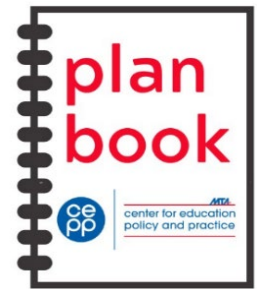


Next Steps for Reading + Literacy Instruction 2025



Since 2018, Massachusetts has invested more than \$100 million in early literacy instruction and support. These funds come from a combination of [federal](#) and state funding, including [Literacy Launch](#) and have driven the [implementation of legislation](#), targeted [grant funding](#), [statewide policies](#) and changes in [district practices](#). Schools throughout Massachusetts have aligned instructional practices based on an [educator-developed definition of Foundational Skills](#) that progresses in complexity by grade level. The implementation of curriculum reviews, early literacy screenings and educator professional development are part of a broader [Mass Literacy](#) strategic plan to help educators implement evidence-based literacy practices.

Simply replacing textbooks will not make up for the expertise of teachers. While core curriculum programs are important, Massachusetts needs to fully analyze the implementation of all available programs and identify gaps in policies and resources for educators. An estimated [10 percent of all students](#) have a specific learning disability in reading and will require supports beyond a new curriculum.

The focus on foundational literacy skills is one part of literacy instruction in preK through third grade. Students need access to a broad and comprehensive curriculum and instruction to support access to higher learning. Classroom teachers, specialized literacy professionals, special education teachers and other educators need the time, funding and flexibility to analyze students' needs and respond to student progress to support students in meeting benchmarks in foundational skills. Massachusetts Teachers Association members know a one-size curriculum will not meet the needs of all students in their classrooms.

Curriculum and Assessment Decisions Massachusetts policies on reading and English language arts instruction must continue to allow schools to adapt to the needs of their students. The [ImplementMA Guide](#) offers tools and resources to guide districts through a process to evaluate, select and implement high-quality instructional materials in early literacy that include [foundational skills](#).

The [Growing Literacy Equity Across Massachusetts \(GLEAM\)](#) and [Partnership for Reading Success in Massachusetts \(PRISM\)](#) grants directed funding to support local selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials.

NEXT STEPS Continue grant funding through Literacy Launch and other channels for districts to make local decisions using the [ImplementMA Guide](#) and evaluate instructional resources that meet the needs of their local student population.

Schools and educators may continue to adopt, adapt and supplement instructional resources that include the [foundational skills](#), along with content rich and culturally responsive curriculum. [DESE curriculum data](#) show that districts are adopting multiple materials for educators to use in their classrooms.

School and Classroom Libraries Reading comprehension is built by reading a variety of materials for both learning and pleasure. School libraries support access to high interest and culturally responsive print and digital reading materials. The [number of school librarians and media center directors](#) has fallen dramatically since 2018. Schools will need new commitments to [fully fund school libraries staffed by licensed librarians](#), as recommended by the [2018 Massachusetts School Library Study](#).

NEXT STEPS Further research on gaps in school library programs statewide, allocating funds and supporting plans for schools to expand library programs. Funding under Literacy Launch can further support reopening of school libraries by increasing staffing, modernizing library collections, replacing furniture and updating learning spaces to ensure students have a clean and welcoming space for building reading skills.

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Literacy Interventions The [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#) include definition of dyslexia subtypes, screening and intervention recommendations. While the dyslexia guidelines are linked on the DESE website, the additional resources on [literacy screenings](#), [tiered interventions](#), [special education evaluations](#) and best practices for [English learners](#) are scattered.

NEXT STEPS Funding to promote and organize the resources for educators under a single website. DESE should collaborate with educators to develop resources for parents, educators and districts on tiered reading intervention programs, which include expectations for clear entry and exit standards for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions and best practices in special education evaluations.

Early Literacy Screenings The Early Literacy Screening regulations under [603 CMR 28.03\(1\)\(F\)](#) took full effect in the 2023–24 school year. Schools are navigating the parent notification requirements under [DESE Early Literacy Screening Guidance \(June 2023\)](#) and implementing responsive interventions that align to the [Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines](#).

NEXT STEPS Further study on the impact of [Mass Literacy](#) can evaluate the Early Literacy Screenings and identify areas for ongoing improvement in the use of screening tools, parent notification and interventions for students who are identified as being at-risk for reading and language-based learning disabilities.

Educator Preparation DESE has aligned the [foundational skills](#) in educator preparation programs with the [Early Literacy Program Criteria](#). The new criteria require approved educator preparation programs to update coursework requirements and support candidates enrolled in programs in using foundational literacy skills in the classroom.

NEXT STEPS Continue support for DESE educator preparation program reviews and provide technical feedback for programs in implementing the [Early Literacy Program Criteria](#). Educator preparation programs should support access to professional learning for practicing educators who want to expand their knowledge and instructional practices in foundational early literacy skills.

Expand Professional Learning DESE has provided opportunities for individual teachers to access [Mass Literacy: Open Access for Professional Learning](#) courses in reading and literacy. Educators should be supported by state and local funds to participate in role-appropriate professional learning aligned with the [International Literacy Association Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals](#).

NEXT STEPS DESE should continue offering funding and explore expanding professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals and include school-based reading tutors. The [Tomorrow's Teachers Scholarship](#), developed and won by the MTA, can be expanded to include master's degree and advanced teacher preparation programs such as Reading Specialist licensure and special education programs for language-based learning disabilities.

Actionable and Accurate Data DESE collects and publishes data on [English language arts core curriculum materials](#) adopted by school districts on both the DESE website and [Curriculum Dashboard](#). [Data on Reading Teachers](#) who are employed in districts show inconsistent levels of staffing, and even some losses in reading teacher roles, in districts statewide.

NEXT STEPS DESE should evaluate the data reporting for [Reading Teachers](#) to ensure accurate data is collected on the number of teachers whose primary role is to support students with early literacy skills. DESE also should collect and report on other district staffing models, including instructional coaches, paraprofessionals and tutors who are assigned to support reading and literacy instruction programs as their primary role.