POLICY 4037

Reading ~~Assessment~~ Achievement for K-3

A. Definitions

1. "Above typical academic progress" means a score for the progress metric on the benchmark reading assessment that demonstrates the rate of a student's progress toward achieving grade-level benchmarks that is higher than typical academic progress.

2. "Benchmark reading assessment" means the statewide benchmark assessment in reading that measures key literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, sound-symbol recognition, alphabet knowledge, decoding and encoding skills, and comprehension, to determine a student's specific strengths and weaknesses in a skill area.

3. "Dyslexia" means a learning disorder that:

   a. is neurological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with:

      1) accurate or fluent word recognition; and

      2) poor spelling and decoding abilities; and

   b. typically results 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.

4. "Dyslexia assessment" means a diagnostic assessment for the identification of dyslexia or a psychoeducational evaluation for the diagnosis of dyslexia.

5. "Dyslexia diagnosis" means a formal determination that an individual has dyslexia based on a comprehensive evaluation conducted by a qualified professional acting within the scope of the professional's license or credentials. It does not include screening for dyslexia, a recommendation that a student be screened for dyslexia, or the results from a diagnostic assessment.

6. "Dyslexia screening" means the use of evidence-based measures to identify whether a student may be at risk for characteristics of dyslexia and need additional assessment, progress monitoring, and intervention related to dyslexia.

7. "Evidence-based" means that a strategy (not including reading software) demonstrates a statistically significant effect, of at least a 0.40 effect size, on improving student outcomes based on either strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (as further defined by the State Board of Education) or moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (as further defined by the State Board of Education).

8. "Evidence-informed" means that a strategy is developed using high-quality research outside of a controlled setting in the given field (as further defined by the State Board of Education) and includes strategies and activities with a strong scientific basis for use (as further defined by the State Board of Education).

9. "Individualized reading plan" means a plan that defines the reading interventions a student will receive in given intervention settings to remediate a reading deficiency that the benchmark reading assessment identifies.

10. "Intervention setting" means the setting in which a student receives a reading intervention. It may include:

    a. a teacher leading an intervention during regular classroom work;

    b. a paraprofessional leading an intervention;

    c. an after-school or extended-day program;

    d. a summer school program;

    e. an at-home activity; and

    f. an online activity.

11. "Literacy team" means the following group of individuals who unite to establish and monitor the progress of an individualized reading plan for a student:

    a. the student's parents;

    b. the student (at the discretion of the student's parents);

c. the student's teacher, including general and special education;

d. for a student scoring well below benchmark on a benchmark reading assessment, a representative of the District who is knowledgeable about available literacy resources and who has the authority to commit literacy resources; and

e. depending on the circumstances of the student and availability, other educators or support personnel, including a therapist, counselor, social worker, translator, friend, or parent advocate.

12. "Qualifying dyslexia assessment" means a dyslexia assessment administered by an individual who is: licensed under Utah Code Title 58, Occupations and Professions, practicing within the scope of practice for the individual's license, and competent by training, education, and experience to administer the dyslexia assessment.

13. "Reading intervention" means an evidence-based instructional strategy, instructional methodology, technique, or resource that assists a student in becoming a successful reader, able to read at or above grade level, and ready for promotion to the next grade. It may include:

a. dyad reading, in which two individuals, typically a skilled reader and a developing reader, sit side-by-side and read the same text aloud together;

b. decoding text, in which an individual translates printed letters and words into speech through phonics;

c. a targeted literacy skill intervention resource that is aligned with the science of reading;

d. a word list;

e. phoneme and grapheme mapping;

f. handwriting practice;

g. reading protocols;

h. retelling;

i. vocabulary practice;

j. retention in the student's current grade level; and

k. other strategies that are aligned with the science of reading to meet student needs in improving literacy.

14. "Reading on grade level" means that a student scores at or above the benchmark for the relevant grade level on the benchmark reading assessment.

