

Early Literacy Model Policy

Missouri has adopted a number of evidence-based reading strategies that could be modified to improve implementation. However, there also is an absence of other policies, such as a mandatory, academic-based third-grade retention program. This model policy is an example of how these deficiencies can be corrected.

*In the model policy that follows, **bold type** is used to indicate text added to a current statute, and [struck through text enclosed within brackets] indicates material that would be removed.*

The Early Literacy Expedition Act

It is the intent of the Legislature that each student's progression from the third to the fourth grade be determined, in part, by competency in reading; that district school board policies facilitate reading instruction with evidence-based teaching strategies and intervention services to address student reading needs; and that each student and his or her parent or guardian be provided objective information about that student's reading progress.

Definitions:

1. **"Three-Cueing Systems Model" means any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, which may also be known as "MSV".**
2. **"Missouri Universal Reading Screener" is a uniform, universal, literacy-based reading assessment given to first- to third-grade students in every public school district and charter school. The screener shall score students in one of the following categories: "below basic," "basic," "grade-level," "proficient," and "advanced." All associated proficiency benchmarks shall be determined by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.**
3. **A student with a "Reading Deficiency" is any student who scores "basic" on the Missouri Universal Reading Screener; a student with a "Substantial Reading Deficiency" is any student who scores "below basic."**

161.097. Evaluation of teacher education programs — advisory board established — literacy and reading instruction — rulemaking authority. —

1. The state board of education shall establish standards and procedures by which it will evaluate all teacher training institutions in this state for the approval of teacher education programs. The state board of education shall not require teacher training institutions to meet national or regional accreditation as a part of its standards and procedures in making those

evaluations, but it may accept such accreditations in lieu of such approval if standards and procedures set thereby are at least as stringent as those set by the board. The state board of education's standards and procedures for evaluating teacher training institutions shall equal or exceed those of national or regional accrediting associations.

2. There is hereby established within the department of elementary and secondary education the "Missouri Advisory Board for Educator Preparation", hereinafter referred to as "MABEP". The MABEP shall advise the state board of education and the coordinating board for higher education regarding matters of mutual interest in the area of quality educator preparation programs in Missouri. The advisory board shall include at least three active elementary or secondary classroom teachers and at least three faculty members within approved educator preparation programs. The classroom teacher members shall be selected to represent various regions of the state and districts of different sizes. The faculty representatives shall represent institutions from various regions of the state and sizes of programs. The advisory board shall hold regular meetings that allow members to share needs and concerns and plan strategies to enhance teacher preparation.

3. Upon approval by the state board of education of the teacher education program at a particular teacher training institution, any person who graduates from that program, and who meets other requirements which the state board of education shall prescribe by rule, regulation and statute shall be granted a certificate or license to teach in the public schools of this state. However, no such rule or regulation shall require that the program from which the person graduates be accredited by any national or regional accreditation association.

4. The state board of education shall, in consultation with MABEP, align literacy and reading instruction coursework for teacher education programs in early childhood, kindergarten to fifth grade elementary teacher certification, middle school communication arts, high school communication arts, and all reading and special education certificates to include the following:

(1) Teacher candidates shall receive classroom and clinical training in:

- (a) The core components of reading, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary;
- (b) Oral and written language development; and
- (c) Identification of reading deficiencies, dyslexia, and other language difficulties;

(2) Teacher candidates shall also have training on:

- (a) The selection and use of **high-quality** reading curricula and instructional materials **that do not include the three-cueing systems model**;
- (b) The administration and interpretation of assessments;

(c) How to translate assessment results into effective practice in the classroom specific to the needs of students; and

~~[(d) Additional best practices in the field of literacy instruction as recommended by the literacy advisory council pursuant to section [186.080](#).]~~

(3) Teacher preparation programs shall not include instruction in, or endorsement of, the three-cueing model of reading instruction.

