



THE COLORADO READ ACT

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Colorado has identified reading competency as crucial to the success of Colorado's students. Programs in Colorado specifically target the periods of early childhood education and kindergarten through third grade as essential for the development of reading skills.

This *issue brief* provides an overview of early literacy education and assessment programs, specifically the provisions of the Colorado Reading to Ensure Academic Development (READ) Act, the assessment of reading skills, and the oversight of local education providers as it pertains to literacy education.¹

Overview

Enacted in House Bill 12-1238, the READ Act aims to provide early literacy education for students enrolled in kindergarten, first, second, and third grades. Specifically, the act ensures the progress of students in mastering the academic standards for reading skills necessary to meet fourth-grade curriculum and beyond.

A local education provider (LEP) is defined in Colorado law as a school district, board of cooperative educational services, or charter school. Each LEP must provide students in kindergarten through third grade the instruction and evidence-based interventions necessary to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, that

early-grade students develop the reading skills necessary to enable them to succeed in later grades.

Assessment of Reading Skills

Teachers in grades one, two, and three are required to administer reading assessments throughout each school year. In addition, each LEP is required to administer a reading assessment to kindergarten students during the first 90 days of the school year. Based on the scores of the State Board of Education-approved reading assessments, a teacher can identify students with a reading deficiency.

READ Plans

When a student with a significant reading deficiency is identified, teachers, parents, and other personnel are required to develop a READ plan. A READ plan is an individualized approach to implementing instruction for identified students.

A READ plan is part of the student's academic record until the student achieves reading competency, and must follow the student if he or she enrolls in another school or district. A READ plan must include:

- the student's reading deficiencies that need to be remediated to attain reading competency;

¹Part 12 of Article 7 of Title 22, C.R.S.

- the goals and benchmarks for the student's growth in attaining reading competency;
- the type of additional instructional services and interventions the student will receive;
- the scientifically based reading instruction program the teacher will use to provide the student's daily reading approaches;
- the manner in which the LEP will monitor and evaluate the student's progress;
- the strategies that the student's parents will be encouraged to employ to assist the student's reading competency; and
- any additional services the teacher deems appropriate to accelerate the student's reading skill development.

Student Advancement

The READ Act includes a process for parents and educators to determine if a student with a significant reading deficiency should advance to the next grade level in the following academic year. If the student is completing third grade, the joint decision is subject to approval of the school district superintendent, or his or her designee. If the student does not advance, the LEP must provide more rigorous instructional services to the student. This process does not apply to children with disabilities, with limited English proficiency, or who have already been retained at grade level.

Oversight Authority

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) is charged with oversight of the READ Act. LEPs are required to report to CDE the number of early-grade students with significant reading deficiencies. CDE is required to create a list of approved instructional programs and professional development tools for LEPs to use to improve reading instruction. CDE also provides regional training, technical assistance, and coaching, as necessary. In addition, each LEP must measure reading competency for

early-grade students using assessments approved by the CDE.

State Board of Education. The State Board of Education (state board) is responsible for adopting the rules for implementation of the READ Act. In addition, the state board defines by rule what constitutes a significant reading deficiency and rules to integrate READ plans with other individualized education plans and special education programs required by federal law.

The rules promulgated by the state board include:

- minimum reading competency skill levels;
- a list of approved reading assessments;
- approval of one or more independent third-party evaluators to review reading assessments for inclusion on the approved list;
- notification and process for appeals for assessment publishers;
- the time frame and procedures for reporting information concerning student reading skills; and
- implementation of the early literacy grant program.

Local authority. A LEP is required to follow at a minimum, but may exceed, the requirements of the state board and the CDE in regard to the READ Act. In addition, LEP procedures must include:

- creating a READ plan and the contents;
- effectively communicating with parents concerning the creation, content, and implementation of the READ plan; and
- determining whether a student who has a significant reading disability will advance to the next grade.