Research Brief
October 2026

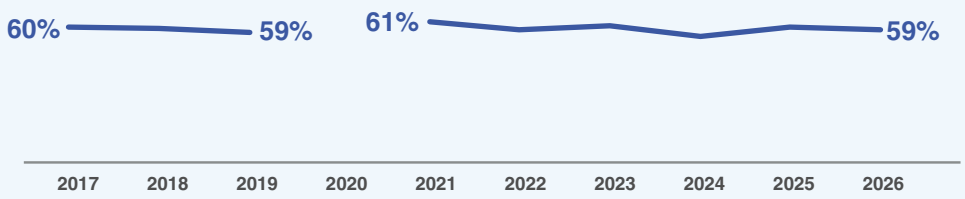
# Colorado Can Read:

## Building The Nation's Next Literacy Success Story

KEY FINDINGS

### Nearly 60% of third graders are not proficient in reading and writing – and there has been no progress in the last decade.

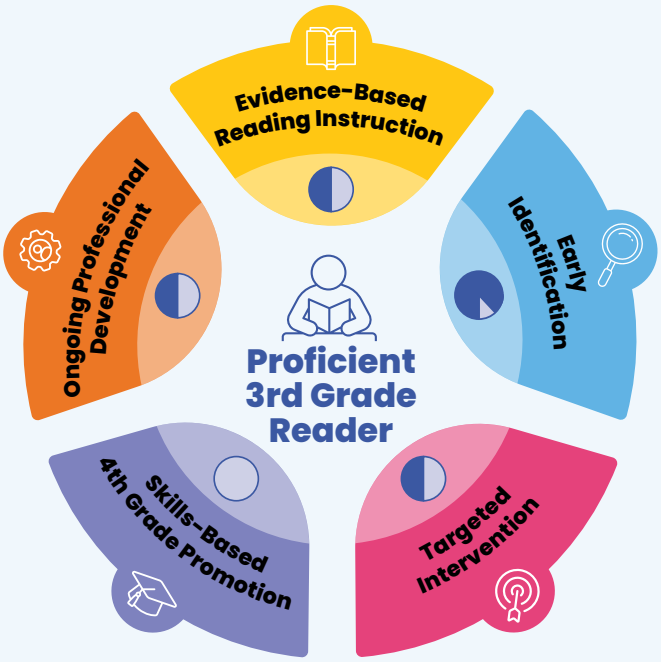
COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EXPECTATIONS ON CMAS, 2017-2026




Note: The CMAS was not administered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: Colorado Department of Education

### Colorado has not yet fully implemented all of the evidence-backed conditions to improve third grade reading proficiency.

COLORADO'S IMPLEMENTATION OF FIVE CONDITIONS FOR STATEWIDE READING SUCCESS




**Colorado's Current Implementation**

No implementation | Partial implementation | Approaching full implementation

- **Nearly 60% of Colorado third graders are not proficient in reading and writing – and no progress has been made in the last decade.** There are significant disparities in proficiency across race, ethnicity, and income.
- Other states that have implemented five common conditions have made dramatic improvements in third grade reading. Colorado has yet to fully implement these conditions, which include:
  a. Evidence-based reading instruction: *partial implementation*
  b. Early identification: *approaching full implementation*
  c. Targeted intervention: *partial implementation*
  d. Skill-based fourth grade promotion: *no implementation*
  e. Ongoing professional development: *partial implementation*
- **Colorado leaders must revamp the READ Act, a state law intended to improve early literacy in Colorado, to establish a comprehensive, statewide literacy approach that gets kids the support they need to learn to read.**

Sources: Colorado Department of Education; National Reading Panel

**Authors:**
**Madi Ashour,** Director of K-12 Education Policy, Colorado Children's Campaign
**Maya Gould,** Vice President of Research, Colorado Children's Campaign

Reading proficiently by the end of third grade is one of the strongest predictors of a child's long-term success.[1] Yet 60% of Colorado third graders do not meet grade-level expectations in English language arts. Proficiency rates are especially low among students from households with low incomes, multilingual learners, Black and Hispanic students, and students with disabilities.[2] The consequences are significant: Each year, tens of thousands of students enter fourth grade without the fully developed literacy skills they need to fully access the rest of their education.[1, 2]