15. "Retention" means a reading intervention through which a student who does not meet a specific reading benchmark or satisfy a good cause exemption repeats the grade in the subsequent school year to provide the student with additional time and intensive, targeted reading intervention to remediate a learning deficiency before advancing to a grade for which the student is not prepared to succeed academically.

16. "Science of reading" means an interdisciplinary body of scientific evidence that:

a. informs how students learn to read and write proficiently;

b. explains why some students have difficulty with reading and writing;

c. indicates that all students benefit from explicit and systematic instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing to become effective readers; and

d. does not rely on any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, including a three-cueing approach.

17. "Scores below benchmark" means a student performs below or well below the benchmark score on the benchmark reading assessment and requires additional instruction beyond that provided to typically developing peers to close the gap between the student's current level of achievement and that expected of all students in that grade.

18. "Scores well below benchmark" means a student performs well below the benchmark score on the benchmark reading assessment and requires additional instruction beyond that provided to typically developing peers to close the gap between the student's current level of achievement and that expected of all students in that grade.

19. "Three-cueing" means a model of teaching students to read based on visual memory and contextual deduction as the primary basis for teaching word recognition rather

than more effective methods, including sounding out words or using a phonics-based approach.

Utah Code § 53E-3-1001(1)(b) (2026)
Utah Code § 53E-4-307(1) (2026)
Utah Code § 53G-10-801 (2026)
Utah Code § 53G-11-303(1)(a), (b) (2025)
Utah Admin. Rules R277-406-2(12) (August 7, 2025)

B. Reading Assessment

1. ~~Subject to legislative appropriations,~~ District elementary schools shall ~~annually~~ administer a State Board of Education approved benchmark ~~the Acadience~~ reading assessment in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, and grade 3 within the following testing windows:

   a. The first assessment ~~benchmark before~~ between the first day of school and September 30

   b. The second assessment ~~benchmark~~ between December 1 and January 31

   c. The third assessment ~~benchmark~~ between April 15 and June 15

2. Following each ~~benchmark~~ assessment, the school shall notify parents of their student's results by October 30, February 28, and June 30, respectively. The District shall also report the results to the State Superintendent by the same dates, together with the additional information required by Rule R277-406-4(6).

3. ~~If a benchmark assessment or a supplemental reading assessment indicates that a student is scoring below benchmark, the school shall take the notification and reading remediation interventions outlined below.~~

   Utah Code § 53E-4-307(3) (2026)
   Utah Admin. Rules R277-406-4 (August 7, 2025)

C. Dyslexia Screening

1. A student with dyslexia is eligible for special education services only if the student meets the criteria for special education services under federal law. When screening a student for dyslexia, schools will use a dyslexia screener from the approved list established by the State Board of Education. Schools may use the no cost dyslexia screening process developed by the University of Utah. In addition, schools may

accept the results of a qualifying dyslexia assessment from a student's parent. An educational professional's recommendation that a student receive a dyslexia screening is not a diagnosis of dyslexia. An educational professional will not be disciplined, retaliated against, or subjected to adverse employment action solely for recommending or referring a student for dyslexia screening.

Utah Code § 53E-4-307(3)(b), (6), (7) (2026)
Utah Code § 53F-5-226(3)(e), (5), (7) (2026)

D. Reading Interventions ~~Scoring Below Benchmark~~

~~1. A student scores below or well below benchmark when the student performs below or well below the benchmark score on the benchmark reading assessment and requires additional instruction beyond that provided to typically developing peers to close the gap between the student's current level of achievement and that expected of all students in that grade.~~

2. If a benchmark assessment, supplemental reading assessment, or qualifying dyslexia assessment indicates that a ~~For any kindergarten, first, second, or third grade~~ student ~~who~~ lacks competency in a reading skill, is demonstrating characteristics of dyslexia, or lagging behind other students in the student's grade in acquiring a reading skill the school shall ~~take the following actions~~:

~~a. Notify the student's parent that the student is reading below grade level;~~

