

Title: TBD

I. Purpose

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

II. Policy Standards

A. System of Support for Educators

1. The Department shall provide a system of support for all general education, special education and English language development (ESOL) teachers of Kindergarten through 3rd grade to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to teach all students to read. The system of support shall include:
2. A system of assessments for school district use to include universal screening, dyslexia screening and progress monitoring of student progress toward grade level reading. The system of assessments shall:
 - a. Include a vetted and approved list of one of more reliable and valid universal screeners to be administered three (3) times per year (fall, winter, and spring) with progress monitoring capabilities and diagnostic tools to support teachers with targeting instruction based on student needs;
 - b. Measure, at a minimum, phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
 - c. Identify students who have a reading deficiency; and
 - d. Include a vetted and approved dyslexia screener to be administered to all students. The dyslexia screener should be administered annually during the spring of kindergarten and at the beginning of 1st and 2nd grades to identify students who may have characteristics of

dyslexia. The dyslexia screener must assess, as developmentally appropriate, all of the following:

- i. Phonological and phonemic awareness;
 - ii. Sound symbol recognition;
 - iii. Alphabet knowledge;
 - iv. Decoding skills;
 - v. Rapid naming skills including letter naming and letter sound fluency;
 - vi. Encoding skills; and
 - vii. Oral reading accuracy and fluency.
- e. In determining which assessments to approve for use by LEAs, the Department shall also consider, at a minimum, the following factors:
 - f. The time required to conduct the assessment, with the intention of minimizing the impact on instructional time;
 - g. The professional development needed to administer, analyze the data and develop instructional pathways; and
 - h. The timeliness in reporting assessment results to teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians.
3. Professional learning required for administrators, Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade teachers, including special education, speech, and English language teachers on the following:
 - a. Comprehensive training on the science of reading, including explicit and systematic instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and building content knowledge, to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skill to teach all students to read, including students with dyslexia.
 - b. The system of assessments selected by school LEAs and approved by the Department to ensure teachers have the knowledge and skills to administer the assessment and analyze the collected data in a structured problem-

solving model to inform instruction based on system and student needs.

4. Job-embedded coaching support provided by educators trained in the science of reading for K-3 reading teachers that shall include the following:
 - a. School-based teacher training on evidence-based reading instruction and data-based decision-making to support the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction;
 - b. Model lessons;
 - c. Co-teaching; and
 - d. Timely feedback for improving instruction.
5. Educator preparation programs that prepare candidates seeking licensure for elementary education and special education with training and instruction to:
 - a. Effectively teach phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
 - b. Implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials which do not include the three-cueing systems model (“guessing strategies”); or leveled readers (“matching students to leveled-text”);
 - c. Provide effective instruction and interventions for students with reading deficiencies, including students with characteristics of dyslexia;
 - d. Understand and use student data to make instructional decisions including decisions about improving the effectiveness of classroom reading instruction in Tier 1, intervention design in Tier 2 and 3; and
 - e. Understand the negative impacts of the three-cueing systems model, how to identify it in curriculum, and why it is a flawed model of teaching children to read.
 - f. Pass a state board approved assessment for initial licensure which assesses the candidates’ knowledge of the science of reading.

B. Reading Instruction and Intervention

1. It is the ultimate goal of the General Assembly that every student read at or above grade level by the end of grade 3.
2. The state shall provide a vetted and approved list for LEAs to adopt high- quality instructional material grounded in scientifically based reading research designed to reduce the risk of reading failure which is aligned to state standards, and which do not include the three-cueing systems model.
3. Districts shall offer Tier 1 instruction and reading intervention programs that do not include the three-cueing systems model of instruction to each K-3 student who exhibits a reading deficiency through a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).
4. The reading intervention program shall be provided in addition to core reading instruction that is provided to all students in the general education classroom.
5. The reading intervention program shall:
 - a. Be provided to all K-3 students identified with a reading deficiency or need for supplemental instruction in reading. This includes students with the risk factors of dyslexia as determined by the Department approved assessment administered within the first thirty (30) days of school;
 - b. Provide explicit, systematic, sequential, and cumulative instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics including decoding and encoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, as applicable;
 - c. Screen students K-3 three times per year (Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year) and monitor the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year and adjust instruction according to student needs; and
 - d. Be implemented during regular school hours.

C. Student Reading Improvement Plan (SRIP)–

1. Any student in Kindergarten or grades 1-3 who exhibits a deficiency in reading at any time, based upon the Department's vetted and approved assessment system, and any 4th-grade student promoted for good cause shall receive a Student Reading Improvement Plan no later than 30 days after the identification of the reading deficiency. The Student

Reading Improvement Plan shall be created by the teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel and the parent/guardian(s) and shall describe the research-based reading intervention services the student will receive to remedy the reading deficit. Each student must receive intensive reading intervention until the student no longer has a deficiency in reading as determined by a state board approved reading assessment.