Colorado has made meaningful attempts to improve reading proficiency through the landmark Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act and investments in early childhood education, full-day kindergarten, and evidence-based interventions. **Despite these efforts, statewide third grade reading scores have remained largely unchanged for more than a decade.[2]**

At the same time, other states are proving that, with the right supports, nearly all children can learn to read. These states have implemented similar policies and comprehensive statewide systems that incorporate five conditions for statewide reading success, including:

1. Evidence-based reading instruction
2. Early identification
3. Targeted intervention
4. Skill-based fourth grade promotion
5. Ongoing professional development

**Colorado is on its way toward full implementation of the five key conditions but has not yet achieved a comprehensive literacy strategy.** Colorado leaders must prioritize third grade reading and revamp the READ Act to give every Colorado kid the ability to learn, grow, and thrive.

## About The Data

Colorado measures third graders' reading and writing skills in the spring of each year through the Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS). Students are assessed on the CMAS English language arts (ELA) exam and identified as not meeting grade-level expectations, partially meeting expectations, approaching meeting expectations, meeting expectations, or exceeding expectations. No single test can fully capture a student's capabilities, yet the CMAS is the only reading exam administered statewide and, therefore, the only measure available that reports reading levels consistently across all school districts.

Parents can choose to opt their children out of testing, but statewide participation rates remain high. In 2026, the Colorado Department of Education received valid scores for 94% of third graders.[2]

## Importance Of Third Grade Reading

Third grade reading proficiency is highly predictive of a student's long-term success. Beginning in fourth grade, reading becomes the tool for all future learning, not the objective of learning. In other words, students transition from learning to read to reading to learn. Developing a love of reading, and learning from written text, is a complex, lifelong endeavor that depends on both skill building and student access to rich, engaging, and enjoyable reading experiences. However, students who are not skillfully reading by the fourth grade may struggle to gain later skills across all subject areas or achieve mathematical proficiency by eighth grade. They are also more likely to drop out of high school.[1, 3, 4]

The gap between strong readers and students who are not proficient in reading widens over time. Students who learn to read early tend to read more often, encounter more words, expand their vocabulary, and build broader background knowledge – a phenomenon sometimes referred to as the Matthew Effect.[5] Because literacy is foundational to academic success, failing to help children learn to read on grade level reinforces and deepens inequities across a lifetime: Struggling readers have worse employment opportunities, earnings, civic participation, and health than their peers.[6]

These consequences are not distributed evenly. Students from low-income families, Black and Hispanic students, multilingual learners, and students with disabilities are significantly less likely to meet third grade literacy benchmarks in Colorado and nationwide. This reflects longstanding inequities in access to opportunity and support.[7]

### High Executive Function Improves Reading

Education leaders across the country are beginning to both measure and support the development of students' executive function as a lever for academic success. Executive function is a set of mental skills that include memory, flexibility, and self-control. Children with strong executive function skills are better able to focus, memorize, and plan than their peers, positioning them to gain new skills in school more easily. New research shows that supporting students' executive functioning is a highly effective way to bolster students' reading skills and to improve economic stability, relationships, and health into adulthood.[9]

### The Science Of Reading

There is a substantial body of research on how to effectively teach children to read, known as the science of reading. It focuses on five components of literacy for students in kindergarten through third grade:[8]

- **Phonological and phonemic awareness:** Hearing and playing with the sounds in spoken words. *Example: Kids counting the number of sounds in the word cat (three).*
- **Phonics:** Linking letters to sounds to read and spell words. *Example: Kids playing with the word cat by swapping the C for an M, then the A for an E, to get to the word met.*
- **Fluency:** Reading words smoothly, accurately, and at a good speed. *Example: Teachers reading aloud together with students, so that kids can model their pacing, expression, and accuracy after the teacher's voice.*
- **Vocabulary:** Knowing what words mean to understand text. *Example: A worksheet with a word in the center of four quadrants – one for the word's definition, synonyms, a sentence using the word, and a drawing of the word.*
- **Comprehension:** Grasping the full meaning of a passage. *Example: Students reading a passage, then pairing up to discuss and write a one-sentence summary they share with the class.*

