)," means a method that teaches students to use meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues when attempting to read an unknown word. Evidence-based instruction does not include the three-cueing system, as defined in subdivision 16.
- N. "Vocabulary development" means the process of acquiring new words. A robust vocabulary improves all areas of communication, and is a strong predictor for reading success.

IV. Reading Screener; Parent/Guardian Notification and Involvement

- A. The school district will administer an MDE approved evidence-based reading screener to students in kindergarten through grade 3 within the first six weeks of the school year, and again within the last six weeks of the school year.
- B. The district will identify any screener it uses in the district's annual literacy plan and submit screening data to MDE annually by June 15.
- C. The district, at least biannually after administering each screener, will give the parent/guardian of each student who is not reading at or above grade level timely information about:
 1. the student's reading proficiency as measured by a screener approved by MDE;
 2. reading-related services currently being provided to the student and the student's progress after the second screener; and
 3. strategies for parents/guardians to use at home in helping their student succeed in becoming grade-level proficient in reading in English and in their native language.

- D. The district may not use this section to deny a student's right to a special education evaluation.

V. Identification and Reporting

- A. Students enrolled in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3, including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services, will be universally screened for mastery of foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, oral language, and for characteristics of dyslexia as measured by approved screening tools. The screening for characteristics of dyslexia may be integrated with universal screening for mastery of foundational skills and oral language.
- B. The district will submit data on student performance in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3 on foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, and oral language to MDE in the local literacy plan submission on an annual basis due on June 15.
- C. Students in grades 4 and above, including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services, who do not demonstrate mastery of foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, and oral language, will be screened using a screening tool approved by MDE for characteristics of dyslexia and will continue to receive evidence-based instruction, interventions, and progress monitoring until the students achieve grade-level proficiency. A parent/guardian, in consultation with a teacher, may opt a student out of the literacy screener if the parent/guardian and teacher decide that continuing to screen would not be beneficial to the student. In such limited cases, the student will continue to receive progress monitoring and literacy interventions.
- D. Reading screeners in English, and in the predominant languages of district students where practicable, will identify and evaluate students' areas of academic need related to literacy. The district also will monitor progress and provide reading instruction appropriate to the specific needs of multilingual learners. The district will use an approved, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive screener and annually report summary screener results to the MDE Commissioner by June 15 in the form and manner determined by the MDE Commissioner.
- E. The district will include in its literacy plan a summary of the district's efforts to screen, identify, and provide interventions to students under paragraph A who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia as measured by a screening tool approved by MDE. The report will include:

1. a summary of the district's efforts to screen for dyslexia;
2. the number of students universally screened for that reporting year;
3. the number of students demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia for that year; and
4. an explanation of how students identified under this subdivision are provided with alternate instruction and interventions.

VI. Intervention

- A. For each student identified under the screening identification process, the school district will create a personal learning plan that provides reading intervention to accelerate student growth and reach the goal of reading at or above grade level by the end of the current grade and school year.
- B. The district will implement progress monitoring for a student not reading at grade level.
- C. The district will use evidence-based curriculum and intervention materials at each grade level that are designed to ensure student mastery of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. All literacy curriculum, or literacy intervention or supplementary materials, purchased by the district after July 1, 2023, will be evidence-based.
- D. If a student does not read at or above grade level by the end of the current school year, the district will continue to provide reading intervention until the student reads at grade level. District intervention methods will encourage family engagement and, where possible, collaboration with appropriate school and community programs that specialize in evidence-based instructional practices and measure mastery of foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, and oral language.
- E. Intervention programs will be taught by an intervention teacher or special education teacher who has successfully completed training in evidence-based reading instruction approved by MDE. Intervention may include but is not limited to requiring student attendance in summer school, intensified reading instruction that may require that the student be removed from the regular classroom for part of the school day, extended-day programs, or programs that strengthen students' cultural connections.

F. The district will determine the format of the personal learning plan in collaboration with the student's educators and other appropriate professionals in consultation with the student's parent/guardian. The personal learning plan will include evidenced based targeted instruction and ongoing progress monitoring. The personal learning plan may include grade retention, if it is in the student's best interest; a student may not be retained solely due to delays in literacy or not demonstrating grade-level proficiency. The district will maintain and regularly update and modify the personal learning plan until the student reads at grade level. This paragraph does not apply to a student under an individualized education program.