5. Any rule or portion of a rule, as that term is defined in section [536.010](#), that is created under the authority delegated in this section shall become effective only if it complies with and is subject to all of the provisions of [chapter 536](#) and, if applicable, section [536.028](#). This section and [chapter 536](#) are nonseverable and if any of the powers vested with the general assembly pursuant to [chapter 536](#) to review, to delay the effective date, or to disapprove and annul a rule are subsequently held unconstitutional, then the grant of rulemaking authority and any rule proposed or adopted after August 28, 2014, shall be invalid and void.

(L. 1985 S.B. 154 § 1, A.L. 2014 S.B. 492, A.L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662)

161.241. Reading instruction, comprehensive system of services — office of literacy — department duties — fund created, use of moneys. —

1. The state board of education, in collaboration with the coordinating board for higher education ~~[and the commissioner's advisory council under section [186.080](#)]~~, shall develop a plan to establish a comprehensive system of services for reading instruction.
2. The state board of education shall establish and periodically update a statewide literacy plan that supports high quality, evidence-based reading instruction for all students.
3. The state board of education shall create an office of literacy. The commissioner of education shall coordinate staff with roles relating to literacy and align staff work around supporting best practices in reading instruction.
4. The state board of education shall align literacy and reading instruction coursework for teacher education programs as required under subsection 4 of section [161.097](#).
5. Subject to appropriation, the department of elementary and secondary education shall recruit and employ quality teacher trainers with expertise in reading instruction and provide opportunities for evidence-based professional development in reading instruction available for all active teachers.
6. The department shall maintain and publish data on reading outcomes, provided that the report shall not include individually identifiable student data.

7. The department shall publish criteria and examples to help districts and schools select and use evidence-based reading curricula and instructional materials. Additionally, the department shall publish a list of curricula that ensure instruction is explicit, systematic, diagnostic, and based on phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and semantics. This shall be a resource to districts.

8. The department shall provide online tools and training for active teachers on evidence-based reading instruction.

9. There is hereby created in the state treasury the "Evidence-based Reading Instruction Program Fund". The fund shall be administered by the department and used to reimburse school districts and charter schools for efforts to improve student literacy, including, but not limited to: initiatives that provide optional training and materials to teachers regarding best practices in reading pedagogies; resources for parents and guardians to assist them in teaching their children to read; funding for reading tutoring programs **inside or** outside of regular school hours; stipends for teachers who undergo additional training in reading instruction, which may also count toward professional development requirements; and funding for summer reading programs. The fund shall consist of moneys appropriated annually by the general assembly from general revenue to such fund, any moneys paid into the state treasury and required by law to be credited to such fund, and any gifts, bequests, or donations to such fund. The fund shall be kept separate and apart from all other moneys in the state treasury and shall be paid out by the state treasurer pursuant to [chapter 33](#).

Notwithstanding the provisions of section [33.080](#) to the contrary, moneys in the fund at the end of the biennium shall not be transferred to the credit of the general revenue fund. All interest and moneys earned on the fund shall be credited to the fund.

10. Subject to appropriation, the department of elementary and secondary education shall reward each local education agency and public charter school five hundred dollars for every fourth-grade student who previously exhibited a substantial reading deficiency in K–3, or was identified as dyslexic, and subsequently scores at the proficient level or higher in reading on the annual English language arts assessment.

11. Beginning July 1, 2027, the department of elementary and secondary education shall annually review and publicly report on the compliance of approved teacher preparation programs with subsection 4 of section 161.097. The review shall include an evaluation of whether instruction is grounded in the components of evidence-based reading instruction—phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and semantics—and an evaluation of whether prohibited practices, including three-cueing, are excluded from coursework. Programs not in compliance shall not be approved to certify new teachers.