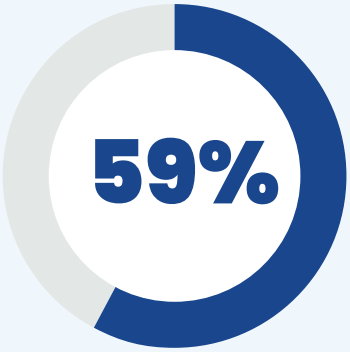
## Lack Of Reading Proficiency In Colorado

In Colorado, students are tested for both reading and writing skills through the CMAS. Nearly 60% of Colorado third graders do not read and write on grade level according to this assessment, and that number has remained largely unchanged for a decade. This means that roughly 32,000 students entered fourth grade each year without the skills to fully access grade-level content as they advance.[2] These students often struggle in the classroom and struggle to catch up to their peers' academic success.[1]

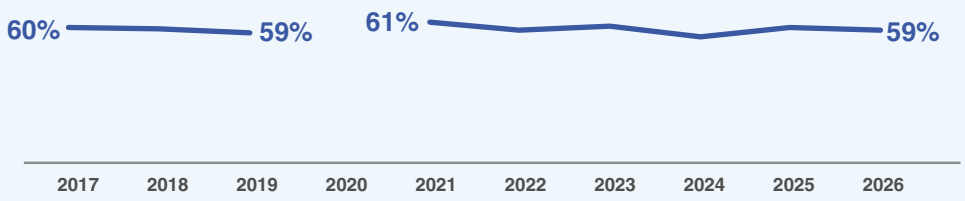
Almost all children can learn to read and write. These numbers tell us that Colorado is not systematically getting all students the supports they need – both inside and outside the classroom – to hit this critical milestone.

**Nearly 60% of third graders are not proficient in reading and writing – and there has been no progress in the last decade.**

COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EXPECTATIONS ON THE CMAS, 2026




COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS EXPECTATIONS ON CMAS, 2017-2026




Note: The CMAS was not administered in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
Source: Colorado Department of Education

## Disparities In Third Grade Reading

Some student groups are less likely to reach reading milestones by the end of third grade, including students with limited resources and those who need additional educational services. About 76% of economically disadvantaged students do not meet reading expectations, a rate 30 percentage points higher than peers with higher incomes. About nine in ten English language learners (91%), migrant students (87%), and special education students (86%) do not meet expectations in third grade English language arts.[2]

Racial and ethnic disparities in CMAS reading outcomes are pronounced, with some student groups far less likely to meet expectations than others. Students who are Hawaiian or Pacific Islanders (79%), American Indian or Alaska Native (78%), Hispanic (76%), or Black (74%) are the least likely to meet English language arts expectations in the CMAS. By comparison, around half of students who are two or more races, Asian, or white do not meet expectations.[2]

Disparities in reading scores reflect longstanding inequities in access to opportunities and supports that help children learn to read, including access to high-quality early childhood education, evidence-based instruction, experienced educators, timely intervention, and adequately resourced schools. Certain student groups are more likely to face barriers both inside and outside the classroom that can make it harder to receive the support needed to meet grade-level expectations.[10]

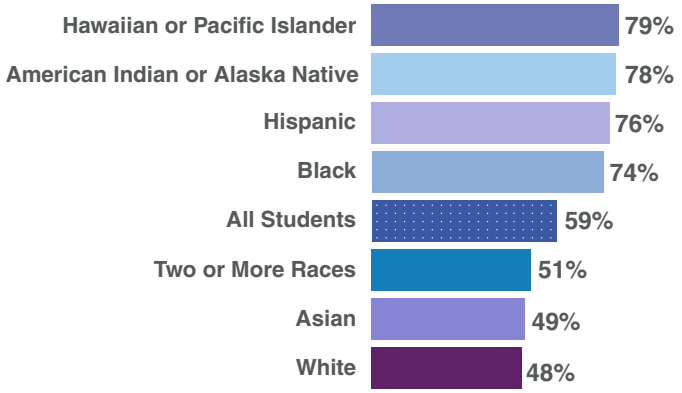
The effects of these disparities compound into long-term consequences: They contribute to lower rates of high school completion, less participation in postsecondary education, and fewer economic opportunities in adulthood.[7]

### Students with limited resources are unlikely to begin fourth grade with the reading skills they need to keep learning.

