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# Nebraska READS



## A Vision of Literacy for Nebraska Students

“The ability to read is one of the most important skills for children to master. It is our responsibility to help Nebraska students become successful readers, writers, and communicators so that they can engage as productive members of our society. This includes working towards the goal that all Nebraska students are reading at or above grade level by the end of third grade.”

**NebraskaREADS** provides tools and resources to support high-quality literacy instruction for all Nebraska students. The initiative highlights policies, procedures, and practices that guide the selection and implementation of literacy practices and evidence-based interventions, and assists districts as they build family, community, and school partnerships to help students become successful readers, setting them up to learn, graduate, and succeed.”

Dr. Cory Epler,  
NDE Academic Officer

# Reading is the KEY to learning



A student's ability to read is a critical predictor of academic and lifelong success. The **Nebraska Reading Improvement Act** (Section 79-2601-79-2607) ensures all students are ready for success in school and beyond. Starting in kindergarten, strong reading policy and programs help students get on track to grade-level reading. The Nebraska Reading Improvement Act and the Nebraska READS initiative are designed to give students every opportunity to gain proficiency in early literacy skills that will enable later access to comprehension and analysis of complex text.

According to a report by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) and the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), "Without adequate reading and comprehension skills, an individual's ability to pursue their field(s) of interest, to become and remain self-sufficient, and to engage productively in society are greatly curtailed." Many states across the nation have recognized the need to bring renewed focus to early intervention for struggling readers. The Nebraska Reading Improvement

Act and Nebraska READS initiative emphasize the need for pre-kindergarten through 3rd grade students to have access to high-quality instruction, and for struggling readers to receive targeted, individualized support. With these supports in place, we can achieve greater equity and assure ALL Nebraska students can read independently and learn about their world from complex texts across content areas.

Fourth grade is an important year for students. That is when they make a bigger transition from learning how to read to reading more on their own. There is a higher expectation for students to be able to read independently and understand what they are reading. Entering fourth grade as a grade level reader can enable a student to read independently, comprehend facts in social studies and science, understand word problems in math, and interpret increasingly complex texts in all content areas. When students enter fourth grade with strong reading skills, they are better positioned for success in the classroom, high school graduation, and readiness for college and career.

## The Nebraska Reading Improvement Act – Nebraska's Approach to Literacy

In 2018, Nebraska's Reading Improvement Act was enacted. The Nebraska Reading Improvement Act, which goes into effect for the 2019-2020 school year, takes a comprehensive approach to improve the reading skills of students in kindergarten through third grade. It is designed to provide reading instruction based on what works to position all students for success as they progress through their education journey and into college and career readiness. The heart of the program is early identification of students who need extra reading help so that they receive targeted intervention. The following are key components of the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act:

- **NDE:** NDE will provide a list of approved reading assessments and the threshold level of performance for each assessment.
- **School Boards:** School Boards may develop policies for reading instruction and intervention services to address all students' reading needs.
- **Teachers:** K-3 teachers must be effective based on classroom observations and student improvement in reading, or receive specialized training in early literacy.
- **Assessment:** All K-3 students are assessed three times per year with an approved reading assessment to measure progress and to support teachers with targeted instruction to meet individual student needs.
- **Early Identification:** Within the first 30 days of school, schools and districts use the approved reading assessment to assess students in

kindergarten through third grade to identify those who may have a reading difficulty.

- **Parent Engagement:** All parents or guardians of K-3 grade students are kept informed of their child's reading progress and parents or guardians of students who are identified with a reading difficulty are notified in writing no later than 15 days after the identification.
- **Supplemental Reading Intervention Programs:** Any student identified with a reading difficulty must be provided a supplemental intervention program. The supplemental reading intervention program should be implemented during regular school hours in addition to regularly scheduled reading instruction unless otherwise agreed to by a parent or guardian.
- **Individual Reading Improvement Plans:** Any student identified with a reading difficulty will receive an individual reading improvement plan no later than 30 days after identification. The plan is created in collaboration with the parent or guardian and describes the reading intervention services and support the student will receive through the supplemental reading intervention program.
- **Summer Reading Program:** Summer reading programs are to be made available by schools for any student in grade 1-3 who has been identified as continuing to have a reading difficulty. Such programs may be community-based (not affiliated with the school) or offered online.