(L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662)

167.268. Policy for reading success plans — state board to develop guidelines. —

1. Each school district and charter school shall have on file a policy for reading success plans. Each school district and charter school shall provide all parents and guardians of students, including parents of students who are identified as having a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading under subsection [1] **4** of section [167.645](#), with suggestions for regular parent-guided home reading.
2. The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop guidelines to assist districts and charter schools in formulating policies for reading success plans. Such guidelines may include, but are not limited to, measures of reading proficiency, strategies for addressing reading deficiencies, timelines for measuring pupil improvement in reading, and information on screening of dyslexia. Such guidelines may also identify performance levels for pupils identified as handicapped or severely handicapped and conditions under which such pupils may be exempt from the provisions of this section and section [167.645](#).
3. Each school district and charter school shall provide intensive reading instruction to students as provided in section [167.645](#).

(L. 1990 S.B. 740 § 5, A.L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662)

167.340. Read to be ready program — certain students to increase average daily attendance — reading improvement instruction. —

1. The provisions of sections [167.340 to 167.346](#) shall be known and may be cited as the "Read to be Ready Program".
2. Beginning July 1, **2027** [2000], if a school district provides reading improvement instruction for students in [~~kindergarten~~] **first grade** through third grade who do not meet the [~~district's~~] **state's** objectives for reading as demonstrated by performance on the **Missouri universal reading screener** [~~district's chosen methods of reading assessment~~], such students who receive reading improvement instruction pursuant to this subsection may be counted for additional average daily attendance for state school aid during their reading improvement instruction time if such time falls outside normal school hours.

3. Reading improvement instruction may take the form of summer school, provided that the summer school instruction addresses the reading deficiency, additional hours of instruction or such other methods as the district may select including, but not limited to, smaller class sizes, additional resources including computers, reading specialists, teacher and administrator training, tutoring, phonics instruction and use of parents and volunteers.

(L. 1999 H.B. 889 § 1)

167.645. Reading assessments required, when — reading success plan required, when — intensive reading instruction required, when — notification of parents, when — retention in grade permitted, when — district duties — report. —

1. Each school district and charter school shall assess all students enrolled in ~~[kindergarten]~~ **grade one** through grade three ~~[at the beginning and end of each school year]~~ for their level of reading **on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's universal literacy-based reading screener. Each school district and charter school will administer the Missouri universal reading screener during administration windows established by the department.** ~~[or reading readiness on state approved reading assessments. Additionally, all school districts and charter schools shall assess any newly enrolled student in grades one through five for their level of reading or reading readiness on a reading assessment from the state approved list.]~~

2. The department shall provide the Missouri universal reading screener at no cost to LEAs and public charter schools. The Missouri universal reading screener:

- (1) Must be appropriate for students in grade one through grade three (1–3); and**
- (2) May be used to comply with the dyslexia screening requirements established in section 167.950, RSMo.**

3. The results of the universal reading screeners administered to students shall not be used to assign accountability determinations for an LEA or school.

4. At the beginning of the school year, each school district and charter school shall provide a reading success plan to any student who:

- (1) Exhibits a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading which creates a barrier to the child's progress in learning to read. The identification of a deficiency may be based upon the most recent assessments ~~[or teacher observation];~~ or**
- (2) Has been identified as being at risk of dyslexia in ~~[the]~~ a statewide dyslexia screening or has a formal diagnosis of dyslexia.**

For the purposes of this section, a **reading deficiency shall refer to a student who scores “basic” on the Missouri universal reading screener** and a substantial reading deficiency shall refer to a student who ~~[is one or more grade level or levels behind in reading or reading readiness]~~ **scores below “below basic” on the Missouri universal reading screener**; provided that nothing in this section shall be interpreted to prevent a school district or charter school from offering a reading success plan to any student based on an assessment completed **during the three administration windows** ~~[at the start and end of the school year]~~ or teacher observation. For any student entering the school district or charter school after the start of the school year, such student shall be provided a reading success plan in the event the student has been identified as having a **reading deficiency or** substantial reading deficiency, based on the student's most recent assessment ~~[or otherwise being identified through teacher observation]~~. ~~[The student's reading proficiency shall be reassessed by reading assessments on the state approved list.]~~ The student shall continue to be provided with intensive reading instruction under a reading success plan until the reading deficiency is remedied.

