



Reading Legislation Guidance Document

**Revised March 2022*

The following document provides clarification on pertinent literacy legislation that districts are required to implement. The Division of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has developed rules and regulations to clarify components of the law. These rules outline the process for ensuring that teachers are able to demonstrate proficiency or awareness in scientific reading instruction as applicable to their teaching position. The chart below has been created to help educators understand requirements and timelines. Educators are encouraged to read the laws in their entirety.

| | |
|---|----------|
| Professional Development | 2 |
| Elementary and Special Education Teachers, including Reading Specialists: Proficiency Pathway | 2 |
| All Other Teachers- Awareness Pathway | 2 |
| Administrators | 3 |
| District Responsibility for Professional Development in the Science of Reading | 3 |
| Demonstrating Proficiency or Awareness by 2023-2024 for Employment | 4 |
| 2023-24 School Year | 4 |
| Classroom Teachers in Grades K-6, K-12 Reading Specialists, K-6 Teachers of English Language Learners | 4 |
| Special Education | 4 |
| All Other Classroom Teachers | 5 |
| Educator and College Preparation Programs | 5 |
| Licensure for New Teachers or Reciprocity | 6 |
| Dyslexia Requirements | 6 |
| Reporting to Parents | 7 |
| Improvement Plans & Support Plans | 7 |
| School Improvement Plan (additional requirements in Act 930) | 7 |
| District Support Plan (additional requirements in Act 930) | 7 |
| Curriculum and Instructional Materials | 8 |
| Levels of Support | 9 |

Professional Development

Elementary and Special Education Teachers, including Reading Specialists: Proficiency Pathway

Beginning 2018-19, a school district shall provide professional development in scientific reading instruction for teachers employed at the elementary level or in special education. Districts are required to provide professional development to educators in one (1) of the prescribed pathways to obtain a **proficiency credential**.

- There are over [20 Pathways](#) available to educators through the various educational service cooperatives, institutions of higher education, and private vendors.
- Each Proficiency Pathway has two phases that must be successfully completed:
 - Phase I - Acquiring Knowledge
 - Phase II - Demonstration of Proficiency

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

Note: Required for all K-6 Core Content Teachers (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies) and K-12 Special Education Teachers, K-12 Reading Specialists, K-6 English Language Learner Teachers

All Other Teachers- Awareness Pathway

Beginning 2018-19, a public school district, including an open-enrollment public charter, shall provide for all other educators professional development for one (1) of the prescribed pathways to obtaining an **awareness credential** in knowledge and practices in scientific reading instruction.

- Arkansas IDEAS - Science of Reading Learning Path
 - This pathway may be completed by individuals or facilitated by a school district within a blended learning environment. Facilitator guides are provided on the Arkansas IDEAS portal for districts that choose a blended approach. It is not recommended to watch or facilitate more than 2-3 courses in a single day of professional development.
 - The pathway includes 14 digital learning courses:
 1. Right to Read Act
 2. Science of Reading Overview
 3. The Reading Brain
 4. Essential Elements
 5. Phonology
 6. Critical Foundational Skills: Decoding
 7. Critical Foundational Skills: Encoding
 8. Permanent Word Storage
 9. Building Comprehension and Writing Through Vocabulary
 10. Morphology
 11. Syntax
 12. Reading Comprehension Difficulty: Causes and Instructional Scaffolds

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

Note: Required for all non-core elementary teachers (art, music, PE, etc), all grade 7-12 teachers, librarians, CTE, counselors, etc.

- 13. Using Graphic Organizers to Support Comprehension
- 14. Supporting Critical Thinking Through Question Generation

- The entire Learning Path must be completed to obtain the awareness credential.

Other Awareness Pathways may be found on the [Prescribed Pathway Credential DESE webpage](#).

Administrators

All administrators, including those at the district level, must complete an Awareness Pathway.

It is highly recommended for all K-6 administrators and LEA supervisors to be Certified Assessors. DESE has established an observation protocol for Certified Assessors to determine if a teacher has demonstrated knowledge and skills of the Science of Reading, other than passing the stand alone Foundation of Reading Assessment. Building or district administrators who have completed appropriate training will be able to determine if teachers are proficient in their implementation of strategies based on the Science of Reading. Demonstrating is NOT a one-time event and determination will take place throughout the year through informal and formal observations and conversations. Certified Assessors will coach teachers into proficiency.

A Certified Assessor is a licensed educator who has completed the appropriate Science of Reading training, and who, in the normal scope of his or her duties, is tasked with observing teachers and required to conduct evaluation of personnel. Administrators who complete the Certified Assessor requirements will have met the Awareness in the Science of Reading requirement for licensure.