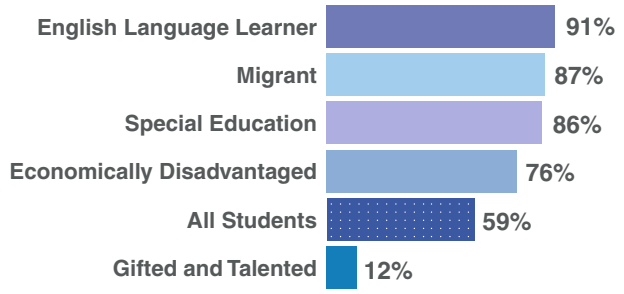
COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING ELA EXPECTATIONS ON THE CMAS BY INCOME, 2026

Note: Students are identified as economically disadvantaged through their eligibility for the National School Lunch Program (185% federal poverty level).
Source: Colorado Department of Education

### COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING ELA EXPECTATIONS ON THE CMAS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY, 2026




### COLORADO THIRD GRADERS NOT MEETING ELA EXPECTATIONS ON THE CMAS BY STUDENT CHARACTERISTIC, 2026




Note: Categories are not mutually exclusive
Source: Colorado Department of Education

## Colorado's Score On The Nation's Report Card

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) measures students at the beginning of fourth grade. The assessment, commonly known as the "Nation's Report Card," provides a common measure of reading achievement across all states, making it the most widely used tool for comparing states to one another and tracking progress over time.

Colorado's reading proficiency rate is low, but still higher than in many other states. In 2024, Colorado ranked as one of the top states for fourth grade reading - but 70% of students in the state were not proficient. These exams also reveal significant disparities in reading outcomes and opportunity: White students scored an average of 29 points higher than Hispanic students and 24 points higher than Black students.[11]

## Five Conditions For Statewide Reading Success

There is growing national consensus about the conditions associated with improved literacy outcomes. That consensus did not emerge from a single study or policy proposal. Rather, it reflects decades of reading science, large-scale evidence reviews, and the practical experience of states that have successfully improved reading achievement.

For example, a National Reading Panel commissioned by Congress synthesized hundreds of studies and identified the components of effective reading instruction.[8] The Institute of Education Sciences translated that research into **evidence-based recommendations** for schools and educators.

Many other guides have been published throughout the last decade. In 2013, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices released a **guide** to state policy emphasizing coordinated statewide action. In 2021, the Council of Chief State School Officers published a **report** on steps state leaders could take to improve literacy rates, highlighting common policy elements successful states are adopting. In 2024, the National Council on Teacher Quality released a **report** identifying state actions associated with literacy gains. As recently as 2026, the Education Commission of the States described **common science-based approaches** used by states to improve reading outcomes.

**The studies have been generally consistent in their recommended frameworks for improving third grade reading proficiency.** From these studies, and from recent state experiences, the Colorado Children's Campaign has identified five common conditions for improving third grade proficiency. A few states have demonstrated that when these instructional principles are paired with statewide systems for early identification, targeted intervention, educator training, and accountability for reading outcomes, literacy rates can improve substantially.

### Five Conditions For Statewide Reading Success

1. **Evidence-based reading instruction:** Allow only evidence-aligned literacy instruction in schools
2. **Early identification:** Test and identify struggling readers early, ideally prior to third grade
3. **Targeted intervention:** Provide targeted intervention and tutoring to struggling readers as soon as they are identified
4. **Skill-based fourth grade promotion:** Only advance students to fourth grade once third grade skills are mastered or if there is reason for a good cause exemption
5. **Ongoing professional development:** Provide continued investment in educator knowledge, coaching, and development

### Thoughtful Implementation Of Skill-Based Promotion

Researchers debate skill-based promotion policies, but it is clear that such policies must be paired with appropriate support systems to avoid perpetuating already existing inequities in areas such as graduation rates and workforce outcomes.[12, 13]

Credible research suggests that skills-based promotion policies are effective and equitable when embedded within a broader support system.[14, 15] For example, a rigorous 2015 study of Florida's policy found substantial short- and medium-term achievement gains for retained students, higher grade point averages, fewer remedial course enrollments, and no negative effect on high school graduation rates. Importantly, Florida's policy paired retention with intensive reading intervention, summer learning opportunities, progress monitoring, and additional instructional supports.[16]

