

Reading Interventions Policy Guide

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A third of eighth graders and 40% of fourth graders [do not yet read at a “basic” level](#). Evidence-based interventions, such as [pull-in/-out reading support](#) and/or [high-intensity tutoring](#), play a critical role in supporting struggling readers. By addressing reading difficulties as soon as they are identified, these interventions can help prevent gaps in students’ reading skills from becoming long-term challenges that are likely to persist in later grades if left unresolved. And when tutoring and other interventions [build on evidence-based core instruction](#) to employ high-quality strategies, target students’ differentiated needs, and align to the students’ overall reading goals, students get the additional help they need most, while also building confidence as readers. These early interventions are [fundamental parts](#) of a comprehensive approach to supporting students’ reading development and success.

What Is a Reading Intervention?

Reading interventions are practices designed to help students with reading difficulties improve. These interventions are implemented as supplemental support, above and beyond the Tier 1 core instruction level. They may or may not be part of a formalized [Response to Intervention](#) (RTI) or [multitiered system of support](#) (MTSS) model, and will likely be delivered by a teacher, reading specialist, or tutor.

How Does Increasing Access & Quality to Reading Interventions Advance Equity?

Ultimately, high-quality, evidence-based reading interventions are essential to ensure that all students grow into skilled, engaged readers. And while many states [have enacted legislation](#) requiring schools to provide a system of early interventions for struggling readers, such legislation is often high level, outlining a broad mandate for schools to provide interventions based on students’ needs, which may include small-group instruction, tutoring, expanded learning time, read-at-home plans, other family resources, and ongoing progress monitoring opportunities.

These policies are an important start. But advocates play an important role in ensuring that reading interventions are of high quality and access to them is equitable for all students and schools. While well-resourced schools may have the funding, staff, and infrastructure to support these initiatives — such as hiring specialized personnel (e.g., reading interventionists or literacy coaches trained in the science of reading), offering smaller student-to-teacher ratios in intervention groups, and investing in partnerships with high-impact tutoring providers — under-resourced schools likely do not.

As a result, under-resourced schools face additional barriers to consistently implementing supports, thereby denying too many students of color and students from low-income backgrounds the targeted assistance they need to become strong readers and widening existing inequities in reading outcomes. Additional state support — such as funding strategically deployed to under-resourced schools to develop and sustain these interventions — can help offset these challenges.

State Spotlight: Ohio

Ohio has taken steps to ensure that schools serving students from low-income backgrounds receive additional funding to support high-quality reading interventions. The state’s “Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid” (DPIA) — a roughly \$560 million annual funding stream — allocates extra state aid for supplemental services in under-resourced schools. DPIA outlines several allowable uses, prioritizing reading intervention programs alongside other wraparound services, such as mental and physical health support, dropout prevention, family engagement initiatives, services for homeless youth, and expanded learning time.

When it was introduced, the state [budget](#) for 2026-2027 included a new requirement for districts and schools struggling with low literacy performance. This provision, which has since been removed, would have required these districts and schools to spend at least half of their allocated DPIA funds on evidence-based reading improvement and intervention efforts, as well as professional development investments. All other districts and schools would have been required to spend at least 25% of their DPIA funds on reading improvement efforts. However, this change is not included in the version that passed the House.

Importantly, districts and schools leveraging these funds to purchase K-12 reading intervention materials may only from the department’s [vetted and approved list](#). This process helps ensure that under-resourced schools not only receive additional funding to acquire materials for interventions they may not otherwise be able to afford but *also* guarantees that these materials are evidence-aligned.

Beyond state funding allocations, what questions can local advocates ask their system leaders to ensure that students from underserved backgrounds have **equitable access to evidence-aligned, high-quality reading interventions**? This implementation guide outlines several key considerations.

Key Considerations & Questions to Ask School & District Leaders About Implementation, Evaluation, Program Monitoring

- 1. Resource allocation decisions matter.** Do schools that serve higher proportions of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and multilingual students provide the same or greater access to and quality of effective reading interventions — such as high-impact tutoring programs and pull-out blocks with qualified specialists — as other schools in the district?

● *Data to consider*

- State-level grants to support district and/or school-level investments in literacy
- State funding formulas
 - Review your state's funding formula for any categorical grants allocated for K-8 literacy interventions (e.g., Tennessee's [K-3 literacy direct funding](#); see page 3).
- District budgets
 - Review the specific allocations for reading specialists and other interventions in your district's budget (e.g., [Montgomery County's Operating Budget](#); see the "Teacher Positions" box on page 37 of the PDF).
- Staffing information
 - What is the ratio of reading specialists and interventionists to the school's enrollment?

