



2023 Legislative Summary - Historic READ Act passes!

Something great just happened for literacy this legislative session! For the past 5 years, **The Reading Center has been an active partner in a legislative literacy coalition that includes Decoding Dyslexia Minnesota and the International Dyslexia Association - Upper Midwest Branch.** We all believe in working towards legislation to increase teacher knowledge through training, so more students receive evidence-based reading instruction in their classrooms. With support from adjacent allies including **National Parents Union, EdAllies, Great Minnesota Schools and others**, the state legislature really delivered!

Representative Heather Edelson (Edina) and Senator Erin Maye Quade (Apple Valley) championed the READ Act that was incorporated into the K-12 finance bill to fund our public schools. \$90 million of our state's surplus was earmarked for READ Act implementation. **Not only are these legislative changes good for dyslexic students, they are good for every student in Minnesota learning how to read.**

The K-12 Omnibus Education Finance Bill was adopted by the conference committee on May 15, 2023 and will be signed into law by Governor Walz. The bill does the following:

- New state literacy goal: Have every child reading at grade level, every year from K-12
- Mandated teacher training in Science of Reading - courses approved by MN Department of Education (MDE)
- Mandated screening and progress monitoring - tool approved by MDE
- Districts must use evidence-based curriculum
- Money available to districts to purchase evidence-based curriculum from approved MDE list

Teacher Training in the Science of Reading

It is critical that teachers are knowledgeable in the Science of Reading, to guide ALL students in successfully learning to read.

Beginning July 1, 2024 a district must provide training in the science of reading via a program approved by the Minnesota Department of Education and Center for Applied Research at the University of Minnesota (CAREI). This partnership ensures that educators are getting the best training possible as they transition from balanced literacy to structured literacy approaches in their classrooms.

The educators who must be trained includes: intervention teachers, K-3 elementary teachers, pre-K teachers, curriculum directors, special education teachers, instructional

support staff who provide reading instruction, and employees who select curriculum materials for a district.

Evidence-based instruction and curriculum required!

State statute now defines and requires curriculum and reading instruction be “evidence-based.” The statute will require instruction and curriculum to be aligned with the principles of the science of reading. The instruction must be “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”.

Instruction must be “explicit, systematic, and includes phonological and PA, phonics and decoding, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students”.

The three-cueing system discussed in depth in Emily Hanford’s “Sold a Story” is prohibited!

Evidence-Based Curriculum Grant Program

The READ Act allocates \$35 million for districts to purchase new curriculum that is evidence-based. To receive reimbursement for the cost of curriculum, a district must choose from the array of choices that MDE/CAREI will list. This legislation does not mandate any particular curriculum unless the grant dollars are used.

Improvements to Screening and Progress Monitoring

In the fall and spring, districts must screen every student in grade K-3 (including multilingual learners and students receiving special education services) for mastery of foundational reading skills AND for characteristics of dyslexia using a screening tool recommended by MDE. They must report these results to parents.

Students not mastering foundational reading skills must have skill development progress monitored and continue to receive evidence-based instruction until grade level proficiency is reached.

Grade level reading is the goal for every student, as it should be! 50% is not acceptable.

New Local Literacy Plans

To help monitor the success of districts in implementing the intention of the READ Act, districts must provide the following annually to the public and MDE:

- Details on plans to assess foundational reading skills of students and the screeners used,
- A district’s parent notification process,
- Evidence-based intervention methods used,
- Curriculum used by site and grade level,

- Student data on: mastery of foundational literacy skills for students in K-3, students identified with characteristics of dyslexia, and students in grade 4+ not reading at grade level,
- Number of teachers trained in the science of reading

Districts must hire or train a Literacy Lead

To help facilitate the change to evidence-based instruction, districts must employ or contract with a literacy lead. This position can be filled by an existing person in the district - but that person will likely need to receive more training in the science of reading so they are able to coach and mentor staff on this journey. MDE/CAREI will develop the job description and training program for this position.

These changes are monumental and represent a true shift in how our state approaches reading instruction. It will take some time for educators to be trained in evidence-based practices, and truly make the shift away from balanced literacy.

The Reading Center's long-time motto, "Literacy for All," is becoming a motto across the state for this literacy movement. As an organization, we have been using the evidence-based approach to reading instruction for 72 years. We know how impactful this approach is for dyslexic students. Now, more students will receive this type of instruction in their own classrooms. Congratulations Minnesota!