Often, the possibility of retention is enough to push schools and families to get students on track, making retention itself unnecessary.[17]

## Improving Reading Outcomes In Other States

Most states across the U.S. struggle to achieve strong third grade literacy rates. But a handful have already made substantial improvements in third grade reading scores. **These states have improved overall literacy rates and have led the nation in reducing academic disparities among groups.** No single policy can explain outcomes, but these states have each pursued literacy strategies that include the five conditions of reading success.

### Mississippi: From 49th to 9th

In just a decade, Mississippi dramatically improved third grade literacy: Between 2013 and 2024, the state moved from being ranked 49th in the country for NAEP fourth-grade reading scores to 9th. The state ranked first in the nation for score improvements in 2024.[18] Mississippi's gains emerged from a well-orchestrated, **sustained statewide strategy** that combined early identification of struggling readers, teacher training, instructional supports, accountability, and significant attention to implementation over time. Mississippi is also closing gaps between student groups. The state ranks first in the nation for reading scores among low-income and Hispanic students and third in the nation for reading scores among African American students.[18]

### Indiana: Continuous Commitment

Indiana's third grade reading proficiency rates were among the highest in the nation when the state's IREAD assessment was first administered in 2012-13, with between 80% and 91% of students demonstrating proficiency.[19] Proficiency rates began declining in 2014, prompting state leaders to re-invest in reading with improved policy and funding after the pandemic. Like Mississippi, Indiana created a **comprehensive statewide system** that requires frequent, early identification of struggling readers, evidence-based instruction, and not promoting students to fourth grade when milestones are not met. Since then, third grade reading scores have improved year-over-year, with a dramatic increase in the 2024-25 school year from 83% to 87% of students meeting reading expectations. Rates improved for all student groups, including an eight percentage point increase for Hispanic students and a six percentage point increase for English language learners.[19]

### Florida: Original System

Florida pioneered the model used and revised in Mississippi and Indiana. In 2002, Florida implemented a third grade retention policy with good cause exemptions for students learning English, students with learning disabilities, or students who demonstrate proficiency using alternative tests or portfolios of work. The policy was accompanied by intensive reading investments and interventions. The state's reading scores increased: Proficiency rates have risen almost every year over the last decade,[20] and Florida ranks in the top 10 states for reading.[21]