~~b. Administer diagnostic assessments to the student;~~

c. Using data from the benchmark reading ~~diagnostic~~ assessment, provide specific, focused, and individualized intervention or tutoring to develop the reading skill, potentially including creation of an individual reading plan as described below;

d. Administer formative assessments and progress monitoring at recommended levels for the benchmark assessment to measure the success of the focused intervention;

e. In addition to parental notice that may be required for students who score below or well below grade level on a benchmark reading assessment, as discussed below:

1) Inform the parent of activities that he or she may engage in with the student to assist the student in improving reading proficiency;

2) Provide information to the parent of the student regarding reading interventions available to the student outside regular instructional time that may include tutoring, before and after school programs, or summer school; and

3) Provide instructional materials that are evidence-informed for core instruction and evidence-based for intervention and supplemental instruction.

Utah Code § 53E-4-307(4) (2026)

~~3. In meeting these standards, "evidence-based" means that a strategy (not including reading software) demonstrates a statistically significant effect, of at least a 0.40 effect size, on improving student outcomes based on either strong evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study (as further defined by the State Board of Education) or moderate evidence from at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study (as further defined by the State Board of Education). "Evidence-informed" means that a strategy is developed using high-quality research outside of a controlled setting in the given field (as further defined by the State Board of Education) and includes strategies and activities with a strong scientific basis for use (as further defined by the State Board of Education).~~

~~4. Dyslexia is a learning disorder that is neurological in origin and is characterized by difficulties with accurate or fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities and typically results 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.~~

~~*Utah Code § 53E-4-307(1)(c), (4)(a) (2024)*~~
~~*Utah Code § 53G-11-303(1) (2023)*~~
~~*Utah Admin. Rules R277-406-2(12) (June 7, 2024)*~~
~~*Utah Admin. Rules R277-406-4(3)(a) (June 7, 2024)*~~

E. Parental Notice for Below Grade Level Assessment

1. For each student in kindergarten through grade 3 who scores below or well below grade level on a benchmark reading assessment, the school shall provide the student's parent notice, in writing or through the standard parent-communication portal, of the following:

   a. that the student has demonstrated a substantial deficiency in reading;

b. a description of the current services that the student receives;

c. a description of the process for establishing an individualized reading plan to identify reading interventions;

d. that retention, especially in earlier grades, can benefit the student's reading proficiency;

e. beginning with the 2029-2030 school year that, if the student scores below benchmark on the benchmark reading assessment at the end of third grade, the student is subject to retention as outlined below;

f. notification that the benchmark reading assessment is not the sole determinant of promotion and that additional evaluations and assessments are available to parents and the school to determine a student's reading proficiency and readiness for promotion to the next grade level; and

g. a statement that connects the child's proficiency in reading to long-term outcomes of success.

Utah Code § 53G-10-802(1)(a) (2026)

F. Individualized Reading Plan

1. A student's literacy team shall establish an individualized reading plan for the following:

a. a kindergarten student who scores well below benchmark on the mid-year or end-of-year benchmark reading assessment;

b. a grade 1, 2, or 3 student who scores below or well below benchmark on a benchmark reading assessment;

c. beginning with the 2029-2030 school year, a student promoted to grade 4 despite not scoring at or above benchmark on the end of year assessment in grade 3, as provided for in Utah Code § 53G-10-803(2)(b)(ii), who has not scored at or above benchmark on a benchmark reading assessment during grade 4; and

d. a student in kindergarten or grade 4:

1) who does not score at or above benchmark on a benchmark reading assessment;

2) who is not a student described in sections 1 and 2 above; and

3) whose parent requests that the student receive an individualized reading plan.