2. **Parent/Guardian Notification** – The parents/guardians of any K-3 student who exhibits a deficiency in reading at any time during the school year must be notified in writing no later than 15 days (about 2 weeks) after the identification of the reading deficiency, and the written notification must include the following:
 - a. That their child has been identified as having a deficiency in reading, and an individual reading improvement plan will be developed by the teacher, principal, other pertinent school personnel, and the parent/guardian(s).
 - b. A description of the current services provided to the child.
 - c. A description of the proposed research-based reading interventions and supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to the child that are designed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading deficiency.
 - d. Notification that the parent or guardian will be informed in writing of their child's progress towards grade level reading as progress monitoring occurs.
 - e. A description of the specific skill deficits and strategies for parents/guardians to use at home to help their child succeed in reading.
 - f. That, if the child's reading deficiency is not corrected by the end of grade 3, the child will not be promoted to grade 4 unless a good cause exemption is met.
 - g. That while the statewide English Language Arts assessment is the initial determinate for promotion, it is not the sole determiner at the end of grade 3. Additionally, students are provided with an alternative reading assessment option to demonstrate sufficient

reading skills for promotion to grade 4.

3. **Successful Progression of Incoming Grade 3 Students Identified with a Reading Deficiency** – (a) Any incoming 3rd-grade student identified with a reading deficiency shall be provided more intensified interventions to remedy his or her specific deficiency and accelerate student progress.
 - a. A review of the SRIP plans shall be conducted for all incoming 3rd-grade students identified with a reading deficiency. The review shall address additional supports and services the student will receive. The supports and services shall include reading instruction and intervention services and supports to correct any identified area of reading deficiency.
 - b. Daily targeted small group reading intervention based on student need, including explicit, systematic, sequential and cumulative instruction with more detailed explanations, more extensive opportunities for guided practice, and more opportunities for error correction and feedback.
 - c. Specialized supplemental reading intervention before or after school.

4. **Demonstrated Readiness for Promotion – See MD Code, Education, § 7-202. Minimum levels of reading ability** Grade 3 students must demonstrate sufficient reading skills according to the State Board of Education’s required performance level for promotion to grade 4 Students shall be provided the following options to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to grade 4:
 - a. Scoring above the required performance level on the grade 3 statewide English language arts assessment,
 - b. Earning an acceptable score on an alternative standardized reading assessment as determined and approved by the State Board of Education; and
 - c. Screener results shall not be used for promotion purposes. **Good Cause Exemptions** – The district school board may only exempt students from mandatory retention if they qualify for a good cause exemption. A student who is promoted to grade 4 with a good cause exemption shall continue to receive intensive reading

intervention that includes specific reading strategies prescribed in the student's individual reading improvement plan until the deficiency is remedied. The LEA shall assist schools and teachers with the implementation of reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among students with reading deficiencies. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

- i. Students with Disabilities whose Individual Education Plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law.
- ii. Students who have received less than 2 years of instruction in an English Language Development program.
- iii. Students with Disabilities who participate in the statewide English Language Arts assessment and who have an Individual Education Plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than 2 years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading or was previously retained for 1 year in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.
- iv. Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years but still show a deficiency in reading and were retained in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade for 2 years. No student shall be retained twice in 3rd grade.
- v. If the student cannot demonstrate sufficient reading skills on one of the two options and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, they must be retained.

5. **Requests for Good Cause Exemptions** – Requests to exempt students from the mandatory retention requirement using one of the good cause exemptions shall be made consistent with the following:

- a. Documentation shall be submitted from the student's teacher to the school principal indicating that the student's promotion is appropriate. Such documentation shall consist only of the good cause

exemption being requested, and the existing Student Reading Improvement Plan or Individual Education Plan (IEP), as applicable.

- b. The school principal shall review and discuss the recommendation with the teacher and determine if the student meets one of the good cause exemptions. If the school principal determines that the student has met one of the good cause exemptions based on the documentation provided, the school principal shall make such recommendation in writing to the district school superintendent. The district school superintendent shall accept or reject the school principal's recommendation in writing.

D. Parent/Guardian Notification of Retention – The LEA shall assist schools with providing written notification to the parent/guardian of any student who is retained that his or her child has not met the reading level required for promotion, the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption, and that his/her child will be retained in grade 3. The notification must include a description of the proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remedy the identified area(s) of reading deficiency in the retained year.

E. Successful Progression of Retained Readers – Beginning with the (insert school year 2 years from enactment of the policy) school year, students retained under the provisions of paragraph (G) must be provided intensive reading intervention to remedy the student's specific reading deficiency. Each LEA shall conduct a review of Student Reading Improvement Plans for all students retained in grade 3. The review shall address additional supports and services, as described in this subsection, needed to remedy the identified area(s) of reading deficiency. The district shall provide the following for retained students:

1. Reading intervention services and supports to correct the identified area(s) of reading deficiency, including, but not limited to:
 - a. More dedicated time than the previous school year in scientifically research-based reading instruction and intervention;
 - b. Use of reading strategies and/or programs that are scientifically research-based and have proven results in accelerating student reading achievement within the

- same school year;
 - c. Daily targeted small group reading intervention based on student needs, including explicit and systematic instruction with more detailed explanations, more extensive opportunities for guided practice, and more opportunities for error correction and feedback; and
 - d. Frequently monitoring the reading progress of each student's reading skills throughout the school year and adjust instruction according to student needs.
2. Before and/or after school supplemental research-based reading intervention delivered by a teacher or tutor with specialized training grounded in the science of reading. A "Read at Home" plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in parent training workshops and/or regular parent-guided home reading activities which are aligned to scientifically based reading research.