[2] **5.** The district or charter school shall notify the parent or guardian of any student in ~~[kindergarten]~~ **grade one** through grade three who exhibits a **reading deficiency or** substantial **reading** deficiency as described in subsection ~~[4]~~ **4** of this section, at least annually in writing, and in an appropriate, alternative manner for the parent or other guardian if necessary, of the following:

(1) That the child has been identified as having a **reading deficiency or** substantial **reading** deficiency ~~[in reading]~~;

(2) A description of the services currently provided to the child;

(3) A description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that the school district will provide to the child that are designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency. For students identified as being at risk of dyslexia or those that have a diagnosis of dyslexia the district shall provide an explanation that the instruction that will be used to teach the child reading shall be explicit, systematic, and diagnostic and based on phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, morphology, syntax, and semantics;

(4) Strategies for parents and guardians to use in helping the child succeed in reading proficiency, including but not limited to the promotion of parent-guided home reading.

(5) That if the child has a substantial reading deficiency that is not corrected by the end of grade 3, the child will not be promoted to grade 4 unless the child qualifies for a good-cause exemption.

[3] **6.** If the school district or charter school provides a summer reading program under this section, the district or charter school shall notify the parent or guardian of each student who

exhibits a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading of the opportunity to attend the summer reading program.

[4] **7. Beginning with the 2027–2028 school year**, if a student has a substantial reading deficiency at the end of third grade **as determined by the Missouri universal reading screener, the student shall be retained in grade three, unless the student scores “basic” or higher on a retest opportunity or qualifies for a good-cause exemption.** ~~[the student's parent or guardian and appropriate school staff shall discuss whether the student should be retained in grade level, based on a consideration of all relevant factors, including the reading deficiency, the student's progress in other subject areas, and the student's overall intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development. A decision to promote or retain a student with a substantial reading deficiency at the end of grade three shall be made only after direct personal consultation with the student's parent or guardian and after the formulation of a specific plan of action to remedy the student's reading deficiency.]~~

(1) A student retained under subsection 7 may be promoted to grade four if the student successfully completes a state-approved summer reading program and scores “basic” or higher on a retest opportunity of the Missouri universal reading screener.

(2) A student may be promoted to fourth grade despite scoring “below basic” on the Missouri universal reading screener if the student has a good-cause exemption. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

- (a) Students with disabilities whose Individual Education Plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law;**
- (b) Students 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 the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than 2 years but still demonstrates a substantial deficiency in reading;**
- (c) Students identified as English Language Learners who have had less than 2 years of instruction in an English Language Learner program;**
- (d) Students who have previously been retained once in grades K–3.**

8. Requests to exempt students from the mandatory retention requirement using one of the good-cause exemptions as described in subsection 7 of this section shall be made consistent with the following:

- (1) Documentation shall be submitted from the student’s teacher to the school principal that indicates that the promotion of the student is appropriate. Such**

documentation shall consist only of the good-cause exemption being requested, and the existing reading improvement plan or Individual Education Plan, as applicable.

(2) The school principal shall review and discuss the recommendation with the teacher and make the determination as to whether the student qualifies for one of the good-cause exemptions. If the school principal determines that the student meets one of the good-cause exemptions based on the documentation provided, the school principal shall make such recommendation in writing to the district superintendent. The district superintendent shall accept or reject the school principal's recommendation in writing.

9. The school district shall assist schools with providing written notification to the parent 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 following year.