Utah Code § 53G-10-802(1)(b) (2026)
Utah Admin. Rules R277-406-4(3)(a) (August 7, 2025)

2. The individualized reading plan must be established within 45 days of the first parent notice of below grade level assessment. The individualized reading plan will include:

   a. identification of the student's specific reading deficiencies;

   b. a description of the reading interventions and intervention settings the school will provide to the student to remediate the identified reading deficiencies;

   c. opportunities for the student's parent to be involved in the identified reading interventions;

   d. a process for monitoring and communicating to the student's parent the extent to which the student receives the reading interventions; and

   e. beginning with the 2029-2030 school year, a statement that if the student does not score at or above benchmark on the benchmark assessment, the student is subject to retention.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-802(2)(a)(i) (2026)

3. In identifying the reading interventions to be included in the individualized reading plan, the literacy team will include interventions that present the best approach for the student to improve literacy given the student's specific circumstances through

   a. alignment with the science of reading,

   b. research-based strategies for which evidence demonstrates success in improving reading among low-performing readers, and

   c. targeting of the student's identified reading deficiencies.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-803(1)(a) (2026)

4. The literacy team will also recommend a scaled intensity of reading interventions and intervention settings based on

    a. the student's historical and current performance on the benchmark assessment relative to the benchmark for the student's grade level,

    b. any reading interventions the student has received in a previous grade, including previous retention, and

    c. the student's performance in numeracy and other foundational abilities.

    Utah Code § 53G-10-803(1)(b) (2026)

5. In addition to in-school reading interventions, for a student in grades 1 through 3 who scores well below benchmark on the end of year benchmark reading assessment, the literacy team will also consider screening for dyslexia (including providing information to a parent regarding potential resources and options for dyslexia screening) and extended learning options (including after-school reading interventions and summer literacy programs).

    Utah Code § 53G-10-803(1)(c) (2026)

6. The school shall consider retention and shall discuss the value of early retention with the parent of the student for the following students:

    a. a student in kindergarten who scores well below benchmark on the mid-year or end-of-year benchmark reading assessment;

    b. a student in grade 1 who:

        1) scores well below benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment; and

        2) has already had an individualized reading plan before the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment and does not demonstrate above typical academic progress on the benchmark reading assessment;

    c. a student in grade 2 who scores well below benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment:

        1) began grade 2 below benchmark on the benchmark reading assessment; or

2) has already had an individualized reading plan before the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment and does not demonstrate above typical academic progress on the benchmark reading assessment; and

d. before the 2029-2030 school year, a student in grade 3 who does not score at or above benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment.

7. Beginning in the 2029-2039 school year, a student in grade 3 who does not score at or above benchmark on the end-of-year benchmark reading assessment will be retained in grade 3, subject to the good cause exemptions and parental appeal process set forth in Utah Code § 53G-10-803(2)(b).

   Utah Code § 53G-10-803(2) (2026)

8. While a student has an individualized reading plan, the literacy team will meet at least annually to review the student's plan and progress and will also meet at the request of the parent to review the student's plan and progress.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-802(2)(a)(ii), (iii) (2026)

9. A student with an individualized reading plan will be assigned to a teacher who has completed or is in the process of completing formal training in the science of reading. The teacher will review the student's plan and literacy progress with the student and the student's parent during each parent teacher conference.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-802(4), (5) (2026)

10. The interventions in the individualized reading plan will continue until the student scores at or above benchmark on the benchmark reading assessment for the student's current grade level or the literacy team jointly modifies the student's literacy plan.

    Utah Code § 53G-10-802(3) (2026)

G. Achievement

1. The Board of Education will annually monitor elementary school performance regarding literacy instruction, science of reading, and providing reading interventions. The Board will also annually monitor student performance regarding the statewide goal for third-grade reading described in Utah Code § 53E-3-1001.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-805 (2026)

H. Science of Reading Curriculum

1. The Board of Education will adopt science of reading curriculum and reading intervention programs as advised by the science of reading panel described in Utah Code § 53E-3-1003 and in accordance with Utah Code Title 53G, Chapter 10, Part 8 Literacy Interventions. The curriculum will not include a three-cueing model except in relation to a student whose IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan explicitly indicates that the three-cueing approach is appropriate for the student's learning needs.

   Utah Code § 53G-10-806 (2026)