III. Responsibilities

- A. **District Annual Reporting** – Each district school board must annually report in writing to the Department of Education by October 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:
- 1. The district school board's policies and procedures on student retention and promotion.
 - 2. By grade, the number and percentage of all students in grades K-3 performing below grade level on local or statewide assessments.
 - 3. By grade, the number and percentage of all students retained in grades K-12.
 - 4. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on the test-based student portfolio.
 - 5. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who demonstrated sufficient reading skills for promotion on the alternative reading assessment.
 - 6. The total number and percentage of students in grade 3 who

were promoted for good cause, by each category of good cause as specified in previous sections.

B. Maryland State Department of Education Responsibilities - The Department of Education shall establish a uniform format for local education agencies to report the information required. The format shall be developed with input from local education agency boards and shall be provided to each LEA no later than 90 days prior to the annual due date.

1. The department shall annually compile the information required along with state-level summary information and report such information to the State Board of Education, the public, Governor, and the General Assembly by October 1 of each year.
2. The department shall provide technical assistance to aid LEA boards in implementing the (*insert name of Act or policy*).
3. The department shall vet and recommend to the state board for approval an initial teacher licensure assessment which assesses candidates' knowledge of the science of reading.

C. State Board Authority and Responsibilities - The State Board of Education shall have authority to enforce this chapter.

IV. Definitions

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

B. "Dyslexia screening" assesses critical skills that are predictors of future reading success and helps to identify students who may have characteristics of dyslexia.

C. "Educator Preparation Program" or "EPP" means any program based in an institution of higher education (IHE) that prepares individuals

for licensure as elementary teachers, school leaders, or other school personnel.

- D. “Good-Cause” Exemptions- Students may be exempt from mandatory retention in 3rd grade for good cause but shall continue to be eligible to participate in reading camps, receive instructional supports and services and reading interventions appropriate for their age and reading level.
- E. “Instructional Equity ”means cultivating the gifts and talents of every student to reduce the predictability of which students succeed and which fail, while interrupting practices that negatively impact all student (adapted from <https://keystoliteracy.com/blog/literacy-and-equity-in-education/>)
- F. “Intensive Intervention” or “intensive support” refers to providing Tier III support for struggling students who are identified as needing the increased intensity and explicitness that constitute Tier III instruction. Tier III should not be provided during core instruction time.
- G. “Literacy” Literacy is not just reading. The chief components of literacy are reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening.
- H. “Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS)” is a framework for supporting and increasing academic, behavioral, and social emotional outcomes for ALL students. MTSS provides opportunities for students that are experiencing reading challenges. MTSS supports shall address a student’s identified needs with varying intensity and durations. There are three tiers of within the MTSS framework:
 - 1. Tier I – All students receive Tier I instruction. It should occur within the core instructional block; delivered in whole group or small group and include direct and explicit instruction.
 - 2. Tier II - Tier 2 support is in addition to Core instruction and should be delivered in small groups supports should incorporate research-based approaches consistent with Tier 1 instruction.
 - 3. Tier III – Tier 3 provides interventions for students who are not showing growth on Tier 2 progress monitoring assessments; supports must be diagnostic-based, direct and explicit instruction should be provided.

- I. “Reading intervention” (also referred to as “supplemental instruction in reading” or “reading supports”) are evidence-based strategies that are frequently used to address reading challenges and includes, but are not limited to, individual/small group instruction, multisensory approaches, tutoring, mentoring, or the use of technology paired with face to face supports that target specific reading skills and abilities.
- J. “Science of reading” refers to the large body of evidence that informs how proficient reading and writing develop; why some have deficiency; and how we can most effectively assess, teach, and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention and intervention for reading deficiencies.
- K. “Structured literacy” is an evidence-based approach to teaching oral and written language aligned to the science of reading. It is based on the science of how children learn to read and is characterized by explicit, systematic, sequential, cumulative, and diagnostic instruction in phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics.
- L. “System of assessments” means a comprehensive assessment system which provides screening, diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments for use in an LEA. The system of assessments should be aligned to assess key indicators of future reading success including critical prerequisite skills.
- M. “Three-cueing system” is any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, which may also be known as “MSV.” This system encourages children to guess and takes the students focus away from the word itself—lowering the chances that they will use the understanding of letter sounds to read through the word part-by-part and be able to recognize it more quickly the next time they see it.
- N. “Universal screener” means an assessment that is administered three times per year (beginning, middle, and end) to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor reading outcomes. This assessment is typically brief and conducted with all students at a particular grade level to assess phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension as developmentally appropriate.

V. References

- A. Laws & Regulations
 - 1. Literacy law
 - 2. Literacy standards

- B. Board Policies and Resolutions
 - 1. SOR Resolution

- C. Superintendent's Guidance

VI. History

- A. Dates

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