### Massachusetts: Long-Term Excellence

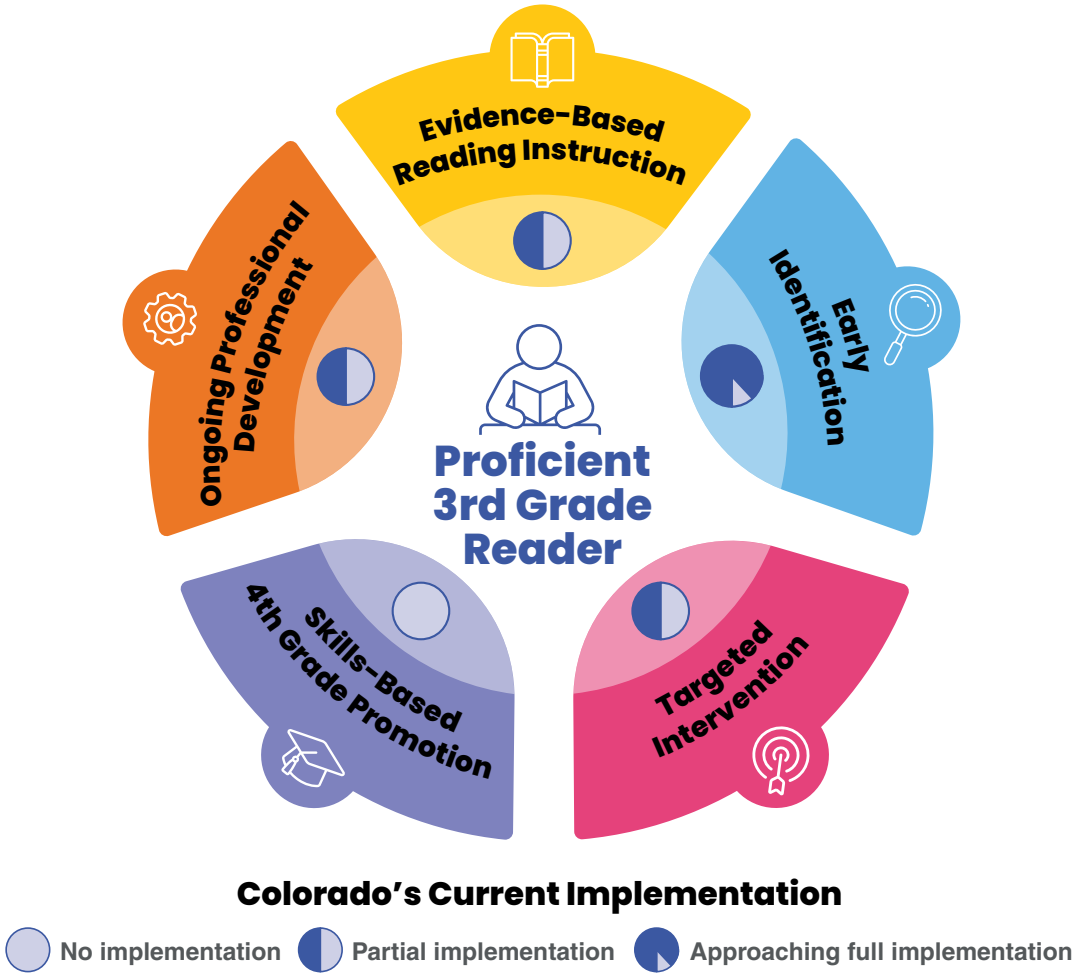
Massachusetts consistently ranks at or near the top of national assessments of reading.[22] In recent years, state leaders have strengthened that foundation through a **renewed focus on evidence-based literacy instruction**, high-quality curriculum, educator preparation, and early identification of struggling readers. While Massachusetts' literacy success cannot be attributed to a single policy, its recent efforts reflect the same core principles that have guided literacy improvements in other leading states: strong instructional materials, well-prepared educators, regular screening and assessment, and targeted support for students who need additional help.

## Colorado READ Act And The Five Conditions For Statewide Reading Success

The Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, passed in 2012 and updated in 2019 and 2025, set in place the right building blocks like early identification, targeted intervention, and evidence-based teaching. However, third grade reading scores have not budged in a decade.[2]

While the READ Act moved Colorado in the right direction, it does not include all five conditions for statewide reading success. The conditions that it does include are in varying states of implementation. The state has an opportunity to strengthen its policy and more fully implement the five conditions for statewide reading success.

**Fully implementing the five conditions for statewide reading success requires significant state investment.** Colorado invests approximately $39 million across its literacy programs and policies annually.[23] Florida, a top literacy state, has historically invested more than $150 million annually in evidence-based reading instruction through dedicated formula funding.[24]



## Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

**Included in READ Act; Partial Implementation**

The READ Act requires that all school districts choose and implement a high-quality literacy curriculum from a menu of options identified by the Colorado Department of Education. Under the Literacy Curriculum Transparency Act, districts must also prominently post information about their adopted literacy materials on their websites.

**Opportunity for Improvement:** While most schools use approved literacy curricula, some do not. A major finding of a 2025 independent evaluation of the effects of the READ Act was that only "80% of schools reported using approved core curriculums during the 2023-24 school year," however another report from the Colorado Department of Education said that 98% of schools used approved materials. Colorado needs to investigate and require all school districts to commit to evidence-based instruction.

## Early Identification

**Included in READ Act; Approaching Full Implementation**

Students in kindergarten through third grade are regularly assessed in literacy development to identify students who are not meeting reading and writing expectations as well as students with Significant Reading Deficiencies (SRDs). Students in kindergarten through third grade are assessed using a State Board-approved literacy assessment at roughly the beginning, middle, and end of each school year, separate from the CMAS. In 2025, the legislature passed a bill that requires school districts to also screen students for dyslexia during required reading assessments.