VII. Local and Comprehensive Literacy Plan

- A. The school district will adopt a local literacy plan to have every child reading at or above grade level every year beginning in kindergarten and to support multilingual learners and students receiving special education services in achieving their individualized reading goals. The district will update and submit the plan to the Commissioner of MDE by June 15 each year. The plan will be consistent with the READ Act, and include the following:
 1. a process to assess students' foundational reading skills, oral language, and level of reading proficiency and the screeners used, by school site and grade level;
 2. a process to notify and involve parents/guardians;
 3. a description of how schools in the district will determine the personal learning plan that provides targeted evidenced-based reading instruction and includes an intervention strategy for a student and the process for intensifying or modifying the reading strategy in order to obtain measurable reading progress;
 4. evidence-based intervention methods for students who are not reading at or above grade level and progress monitoring to provide information on the effectiveness of the intervention;
 5. identification of staff development needs, including a plan to meet those needs;
 6. the curricula used by school site and grade level;
 7. a statement of whether the school district has adopted a MTSS framework;

8. student data using the measures of foundational literacy skills and mastery identified by MDE for the following students:
 - a. students in kindergarten through grade 3;
 - b. students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia; and
 - c. students in grades 4 to 12 who are identified as not reading at grade level; and
9. the number of teachers and other staff that have completed training approved by MDE.

B. The district will post its literacy plan on the official district website and submit it to the Commissioner of MDE as required.

VIII. Staff Training

A. The school district will provide access to state-required training to:

1. intervention teachers working with students in kindergarten through grade 12;
2. all classroom teachers of students in kindergarten through grade 3 and children in prekindergarten programs;
3. special education teachers;
4. curriculum directors;
5. instructional support staff who provide reading instruction; and
6. employees who select literacy instructional materials for a district.

B. The district will provide training from a menu of approved evidence-based training programs to all reading intervention teachers, literacy specialists, and other teachers and staff in accordance with the READ Act and to other teachers in the district, prioritizing teachers who work with students with disabilities, English learners, and students who qualify for the graduation incentives program under state law.

C. The district will employ or contract with a literacy lead or be actively supporting a designated literacy specialist through the process of becoming a literacy lead in accordance with the Read Act. The district

may satisfy the requirements of this subdivision by contracting with another school board or cooperative unit under state law for the services of a literacy lead. The district literacy lead will collaborate with district administrators and staff to support the district's implementation of requirements under the READ Act.

IX. Staff Development

- A. The school district will provide training programs on evidence-based reading instruction to teachers and instructional staff in accordance with the READ Act. The training will include teaching in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy.
- B. The district will use the data under Article V. above to identify the staff development needs so that:
 - 1. elementary teachers are able to implement explicit, systematic, evidence-based instruction in the five reading areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension with an emphasis on mastery of foundational reading skills and other literacy-related areas including writing until the student achieves grade-level reading and writing proficiency;
 - 2. elementary teachers have sufficient training to provide students with evidence-based reading and oral language instruction that meets students' developmental, linguistic, and literacy needs using the intervention methods or programs selected by the district for the identified students;
 - 3. licensed teachers employed by the district have regular opportunities to improve reading and writing instruction;
 - 4. licensed teachers recognize students' diverse needs in cross-cultural settings and are able to serve the oral language and linguistic needs of students who are multilingual learners by maximizing strengths in their native languages in order to cultivate students' English language development, including oral academic language development, and build academic literacy; and
 - 5. licensed teachers are well trained in culturally responsive pedagogy that enables students to master content, develop skills to access content, and build relationships.
- C. The district will provide training for staff in early childhood programs with explicit, systematic instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness;

oral language, including listening comprehension; vocabulary; and letter-sound correspondence.

X. Literacy Incentive Aid Uses

The school district will use its literacy incentive aid to support implementation of evidence-based reading instruction. The following are eligible uses of literacy incentive aid:

1. training for kindergarten through grade 3 teachers, early childhood educators, special education teachers, reading intervention teachers working with students in kindergarten through grade 12, curriculum directors, and instructional support staff that provide reading instruction, on using evidence-based screening and progress monitoring tools;
2. evidence-based training using a training program approved by MDE focused on foundational reading skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, oral language;
3. employing or contracting with a literacy lead;
4. materials, training, and ongoing coaching to ensure reading interventions are evidence-based; and costs of substitute teachers to allow teachers to complete required training during the teachers' contract day.

Legal References:

Minn. Stat. § 120B.1118 (READ Act Definitions)
Minn. Stat. § 120B.12 (READ Act Goal and Interventions)
Minn. Stat. § 120B.123 (READ Act Implementation)
Minn. Stat. § 123A.24 (Withdrawing from a Cooperative Unit; Appealing Denial of Membership)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.68 (Graduation Incentives Program)
Minn. Stat. § 124D.98 (Literacy Incentive Aid)
Minn. Stat. § 125A.56 (Alternate Instruction Required before Assessment Referral)