

The Minnesota Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act

February 2025

Minnesota Reading to Ensure Academic Development Act, known as the READ Act, was passed and signed into law by Governor Tim Walz on May 24, 2023. The goal of this legislation is to have every Minnesota 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 in order to meet grade level proficiency. The READ Act replaces Read Well by Third Grade (RWBTG) and is in effect as of July 1, 2023. Portions of the READ Act were adjusted by the legislature in 2024.

The READ Act requires that reading instruction follows the science of reading which requires the explicit and systematic teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics. The legislation mandates that all school districts adjust the methods and tools of instruction in three areas.

Professional Development

In an effort to shift the knowledge base and practice of reading instruction throughout the state, the READ Act mandates that all teachers responsible for reading instruction participate in one of three required courses of study in foundational literacy instruction and the science of reading. Each of the courses of instruction is between 35 and 170 hours. The MN Department of Education was provided with funding to ensure that all eligible teachers are provided with the training. The READ Act identifies a three-year window for districts to provide training to identified educators, educational assistants, and administrators. After that time the newly established Regional Literacy Networks will provide the training, and teacher preparation programs in Minnesota will be required to include the science of reading in their training for teachers.

The district has identified **LETRS for Early Childhood** for preschool/early childhood special education staff and **CAREIALL** for Phase 1 educators. Options for Phase 2 educators have not yet been identified by MDE. These are the trainings that will be provided and facilitated by the district. Educators who have successfully completed any of the MDE-approved professional development programs will have met the READ Act professional development requirements and will not be required to complete the program selected by the school district.

2023-24: Preschool teachers completed the required literacy training for preschool teachers as part of a piloting grade from MDE

2024-25: Phase 1 educators are required to participate in the literacy training (356)

- K-5 classroom teachers (153)
- K-5 multilingual teachers (28)
- K-12 interventionist (25)
- PK-12 special education teachers (94)
- Preschool teachers/Early childhood special education teachers (33)
- Principals/coaches/administrators (23)

2025-26: Phase 1 educators complete training - **This is a shift in timeline from MDE. Originally Phase 2 educators were to begin literacy training and MDE has delayed ALL Phase 2 training to the following year.**

- Any Phase 1 teacher who did not complete the training including new hires to the district and staff moving into an identified Phase 1 job assignment. (Estimated 75)

2026-27: Phase 2 educators are required to participate in literacy training (Estimated 125)

- Grade 6 classroom teachers
- 6-12 English language arts teachers
- 6-12 multilingual teachers
- Teachers providing reading or language arts instruction in an alternative school or program

Universal Screening

All school districts are required to conduct universal literacy screening for all students in grades K-3 three times a year using assessment tools identified and approved by the MN Department of Education. The results of the screening are to be communicated to parents and used to identify appropriate instruction in literacy as well as identify those students who demonstrate characteristics of dyslexia.

Students in grades 4-12 who continue to read below grade level are to be screened each year as well. All students reading below grade level are to receive evidence-based reading intervention aligned to the science of reading.

District 191 has been conducting universal literacy screening using one of the approved screeners since 2019 for students in K-8. Fastbridge earlyReading and CBM Reading are part of the district assessment plan and are administered in fall, winter and spring each year.

Additional subtests of Nonsense Words were added to grades 2 and 3 in winter 2024.

The MDE approved screening tools for grades 4-12 have not been identified as of January 2025. This screening requirement will be implemented in the 2025-2026 school year.

Curriculum and Intervention

The Department of Education in partnership with the CAREI from the University of Minnesota, will review and identify curriculum materials that are evidence-based:

- Evidence-based literacy instruction is “explicit, systematic, and culturally responsive. It includes phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, oral language, comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students. Evidence-based instruction does not include the three-cueing system. 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.”
- 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.”

School districts are not required to use one of the MDE approved curricula, but must 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.

District 191 began full implementation of the foundational literacy curriculum for grades K-2, *Heggerty Bridge to Reading*, in 2023-24. The curriculum meets the criteria of an evidence-based foundational literacy curriculum aligned with the science of reading. In the 2024-25 school year, all preschool classrooms began implementation of *Heggerty Phonemic Awareness* instruction.

In the 2024-25 school year, Grade 3 began using *Heggerty Bridge to Reading* while grades 4 and 5 adopted the University of Minnesota's *Functional Phonics & Morphology* as part of the core instruction for all students.

Special education adopted SPIRE and UFLI as Tier 2 interventions for students served with IEPs in 2023-24. UFLI is one of the MDE-approved curricula and SPIRE meets the criteria of an evidence-based foundational literacy curriculum aligned to the science of reading.

Currently MDE is engaged in reviewing intervention curriculums. The list of approved reading intervention curriculums for K-12 will be available in November 2025. This will guide district decisions around adoption of additional interventions.