[5] **10. Each school district or charter school shall do all of the following:**

(1) Provide students who are identified as having a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading under subsection **4** of this section, have been identified as being at risk of dyslexia in the statewide dyslexia screening, or have a formal diagnosis of dyslexia with intensive instructional services and supports specified in a reading success plan, as appropriate according to student need, free of charge, to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency, including additional scientific, evidence-based reading instruction and other strategies prescribed by the school district or charter school which may include but are not limited to the following:

- (a) Small group or individual instruction;
- (b) Reduced teacher-student ratios;
- (c) More frequent progress monitoring;
- (d) Tutoring or mentoring;
- (e) Extended school day, week, or year; and
- (f) Summer reading programs;

(2) For any student with a formal diagnosis of dyslexia or for a student who was found to be at risk of dyslexia in the statewide dyslexia screening, the school district or charter school shall provide evidence-based reading instruction that addresses phonology, sound-symbol association, syllable instruction, morphology, syntax, and semantics provided through systematic, cumulative, explicit, and diagnostic methods;

(3) At regular intervals, but no less than four times per year in a manner that reflects progress through each school term, notify the parent or guardian of academic and other progress being made by the student and give the parent or guardian other useful information;

(4) In addition to required reading enhancement and acceleration strategies, provide all parents of students, including parents of students who are identified as having a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading under subsection ~~4~~ **4** of this section, with a plan that includes suggestions for regular parent-guided home reading.

[6] **11.** Each school district and charter school shall ensure that intensive reading instruction through a reading development initiative shall be provided to each ~~[kindergarten]~~ **grade one** through grade **three** ~~[five]~~ student who is assessed as exhibiting a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading. In addition to the requirements otherwise provided, such instruction shall also comply with all of the following criteria:

(1) Be provided to all **grade one** ~~[kindergarten]~~ through grade **three** ~~[five]~~ students who exhibit a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading under this section. The assessments shall measure phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;

(2) Be provided during regular school hours;

(3) Provide a reading curriculum that meets the requirements of section [170.014](#), and at a minimum has the following specifications:

(a) Assists students assessed as exhibiting a **deficiency or** substantial deficiency in reading to develop the skills to read at grade level;

(b) Provides skill development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;

(c) Includes a scientifically based and reliable assessment;

(d) Does not include the three-cueing system to teach word reading;

(e) Provides initial and ongoing analysis of each student's reading progress; and

(f) Provides a curriculum in core academic subjects to assist the student in maintaining or meeting proficiency levels for the appropriate grade in all academic subjects.

[7] **12.** School districts and charter schools shall report to the department the specific intensive reading interventions and supports implemented by the school district or charter school pursuant to this section as well as the reading assessment data collected for grades

[~~kindergarten~~] **one** through **three** [~~five~~]. The department shall annually prescribe the components of required or requested reports.

[8] **13.** (1) Each school district and charter school shall address reading proficiency as part of its comprehensive school improvement plan, drawing upon information about children from assessments conducted pursuant to subsection 1 of this section and the prevalence of deficiencies identified by classroom, elementary school, and other student characteristics. As part of its comprehensive school improvement plan or contract, each school district or charter school shall review chronic early elementary absenteeism for its impact on literacy development. If more than fifteen percent of an attendance center's students are not at grade level in reading by the end of third grade, the comprehensive school improvement plan or contract shall include strategies to reduce that percentage, including school and community strategies to raise the percentage of students who are proficient in reading.

(2) Each school district and charter school shall provide professional development services to enhance the skills of elementary teachers in responding to children's unique reading issues and needs and to increase the use of evidence-based strategies.

14. 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 with deficiencies and substantial deficiencies in reading.

(3) By grade, the number and percentage of all students retained in grades K–3.

(4) 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 subsection (4).

(L. 1999 H.B. 889 § 9, A.L. 2001 S.B. 319, A.L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662)

Effective 1-01-23

170.014. Reading instruction act — reading programs established, essential components. —

1. This section shall be known as the "Reading Instruction Act" and is enacted to ensure that all public schools including charter schools establish reading programs in kindergarten through grade five based in scientific research. "Evidence-based reading instruction" includes practices that have been proven effective through evaluation of the outcomes for large numbers of students and are highly likely to be effective in improving reading if

implemented with fidelity. Such programs shall include the essential components of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, and all new teachers who teach reading in kindergarten through grade three shall receive adequate training in these areas.