Certified Assessor Requirements:

- Must successfully complete a Phase I of a prescribed pathway for proficiency
- Must successfully complete Science of Reading Assessor Training

District Responsibility for Professional Development in the Science of Reading

By 2019-2020 school year and annually thereafter, school districts shall establish a professional development program that shall include instruction based on the Science of Reading and be aligned to the literacy needs of the district.

Beginning with the 2020-2021 school year, a school that does not provide professional development shall be placed on accreditation probation and must provide notice to parents that the district has not met the requirements.

Note: *Awareness Required for all administrators.*

[Act 83 of 2019](#)

Demonstrating Proficiency or Awareness by 2023-2024 for Employment

2023-24 School Year

By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

All teachers employed in a teaching position that requires an elementary education (K-6) license or special education (K-12) license shall demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction.

All other licensed educators shall demonstrate awareness in knowledge and practices of the scientific reading instruction.

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

Classroom Teachers in Grades K-6, K-12 Reading Specialists, K-6 Teachers of English Language Learners

By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

All teachers **employed** in the positions identified below shall demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction. It will be the district's responsibility to ensure that teachers employed and teaching in grades K-6 have met the proficiency criteria.

- This includes any classroom elementary educator in grades K-6 (self-contained or departmentalized: Math, Science, ELA, or Social Studies), any K-12 reading specialist, and any K-6 teachers of English Language Learners.
- Those employed under a licensure exception or waiver will have one year to demonstrate proficiency.
- Those who are licensed and returning to the classroom in one of the above mentioned positions will have one year to demonstrate proficiency.

An educator license that expires December 31, 2023 and thereafter will not be renewed if the educator has not met the awareness requirement for the Science of Reading. Applicants are responsible to provide documentation of awareness of best practices in the scientific instruction of reading unless previously documented.

Educators described above who have not met proficiency requirements for employment by the 2023-24 school year may be afforded an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency by being placed in intensive support status for a period of time specified by the teacher's evaluator in the professional growth plan for the teacher.

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

Special Education

By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

All K-12 special education teachers **employed** in a teaching position shall demonstrate proficiency in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction.

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

It will be the district’s responsibility to ensure that special education teachers employed and teaching have met the proficiency criteria.

- This includes resource and self-contained special education teachers in grades K-12 in all subjects.
- Those employed under a licensure exception will have one year to demonstrate proficiency.
- Those who are licensed and returning to the classroom in one of the above mentioned positions will have one year to demonstrate proficiency.

An educator license that expires December 31, 2023 and thereafter will not be renewed if the educator has not met the awareness requirement for the Science of Reading. Applicants are responsible for providing documentation of awareness of best practices in the scientific instruction of reading unless previously documented.

Educators described above who have not met proficiency requirements for employment by the 2023-24 school year may be afforded an opportunity to demonstrate proficiency by being placed in intensive support status for a period of time specified by the teacher’s evaluator in the professional growth plan for the teacher.

All Other Classroom Teachers

By the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year:

All other licensed educators shall demonstrate awareness in knowledge and practices of scientific reading instruction. It will be the district’s responsibility to ensure that educators have met the awareness requirement.

- This includes 7-12 general education teachers, school and district administrators.
- K-6 speciality educators (Music, PE, Art, Library Media, etc.).
- Those employed under a licensure exception or waiver will have one year to show awareness.
- Those who are licensed and returning to the classroom in one of the above mentioned positions will have one year to show awareness.

An educator license that expires December 31, 2023 and thereafter will not be renewed if the educator has not met the awareness requirement for the Science of Reading. Applicants are responsible for providing documentation of awareness of best practices in the scientific instruction of reading unless previously documented.

[Act 1063 of 2017](#)
[Act 83 of 2019](#)
[Act 489 of 2021](#)

Educator and College Preparation Programs

K-6 or special education teachers (K-12) who started their education preparation program in the **fall of 2017** and thereafter must pass the approved stand-alone reading assessment. ([Foundations of Reading for Arkansas](#))

- Depending on the preparation program, there may be a gap between curriculum alignment and the assessment requirements for current graduates,

[Act 540 of 2019](#)
[Act 416 of 2017](#)

- Candidates who complete a program of study approved as aligned to 2019 competencies, and
- Pass the Foundations of Reading for Arkansas are considered proficient
- Graduates prior to May 2021 will need to complete a proficiency pathway Phase I as a condition of employment unless they complete a program considered an early adopter.

All graduates in **May 2021** and thereafter will meet the proficiency requirement.

Licensure for New Teachers or Reciprocity

K-6 or special education teachers (K-12) who apply for reciprocity after September 1, 2017, must take and pass the stand-alone reading test. The test requirement is waived with a valid out-of-state teaching license and 3 years documented teaching experience. By 2021-2022 school year these teachers shall demonstrate proficiency upon employment within one year by completing a proficiency pathway Phase I.