**Opportunity for Improvement:** Another major finding of the 2025 evaluation was that though educators feel comfortable with the systems and strategies for children on READ Plans, "fewer than half of coaches and teachers reported that they had received sufficient training to feel confident identifying and supporting students with multiple identifications." Educators are also navigating other requirements for supporting students, such as Individualized Learning Plans and supports for English language learners. Colorado educators need a simpler, clearer system for identifying students with multi-layered learning needs, followed by more support in tailoring services to meet the needs of students with multiple identifications.

## Targeted Intervention

**Included in READ Act; Partial Implementation**

Students with SRDs are placed on a READ Plan to help get them back on track. The plan identifies a student's specific reading skill gaps and outlines the evidence-based instruction, interventions, and progress-monitoring supports that will be provided to help the student reach grade-level reading proficiency. Teachers regularly update READ Plans and communicate with families about the student's progress toward meeting reading benchmarks and exiting SRD status. Importantly, Colorado has moved the needle on this front: According to the 2025 evaluation, the number of students identified with SRDs continues to decrease. Although SRD identification rates remain elevated from pre-pandemic levels (around 15% per year), in 2023–2024 the share of students identified as having an SRD declined to 19% from the all-time high of 22% recorded immediately post-pandemic in 2020–2021. In the 2023-24 school year, for the first time in Colorado's history, a higher percentage of students exited SRD status than entered SRD status.

Additionally, the Comprehensive Early Literacy Grant (ELG) Program helps school districts pay for literacy programming, summer school, or tutoring services, as well as to hire literacy interventionists or provide professional development to educators.

**Opportunity for Improvement:** ELG funds are flexible and allow districts to invest in a wide range of activities. Allowing districts to invest in a wide range of activities with varying levels of evidence and impact contributes to uneven implementation and outcomes. The highest-impact strategies include:

- Whole-school professional learning, not individual workshops
- Whole-school interventions and implementation plans, not limited to student subgroups
- Instructional coaching that is literacy-specific, ongoing, and job-embedded
- Progress-monitoring tools that support instructional decision-making
- Leadership development for principals and literacy leads

## Skill-Based Fourth Grade Promotion

**Not included in READ Act; No Implementation**

Colorado currently relies on individualized intervention plans and a decision-making process shared between parents and schools regarding promotion to fourth grade. Colorado's current fourth-grade promotion policy recognizes that improving literacy outcomes requires more than school-based interventions alone. By requiring schools to communicate with families and involve parents in their child's READ Plan and reading supports, the current policy seeks to strengthen one of the most important factors in literacy development: sustained family engagement, which research consistently associates with stronger reading achievement and long-term academic success.[25]

**Opportunity for Improvement:** Currently, students without appropriate reading skills are promoted to fourth grade where they may struggle to catch up. Colorado needs a clearer proficiency threshold that parents and educators can work toward together. Students should be able to demonstrate proficiency through multiple measures tied to adequate and timely supports, and schools should have flexibility to grant good-cause exemptions.

## Ongoing Professional Development

**Included in READ Act; Partial Implementation**

Since 2022, kindergarten through third grade educators who provide literacy instruction – including classroom teachers, reading interventionists, special education teachers, Title I teachers, and administrators overseeing these educators – must complete training in the science of reading. The Colorado State Board of Education has leveraged its teacher preparation accreditation process to ensure more Colorado programs prepare teacher candidates using the science of reading. School districts have and continue to use ELG funding to support ongoing teacher professional development and instructional coaching.

**Opportunity for Improvement:** Colorado has made significant progress by requiring science-of-reading training for educators and administrators. The next phase of READ Act implementation should focus on helping educators translate that training into classroom practice through additional literacy coaching, implementation support, professional learning communities, and principal leadership development. State funding should prioritize ongoing, job-embedded support rather than one-time professional development experiences.

### Supporting Literacy Outside The Classroom

Reading outcomes are not solely determined by classroom instruction. States with stronger literacy outcomes often pair school-based policy changes with efforts to improve preschool participation, student attendance, access to high-quality instructional materials, and support for economically disadvantaged students.[26] Colorado has taken important policy steps to support early literacy in recent years, including:

- Expanding access to early childhood education
- Providing universal full-day kindergarten
- Promoting school attendance
- Measuring and supporting school climate
- Updating the school funding formula to funnel more dollars to low-income and multilingual learners

## The Path Forward

Colorado leaders must commit to making real change for children's education and prioritize third grade literacy.

