



Early Literacy Policy Framework 2024

Partners in Read On Arizona developed this shared policy framework to highlight the comprehensive set of strategies, policies, and investments needed to **improve school readiness and third grade reading**:



1. Scale and sustain evidence-based literacy strategies

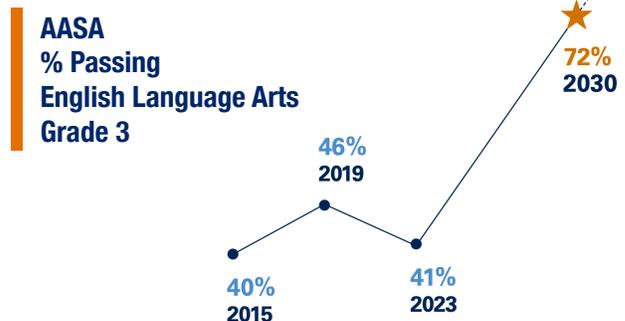
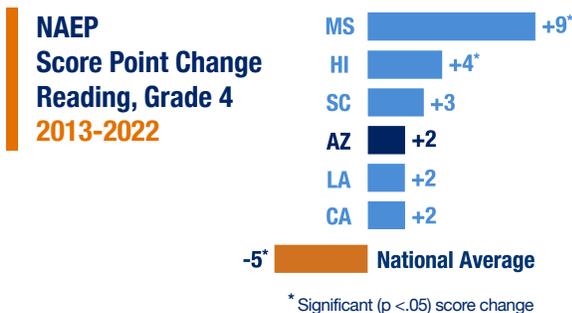


2. Build educator capacity in the science of reading



3. Expand access to high-quality early learning

These strategies have been successful in other states, and they are working here. From 2013 to 2022, Arizona was one of only six states to make gains in fourth grade reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), **improving from 45th to 28th in the nation**. But less than half of our third graders passed the most recent English Language Arts (ELA) assessment, well below **our shared goals of 72% at proficiency by 2030** and 90% by 2040. Measuring more than just a student’s ability to decode words, **these early grade milestones are crucial** because so much students’ learning in later grades depends on their reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



Let’s get on the same page. Reaching our goals requires the commitment of partners and policymakers to collaborate, coordinate efforts, and take the bold action needed to get better literacy outcomes.

PRIORITY: Keep Moving Forward, Not Back

The following shared policy priorities reflect Read On Arizona’s comprehensive approach to helping students develop the skills they need to be proficient readers and successful in school.

1. Evidence-Based Literacy Strategies

Arizona has several cornerstone policies and projects in place that are bringing proven, effective literacy solutions to greater scale, including:

- ★ **Move On When Reading (MOWR)**, our state’s K-3 reading policy, which helps public and charter schools provide effective, evidence-based reading instruction for students in kindergarten through third grade and identify and support students with reading challenges as early as possible.
- ★ Arizona’s **Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD)** federal grant provides high-quality literacy supports for our most struggling readers in high-need communities, including literacy coaches, professional development, and evidence-based curriculum.
- ★ The statewide **Chronic Absence Task Force**, convened by Read On Arizona, is identifying effective policies and practices to help schools reduce rates of chronic absence in our state, which is currently **the highest in the nation**.



The successful implementation, expansion, and sustainability of these and other proven literacy strategies currently in place in Arizona is key to improving reading outcomes in the long term.

- ✓ Evidence-based curriculum, literacy coaching, and high-quality intervention programs help schools provide effective literacy instruction that helps students progress toward proficiency.
- ✓ Data submitted via schools’ annual MOWR literacy plans inform statewide strategies and has been integral to Arizona’s success in securing additional federal funding for literacy.
- ✓ Policies and practices that decrease school absences also produce increases in early literacy outcomes. Analysis of Arizona school-level data showed that a 1% increase in school-level attendance rate was associated with a 1.5% increase in students passing Arizona’s third grade ELA assessment.

2. Building Educator Capacity

Student outcomes improve when teachers are supported with comprehensive training and coaching on the most effective approaches to reading instruction. Arizona has made a coordinated effort to empower educators with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need through:

- ★ **Professional development** in the science of reading for K-3 teachers and early childhood educators.
- ★ Expert **literacy coaches** to support educators in our highest-need schools and communities.
- ★ Ensuring teachers who provide literacy instruction in grades K-5 are prepared for success with a **literacy endorsement** aligned with existing requirements for annual professional development hours.



Sustaining these efforts and training more educators is critical to our success.

- ✓ Building the capacity of teachers has been a key strategy in Mississippi and Tennessee, where reading scores have outpaced pre-pandemic levels, and it is working in many Arizona schools and districts.

3. High-Quality Early Learning

Ensuring the school readiness of Arizona's young children is a crucial component of our comprehensive approach to early literacy, which includes **supporting early childhood providers** with the tools and resources they need to support language and literacy development in young children, and providing **additional slots** for young children in high-need communities to attend quality preschool.

- ★ Arizona's three-year, federal **Preschool Development Grant (PDG)** program is focused on supporting language and early literacy, strengthening family engagement, increasing inclusive settings, supporting the early childhood workforce, and increasing the number of children attending high-quality early learning programs.
- ★ ADE's **High-Quality Early Learning (HQEL) grants**, funded through temporary federal relief dollars, also expand access to quality preschool and support early childhood programs in high-need communities with professional development and coaching. HQEL is a part of Arizona's ongoing effort to improve early learning program quality in our state through **Head Start** affiliation, participation in **Quality First**, and **national accreditation**.



Arizona's PDG and HQEL grant programs provide a strong framework for any additional state investments to expand access to early learning in our state in ways that effectively promote school readiness and early literacy.

- ✓ High-quality early learning programs support language and literacy development and help young children be ready to learn to read when they enter kindergarten.



Literacy Powers Learning

Reading is the foundational skill for school success, impacting every aspect of academic achievement across all subjects. That's why learning to read proficiently is a student's most important educational challenge.

Launched in 2013, **Read On Arizona is our state's early literacy initiative**. Partners in Read On Arizona take a collaborative approach to improving language and literacy outcomes for Arizona's children from birth to age eight, with strategic focus on school readiness and third grade reading proficiency.

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