[Act 416 of 2017](#)
[Act 1063 of 2017](#)

No later than May 2023, an applicant seeking Elementary (K-6) or Special Education licensure by reciprocity or by adding an endorsement, must demonstrate proficiency in the knowledge and skills to teach reading consistent with the best practices of scientific reading instruction.

DESE may issue a Provisional License for up to three years to an applicant who has not completed the required professional development to demonstrate proficiency or awareness in scientific reading instruction.

Dyslexia Requirements

Dyslexia Requirements ([See Dyslexia Resource Guide](#)):

- Screening (Required for ALL K-2 students, students who transfer to a new school and have not been screened, students who transfer from another state and cannot provide documentation of similar screening, 3-12 students experiencing difficulty in reading as noted by the classroom teacher)
- Parental Notification
- Program
- Reporting
- Website Information

[Act 1268 of 2017](#)

The initial screening of students shall be performed with fidelity and include without limitation:

1. Phonological and phonemic awareness
2. Sound symbol recognition
3. Alphabet knowledge
4. Decoding skills
5. Rapid naming
6. Encoding

Early screening paired with progress monitoring should provide the district with actionable information to determine early intervention services for primary students. Districts are encouraged to review their screening and progress monitoring protocols to determine efficiency and timeliness in providing services.

Reporting to Parents

At least two (2) times per year, a public school district shall report in writing to the parent or legal guardian and each teacher of a student in kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) the independent reading level at which the student is reading.

[Act 940 of 2017](#)

Improvement Plans & Support Plans

School Improvement Plan (additional requirements in [Act 930](#))

By May 1 (annually) a school shall submit a school-level improvement plan to the school district.

[Act 83 of 2019](#)

A literacy plan shall be included in the school-level improvement plan and shall include without limitation a curriculum program and professional development aligned to the school's literacy needs and based on the Science of Reading.

By August 1 (annually) the school-level improvement plan shall be posted on the district website.

District Support Plan (additional requirements in [Act 930](#))

Level 3 Coordinated Support: 40-49% or more of students in the district scored **In Need of Support** on ACT Aspire Summative for Reading. Support is offered by DESE, education service cooperatives, and other education partners.

[Act 1082 of 2019](#)

Districts must develop a literacy plan as part of the districts' support plans. DESE will contact districts that must submit plans to the state.

DESE must approve district support plans (template is available on Indistar as a resource).

- Districts required to submit plans to the state will have to include ESA funds.

Level 4 Directed Support: 50% or more of students in the district scored **In Need of Support** on ACT Aspire Summative for Reading. Support is directed by DESE with support from education service cooperatives, and other education partners.

[Act 1082 of 2019](#)

Districts must develop a literacy plan as part of the districts' support plans. DESE will contact districts that must submit plans to the state.

DESE must approve district support plans (template is available on Indistar as a resource).

- Districts required to submit plans to the state will have to include ESA funds.

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

By 2020-2021 school year, DESE shall identify and create an approved list of materials, resources, and curriculum programs for school districts that are supported by the Science of Reading and based on instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic, including dyslexia programs and evidence-based reading intervention programs.

[Act 83 Of 2019](#)

Education Ombudsman: The office of the Education Ombudsman was developed in compliance with Ark. Code Ann. 6-17-429 to assist and support the Right to Read and associated literacy legislation. The Education Ombudsman acts as a liaison between schools, parents, and DESE to promote the effective implementation of the Science of Reading.

[Act 606 of 2021](#)

| Levels of Support | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|
| <u>Act 930 of 2017</u> | GENERAL SUPPORT | COLLABORATIVE SUPPORT | COORDINATED SUPPORT | DIRECTED SUPPORT | INTENSIVE SUPPORT |
| General Definition | General support provides guidance and tools to assist LEA | Collaborative support provides minor or temporary technical assistance or personalization of a Department initiative or state expectation | Coordinated support provides technical assistance and monitoring. District support plan required. | Directed support includes directly guiding the development and implementation of the school-level plans, district support plan, allocation of resources, monitoring and evaluation. | Districts are classified for intensive support by the State Board of Education based on Commissioner's recommendation |
| District Initiated | Contacts for general questions and assistance regarding daily operations | District request for short term assistance | District request for long term assistance | District request for long-term guidance | District request for intensive guidance |
| DESE Initiated | | 1003 planning grants | ACT 1082 - district in which 40% or more of students score in need of support on the prior year summative assessment for reading | ACT 1082 - district in which 50% or more of students score in need of support on the prior year summative assessment for reading | SBE directed support |
| DESE Requirement | School improvement plans including literacy plan | School improvement plans including literacy plan District support plan - upon request from ADE | School improvement plans including literacy plan District support plan including district literacy plan - shall be approved by DESE | School improvement plans including literacy plan District support plan including district literacy plan - shall work with DESE - plan shall be approved by DESE | School improvement plans including literacy plan District support plan including district literacy plan - shall work with DESE - plan shall be approved by SBE |