### » Commit to improve third grade reading proficiency.

Colorado leaders must strengthen the READ Act to get more kids the reading skills they need, building the nation's next literacy success story. The consequences of poor literacy skills are significant for children's short and long-term success, yet literacy levels have remained stably low for a decade. Kids deserve better. This is a solvable problem, but only if Colorado leaders commit to and invest in making real change for kids.

### » Update state policy to advance a comprehensive, statewide, evidence-based approach to reading proficiency.

The READ Act moved Colorado in the right direction, but reading scores are stagnant, and the state has not yet fully established all five conditions associated with successfully improving reading scores. Colorado leaders must update the READ Act to fully implement all five conditions.

1. Evidence-based reading instruction
2. Early identification
3. Targeted intervention
4. Skill-based fourth grade promotion
5. Ongoing professional development

### » Use other states as models for policy approaches to support literacy.

Other states have demonstrated that meaningful improvements in literacy rates are possible when state leaders commit to a coherent, evidence-based approach and sustain that commitment over time. Their success came from combining high-quality instruction and intervention with clear expectations and a focus at the state, district, and school level on helping every child become a successful reader. To ensure success, Colorado leaders must model Colorado policy on evidence-based successes in other parts of the country.

*For more information on third grade literacy systems and policies, please email Madi Ashour at Madi@ColoradoKids.org.*

## Sources

[1] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2010). Early Warning! Why reading by the end of third grade matters.

[2] Colorado Department of Education. (Retrieved August 2026). Data and results: 2026 CMAS results.

[3] Chapin Hall, University of Chicago. (2010). Reading on grade level in third grade: How is it related to high school performance and college enrollment?

[4] Center for Public Education. (2015). Learning to read, reading to learn: Why third-grade is a pivotal year for mastering literacy.

[5] Stanovich, K.E. (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individual differences in the acquisition of literacy. Reading Research Quarterly, 21(4): 360-407.

[6] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2026). 2023 Navigating life with low literacy and numeracy.

[7] The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2011). Double jeopardy: How third-grade reading skills and poverty influence high school graduation.

[8] National Reading Panel. (2000). Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction.

[9] The School Superintendents Association. (2024). Executive function skills in a comprehensive curriculum.

[10] The Brookings Institution. (2020). Categorical inequalities between Black and white students are common in US schools–but they don't have to be.

[11] The Nation's Report Card. (2025). 2024 reading state snapshot report: Colorado, grade 4 public schools.

[12] Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance. (2012). The effects of early grade retention on student outcomes over time: Regression discontinuity evidence from Florida. Working paper series.

[13] Jimerson, S.R. (2001). Meta-analysis of grade retention research: implications for practice in the 21st century. School Psychology Review, 30(3): 420-437.

[14] Harvard University, Graduate School of Education. (2017). When kids are held back, gains can follow.

[15] Brown University, Annenberg Institute. (2022). Holding back to move forward: The effects of retention in the third grade on student outcomes. Working paper.

[16] National Bureau of Economic Research. (2015). The effects of test-based retention on student outcomes over time: regression discontinuity evidence from Florida. Working paper.

[17] Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs. (2026). The effect of retention threat on student learning gains: Evidence from Ohio. Working paper.

[18] Mississippi Department of Education. (2025). Mississippi Success Story.

[19] Indiana Department of Education. (2025). 2024-2025 IREAD Results.

[20] The Nation's Report Card. (Retrieved August 2026). 2024 Florida overview.

[21] The Nation's Report Card. (Retrieved August 2026). 2024 Florida state comparisons.

[22] The Nation's Report Card. (Retrieved August 2026). 2024 Massachusetts state comparison data.

[23] Colorado General Assembly. (2026). FY 2026-27 Budget Package and Long Bill Narrative.

[24] Florida House of Representatives. (2023). House Bill 5101 House of Representatives Staff Analysis.

[25] Harvard University, Graduate School of Education. (2008). Family involvement and children's literacy.

[26] Waldfogel, J. (2012). The role of out-of-school factors in the literacy problem. Future of Children, 22(2): 39-54.