2. (1) For purposes of this subsection, "three-cueing system" means any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, which may also be known as "MSV".

(2) A public school district or charter school shall provide reading instruction in accordance with the following requirements:

(a) Phonics instruction for decoding and encoding shall be the primary instructional strategy for teaching word reading;

(b) Instruction in word reading shall not **use the three-cueing system to teach word reading in any form.** ~~[rely primarily on strategies based on the three-cueing system model of reading or visual memory; and]~~

~~[(c) Reading instruction may include visual information and strategies that improve background and experiential knowledge, add context, and increase oral language and vocabulary to support comprehension, but such visual information and strategies shall not be used to teach word reading.]~~

3. Every public school in the state shall offer a reading program as described in subsection 1 of this section for kindergarten through grade five.

(L. 2002 H.B. 1711, A.L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662, A.L. 2025 S.B. 68)

Severability clause, see § [82.293](#).

~~[186.080. Council established—members, meetings, duties, recommendations.—~~

~~1. The commissioner of education shall establish a literacy advisory council. The council shall consist of no more than twenty members, appointed by the commissioner, and shall include members representing the following stakeholder groups:~~

~~(1) School boards;~~

~~(2) Charter schools;~~

~~(3) School superintendents;~~

~~(4) Elementary and secondary building principals;~~

- ~~(5) At least three teachers, including at least two teachers with expertise in reading instruction;~~
- ~~(6) At least two special education educators;~~
- ~~(7) At least two parents of elementary and secondary school-age pupils who have struggled with literacy proficiency;~~
- ~~(8) At least two community members who have struggled with literacy proficiency or supported others who have struggled with literacy proficiency, at least one of whom shall be a high school student;~~
- ~~(9) One member from a ^{*}dyslexia advocacy group;~~
- ~~(10) Faculty members of institutions of higher education with approved teacher preparation programs;~~
- ~~(11) Professionals with expertise in reading instruction, reading interventions, and how students learn to read including one certified academic language therapist; and~~
- ~~(12) Professionals with expertise in educational assessment data analysis.~~

~~2. The council shall meet at least twice per year to review best practices in literacy instruction and related policy provisions. The department shall provide necessary staff and resources for the work of the advisory council.~~

~~3. The council shall periodically provide recommendations to the commissioner and the state board of education regarding any identified improvements to literacy instruction and policy for students. The recommendations may include recommendations for changes to state law, and the commissioner shall furnish any such recommendations to the joint committee on education.~~

~~4. The council recommendations shall:~~

- ~~(1) Advise the department of elementary and secondary education on how to implement and maintain the statewide literacy plan required under section [161.241](#) and advise the department, school districts, and charter schools on ways to inform and engage parents and other community members about the literacy plan;~~
- ~~(2) Provide advice as to what services the department should provide to school districts and charter schools to support implementation of the plan and on staffing levels and resources needed at the department to support the statewide effort to improve literacy;~~
- ~~(3) Provide advice regarding the statewide plan for collecting literacy-related data that informs:~~
 - ~~(a) Literacy instructional practices;~~

- ~~(b) Teacher professional development in the field of literacy;~~
- ~~(c) What proficiencies and skills should be measured through literacy assessments and how those assessments are incorporated into local assessment plans; and~~
- ~~(d) How to identify school progress in achieving literacy outcomes, including closing literacy gaps for students from historically underserved populations;~~
- ~~(4) Recommend best practices for tiered literacy instruction within a multitiered system of supports to best improve and sustain literacy proficiency;~~
- ~~(5) Review literacy assessments and outcomes and provide ongoing advice as to how to continuously improve those outcomes and sustain improvement; and~~
- ~~(6) Provide a means for members of the public to provide input and ask questions concerning literacy issues.~~

~~(L. 2022 S.B. 681 & 662)~~

~~*Word "a" does not appear in original rolls.]~~