2. Strong interventions start with strong data. How are screeners and assessments used to guide the type, frequency, and focus of reading interventions for students?

- Are there coherent, timely, and aligned processes in place to ensure that high-quality assessments lead to evidence-based reading interventions?
- How do district leaders support school leaders, educators, instructional coaches, and reading specialists in understanding and using their students' reading assessment data?
- How do district leaders prioritize schools that serve higher proportions of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and multilingual students for support when capacity or resources are limited?

● *Data to consider*

- State laws that require districts to screen and assess students for reading difficulty
 - For example, the Virginia Literacy Act provides districts with resources, tools, technical assistance, and funding to assess student learning using state-approved screeners and to utilize student-level data to inform instruction and intervention.
- Information about the district's intervention policies and practices publicly provided by the central office
 - Review your district's strategic plan goals to see how they're investing in effective interventions.
 - For example, Fairfax County Public Schools "[Goal 3 Report](#)" provides an update on the district's progress toward its goal of ensuring that all students are reading at grade level by end of third grade (see pages 26-33).
 - If the district does not include this information in a publicly available strategic plan, consult someone in your district's central office who is in charge of literacy and/or the English language arts (ELA) curriculum (e.g. [Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Literacy](#)).

3. Different students have different reading needs, and practitioners must be well-equipped to meet them. How can instructional leaders, as well as reading specialists, tutoring organizations, literacy coaches, and others tailor interventions for students with differentiated needs, such as multilingual learners, dyslexic students, and older students?

● *Data to consider*

- Disaggregated reading proficiency data for multilingual students, students with disabilities, and middle school students, including state assessment data published in state agency report cards
- State and district-level budget documents, with a focus on line items or plans for professional development, and whether and how well these opportunities explicitly address the differentiated needs of various student groups (e.g. [Montgomery County Public Schools Operating Budget](#); see pages 383-87 of the PDF)
 - At the state level, funds may be provided via the state funding formula or offered through a competitive grant that districts must apply for.
 - At the district level, leaders may use state, local, and federal sources to fund professional development (PD). Districts may also leverage private funds to support PD opportunities, such as [The DC Ed Fund](#), which finances the DC Reading Clinic. This clinic provides intensive, one-on-one decoding sessions for the most struggling readers in DC Public Schools' (DCPS) and offers clinical apprenticeships for DCPS educators to become literacy experts.
- District budgets and school board meeting minutes that specify professional development providers
 - Consider whether and how well these PD allocations explicitly address the differentiated needs of various student groups.

4. Aligning reading interventions with high-quality core instruction helps sustain a coherent literacy “ecosystem” of teaching and learning. Are the reading interventions evidence-based and aligned with the school's overall literacy vision, materials, and instructional practices?

● *Data to consider*

- Information about how the district plans to achieve its literacy and English language arts priorities in its strategic plan
- Your district's [literacy plan](#) (if applicable)
 - If the district does not include this information in a publicly available strategic plan, consult someone in your district's central office who is in charge of literacy and/or ELA curriculum (e.g., [Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Literacy](#)).

- 5. Time is valuable — so scheduling must be strategic.** How is your school's schedule organized to ensure that students can receive necessary interventions without missing important Tier I, grade-level core instruction, while still fitting within the school day?

- *Data to consider*
 - School master schedule
 - District policies on school scheduling

Strong systems start with clear expectations and bold questions that prompt leaders to consider the needs of all students, particularly those underserved by our educational systems.

Other Resources

- [6 Principles to Advance Equity in State Literacy Policy](#)
This brief outlines six principles to guide advocates in their efforts to ensure that every student becomes a skillful, engaged reader and articulates how state policy can support these aims.
- [ARE Guidebook: Instructional Time and Attention](#)
This resource provides a list of policy and practice suggestions for schools and districts designed to address inequities in access to academic supports. These suggestions focus on identifying students, staff time and capacity, scheduling, curriculum, and state and district policies. Advocates can use this guide to recommend changes to district practices based on the responses to the questions above.
- [ARE Advocating Across Government](#)
This tool outlines what state, district, and school leaders can do to provide students with equitable access to support. Advocates can use this guide to identify the target audience for their advocacy efforts.